Miami Heat suspends Meyers Leonard for using slur during Twitch stream

The Miami Heat has suspended Meyers Leonard indefinitely after he used an anti-Semitic slur during a Twitch stream on Monday.

“The Miami Heat vehemently condemns the use of any form of hate speech,” the NBA team wrote in a Twitter statement on Tuesday evening. “The words used by Meyers Leonard were wrong and we will not tolerate hateful language from anyone associated with our franchise.”

In a statement apologizing for his actions posted to Instagram, Leonard says he wasn’t aware of the meaning of the slur when he said it.

“While I didn’t know what the word meant at the time, my ignorance about its history and how offensive it is to the Jewish community is absolutely not an excuse and I was just wrong,” he said. “I am now more aware of its meaning and I am committed to properly seeking out people who can help educate me about this type of hate and how we can fight it.”

The NBA also issued a statement, saying it “unequivocally condemns all forms of hate speech,” a spokesperson told ESPN.

Twitch has suspended Leonard, the company tells *The Verge*. “We do not allow the use of hateful slurs on Twitch,” Twitch said in a statement. “The safety of our community is our top priority, and per our guidelines we reserve the right to suspend any account for conduct that we determine to be inappropriate, harmful, or puts our community at risk.”

Other organizations have distanced themselves from Leonard as well. Gaming and esports organization FaZe Clan, which Leonard had invested in, said on Tuesday evening that it had severed ties:

And sponsors Origin PC and Scuf Gaming, which are both owned by Corsair, have also said they are ending their working relationships with Leonard.

While stars saying inappropriate things on stream is relatively new territory for NBA players who dabble in streaming, it’s an unfortunately common problem for the biggest names on Twitch. Turner “Tfue” Tenney, for example, was suspended in 2018 for using a racial slur on stream, though the platform did not take action when he said a different slur in 2019. And *Fortnite* pro Daniel “Dubs” Walsh was banned from Twitch and suspended from FaZe Clan after saying a racial slur in February 2020. (He has since been reinstated.)

Other celebrities who have tried their hand at streaming have faced real-world consequences for hurtful language as well. NASCAR driver Kyle Larson was fired by his team in April for using the n-word during a sim racing stream, while musician Joel Zimmerman, who you might know as deadmau5, deleted his Twitch channel in 2019 after he was suspended for saying homophobic slurs.

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