



COLUMNISTS

An Arbiter's Notebook

Geurt Gijssen

Rules, Rules, Rules

I JUST RETURNED from the 34th Chess Olympiad in Istanbul (Turkey). The first seeded teams (Russia in the men's competition and China in the women's) won quite convincingly. I will report about the Olympiad in my next column. In this Notebook I will report on the meetings of the Rules Committee and the result of these meetings.

First of all I would like to mention that after the radical changes we made in Yerevan 1996, it was not our intention to change much. If there are major changes every four years, players will be confused and the Laws of Chess shall lose a lot of credibility. The new laws of Chess take effect 1 July 2001.

Among the major changes I would like to mention the following:

(1) Articles 1-5 describe the way the game of chess must be played. But it is a manual. For instance, clocks are not mentioned. From Article 6 onward, the Laws of Chess describe exactly what takes place in a game - the chess clock, how to offer a draw, the behaviour of the players and so on. It was therefore quite illogical that Article 1.1 stated that a player is said to have the move, when his opponent's move has been completed. A move is completed when, after making a move, the player presses his clock and starts his opponent's clock. In the new version, the player has the move when his opponent's move has been made.

(2) We had a long discussion about Article 5: The completion of the game. The main point of the discussion was: is the game won by the player who has checkmated his opponent's king with a legal move or is the game won by the player who has checkmated his opponent's king, provided all moves are legal. It was finally decided that the last move must be legal. The majority of the Rules Committee was afraid that after the finish of a game, a player could force the arbiters to check all moves before the player would be ready to sign the scoresheet for the result of the game.

(3) There were several proposals for Article 6.10, especially the second part of it:

Except where Article 5.1 or one of the Articles 5.2 (a), (b) and (c) apply, if a player does not complete the prescribed number of the moves in the allotted time, the game is lost by the player. However, the game is drawn, if the position is such that the opponent cannot checkmate the player by any possible series of moves, even with the most unskilled counterplay.

The Rules Committee decided after a short discussion to keep this article. What does this mean? If a player oversteps the time limit and his opponent has two knights, the game is won by the opponent.

One of the proposals was to replace the old one by Article C4 of the Blitz Rules:

In order to win, a player must have 'mating potential'. This is defined as adequate forces eventually to produce a position legally, possible by 'helpmate', where an opponent having the move cannot avoid being checkmated in one move. Thus two knights and a king against a lone king is insufficient, but a rook and king against a knight and king is sufficient.

But what happened was that Article C4 was removed. More on this later.

(4) Article 10.3 was moved to Article 7.4. In the old Laws of Chess a player was penalised for an illegal move only in the quickplay finish stage. Now there is a punishment in all phases of a normal game. The opponent of the player who made the illegal move gets two extra minutes thinking time. It is the third illegal move that results in the loss of the game.

(5) A new Article 8.7 now says that the players have to sign the scoresheets, indicating the result. Even if incorrect, this result stands, unless the arbiter decides otherwise. **N.B.:** it happens quite often that players sign scoresheets that reflect incorrect results.

(6) No one will be surprised when I inform the readers that we had a long debate regarding Article 10.2. The result of this debate is as follows: (a) If a player claims a draw, there are three possibilities: (i) The arbiter agrees. (ii) The arbiter rejects the claim. A claim may for instance be rejected if a player claims a draw with a few seconds on his clock. (iii) The arbiter postpones his decision. If he does so, he shall declare the final result after a flag has fallen. (b) The decision of the arbiter shall be final relating to 10.2 a, b, c. Personally I have problems with this Article. Appeals are not impossible.

(7) Article 11 (scoring) is changed. Each tournament committee may use its own scoring system. 3 points for a win and 1 point for a draw is now possible. For rating calculations the old scoring system is still valid.

(8) In rapidplay, the following changes are made: (a) The touches piece will be applied only if a player requests it. (b) The player loses the right to claim an illegal move once he has touched a piece. (c) In case of reverse king and queen placement, castling is not possible.

(9) Article C4 has been removed. It means that Article 6.10 also applies in blitz play. See point 3 above.

And now to this month's questions...

Question: Dear Geurt: In your previous column you wrote regarding the game Fritz 6 Tiviakov in the Dutch Championship: "He decided to offer a draw when Tiviakov's clock was running." I would like to point out that I offered a draw when Fritz's clock was running. You yourself witnessed it. Tiviakov protest was not related to the fact that I offered a draw on his time. I hope you can to correct this. **Frans Morsch (The Netherlands), Operator of Fritz 6**

Answer: Dear Frans: You are 100% right. You offered the draw in the correct way. Tiviakov's protested in fact that you did not resign on behalf of the computer, when Fritz's position was lost.

Question: Hello, I enjoy your column at **The Chess Café**. I think it is an entertaining way to train chessplayers in the rules. In your last column you wrote that you want the arbiter's right to claim a win in a tournament game to be maintained if a player oversteps the time control. So my first question is: does somebody else in team championships have this right (e.g. team captain)?

Next question: What happens if the other player does not react, makes another move and stops his own clock. Is the game still lost or should the player now continue, if they have made the required number of moves. **Gerd Lorscheid (Germany)**

Answer: (1) The arbiter is the only person who may call a flag fall. No teammate or captain may intervene. (2) If in a normal game the player does not notice the flag fall, the arbiter may intervene. If neither the player or the arbiter sees it, the game continues.

Question: In the South Carolina State Championship, some years ago, the tournament director, my opponent and I were the only souls left in the tournament hall very late at night at the end of the first round. I was defending a difficult position. In a time scramble I lost a move on my scoresheet, and my opponent became aware of this fact, relaxed and quit recording moves entirely. The TD was sitting beside our table watching. I made the time control (I was White) but my opponent did not (in fact made no attempt to do so). When my opponent's flag fell, I was convinced that he had overstepped because, while my score was incomplete, I was certain that it was missing only one move.

At that point I turned to the TD and uttered, "I think my opponent overstepped. What do I need to do?" To my surprise, the TD stared at me but remained absolutely silent! My opponent then said, "You cannot claim a win because your score is incomplete." I looked at my opponent, at the TD, at my score. I had recorded the game on notebook paper, a pair of moves per line. I closed my eyes and mentally replayed the final moves of the time scramble. I looked back at the score and saw where I had omitted the move.

To the right of the originally recorded sequence, I wrote the moves as they had actually been played. Then I said, "My opponent overstepped the time limit. I claim a win." The TD now sprang into action. He stopped the clocks. He set up another chessboard and he and I played through the entire game from my score.

Meanwhile my opponent kept studying the final position on the original board. The TD eventually

awarded me the win. At this point my opponent, an attorney, protested. He argued that I had modified my scoresheet after claiming a win on time. The TD thought for a few minutes and then announced that he was overruling himself and that the game must continue. Was this a correct decision? **Danny Purvis (USA)**

Answer: It is still strange that the USCF Laws of Chess differ from the FIDE Laws of Chess. Let me explain to you what the FIDE rules say: in the situation you describe, the arbiter has to investigate. He checks if the required number of moves has been played. In the USCF rules, the player has to prove that he has not made the required number of moves. And he needs a complete scoresheet for this.

Question: This question is about the USCF rule on digital clocks, and a 5-second delay. A game is started and one player is down to 7 min. while the other has 21. The player with 7 minutes assumed that the clock was set for the 5-second delay (this model adds 5 seconds, or less if you used less after the move). Upon finding out that the clock was not set for the delay he stopped the clocks and informed the TD who used the "not working clock" rule and reset the clocks. Was this correct? **Harl Myers, (USA)**

Answer: I think that in many cases the arbiter has no other choice. There is a playing schedule and the arbiter has to maintain it.

Question: Dear Mr. Gijssen: In a recent rapid play tournament, we had the following situation: Black made an illegal move. White complained about that and stopped the clock. Black discovered that White had overstepped the time. The arbiter was called. White claimed that Black had made an illegal move and Black claimed that White lost on time.

White argued that he still had time left, because Black had made an illegal move and he would get now an extra two minutes. No one, not the players or the spectators knew whether Black had pressed the clock after his move or not. It was only known that White had claimed the illegal move very fast. After two minutes of discussing, both players agreed to a draw. Since it was not possible to decide, whether the illegal move was completed or not, would it be correct to decide, that White lost on time (because this was a fact)? **Axel Eisengraeber-Pabst (Germany)**

Answer: At the moment it is realized that an illegal move has been played, the clocks must be stopped. The position that was on the board just before the illegal move must be reinstated and the clock must be adjusted. And the arbiter has to use his best judgment to determine the times to be shown on the clocks. He must give the opponent two extra minutes thinking time. These are the rules. And in the situation you describe? I would give the opponent the two minutes and let the players continue the game.

Question: Dear Mr. Gijssen: I have two situations, decisions I've made as Arbiter in two separate tournaments and would like to hear your comments. Case 1: In a blitz game (5/5), Players A & B both had about 30 seconds left to make their moves. Player A then unexpectedly took a long time on his next move and thought for quite a while. At this moment (I was standing next to the board) I looked at the clocks and noticed the following: Player A's time had expired (the minute hand was past 12) *but* the flag was still "up". I then immediately stopped the game and declared it won for B because A's time expired. I explained this to both players: there was a mechanical fault with the clock. Neither player objected. My decision was based on the fact that neither player saw this and because the flag was still "up", both players thought there was still time left. Was my decision correct?

Answer: In a blitz game it is the players' responsibility to call a flag fall. This means that the arbiter should not intervene. But there is also an article, that says that a chess clock with an obvious defect shall be replaced (Article 6.11). In your case I would not have declared the game lost because that is still the players' responsibility. I would have replaced the clock and waited for a claim.

Question: Case 2: In a rapid game (20/20), both players (A&B) were *very* short of time. I saw (from across the playing hall) that something was going on (was about to happen) and started walking toward the players. The clock was placed on the side of the table I was approaching and thus could not see its face. As I reached the table, Player B stopped the clock (on his time/on his move) and claimed a draw according to 10.2. When stopping the clock, player B's hand covered the face of the clocks as well. Then suddenly player A argued (actually he shouted) that the

position was not drawn and started the clocks again. I then immediately stopped both clocks. Now, player A saw that player B's flag was down and claimed a win on time also arguing that player B deliberately covered the face of the clock to "hide" the fact that his flag has fallen. At this points, both players were shouting at each other and while this was going on, a couple of spectators started to gather.

Now, players A&B were both on their feet and I was sure they were about to hit each other. After much dialog from my side, I managed to calm down both players. I then gave both players a warning regarding bad behaviour and stated that I would not tolerate any further inappropriate behaviour and would not hesitate to expel them both from the event. My decision (on the game) was to declare it drawn because there was no proof that B's flag fell - player A started it again and because of this, B's flag could have fallen. Both players accepted the decision. Was this the correct one? **Günther van den Bergh (South Africa)**

Answer: The situation you described is quite funny. In situations such as this it is very difficult to apply the Laws of Chess. It is my opinion that you showed excellent judgment. I am convinced that a lot of arbiters disagree with me, but I stand by my opinion: excellent decision.

Question: Dear Mr. Gijssen: A clarification may be in order from your most recent and (as always) illuminating column. In your answer to the question regarding improper draw offers, you stated, "It is customary in professional chess that the player who has an inferior position shall not offer a draw. Recently there have been cases where a player did not follow this unwritten Law of Chess. In the third game of the current match Kasparov - Kramnik in London...", and you recount a position from the R+P endgame. Your implication is that Kramnik had an inferior position, and therefore he had violated the unwritten Law with his draw offer.

However, I question the notion that Kramnik had an "inferior position," in any sense of the word. The given position is not only drawn theoretically, of course, but it is also very easily and simply drawn as a matter of practicality, especially by someone of Kramnik's stature. Given 100 opportunities to play out this position, Kramnik would draw all 100 - easily. Kasparov was equally aware that the given position was dead-drawn, as was everyone else.

Therefore, since by definition a (theoretically and practically) drawn position is not "inferior", but rather fully equal, I would submit that Kramnik did not violate this unwritten Law in any respect. **Jon Crumiller (USA)**

Answer: Of course, you are completely right, that it is a draw, but still each professional chessplayer is annoyed when his opponent offers a draw having less material.

Have a question for Geurt Gijssen? Perhaps he will respond to it in a future column. Send it to hwr@chesscafe.com. Please include your name and country of residence.

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