

4NCL Online Fair Play Report – End of Season 2

The statistics for Season 2 are below:

- 11 players were banned due to fair play violations;
- 11 other players were banned by Lichess, for whom the weight of statistical evidence did not support the 4NCL overturning results (e.g. the bans were imposed as a result of the cheating taking place in non-4NCL games on Lichess);
- Of the 22 cases above, only 3 cases were attributable to players in Junior 4NCL Online; the other 18 were attributable to 4NCL Online.

In Season 1, there were 50 cases, with the reduction in part caused by changing the definition of what constituted a ban. Previously all 22 cases above would have resulted in the player being banned. In addition:

- A number of players who were banned in Season 1 have not returned in Season 2;
- With two exceptions, players who were banned in Season 1 and readmitted in Season 2 have a clean bill of health.

On the face of it, this is a dramatic reduction and looks positive; and for Junior 4NCL Online, it does look considerably more like we would expect to see from an over-the-board event as a whole.

However, 4NCL Online still has a number of people who we expect, if they continue to behave in the way that they have for much longer, will be banned by Lichess and meet our tolerance threshold. There are approximately 25 players in 4NCL Online who we believe were probably cheating in Season 2. We say this based on comparing data from Season 2 with 4NCL over the board dating back to 2017; there are a number of performances which far exceed anything we have ever seen naturally from over the board chess in England, but which nevertheless fall short of the thresholds under which either 4NCL or Lichess will ban someone. There is a reasonable probability that maybe one or two of these people are playing honestly, but the chances that they are *all* playing honestly are vanishingly small. 4NCL Online will be combining Season 2 with Season 3 data, and so the slate will not be wiped clean, and may be used to provide justification for bans in Season 3. Most disappointingly, amongst these 25 are three squad captains and an ECF arbiter.

While it's disappointing that a number of people are clearly 'sailing close to the wind', and also that bans/suspicious activity are weighted disproportionately towards 4NCL Online rather than Junior 4NCL Online, nonetheless the overall trend does appear to be in the right direction. The fair play guidelines have been reviewed and amended to take account of experience gained in Seasons 1 and 2, and we believe that they strike a good balance between identifying cheats effectively and reducing the risk of wrongly accusing the innocent. We encourage captains to read the new guidelines and to share them with their players – and we also thank the vast majority of captains and players who are committed to a clean playing environment.