



## COLUMNISTS

## An Arbiter's Notebook

Geurt Gijssen

### The New Laws

I think that all chessplayers know that new Laws of Chess were approved during the FIDE Congress in November 2000 in Istanbul. I noticed also that in many countries arbiters' committees are translating the new Laws into their own language. I base this on the telephone calls, e-mails and faxes I receive from all over the world.

I received many questions about Article 13.6. First, the old text of this Article:

*The arbiter must not intervene in a game to indicate the number of moves made, except in applying Article 8.5, when at least one player has used all his time. The arbiter shall refrain from informing a player that his opponent has made a move, or that he failed to press the clock.*

The new text, taking effect on 1 July 2001, is:

*The arbiter must not intervene in a game except in cases described by the Laws of Chess. He shall not indicate the number of moves made, except in cases applying Article 8.5, when at least one player has used all his time. The arbiter shall refrain from informing a player that his opponent has completed a move.*

The main question is whether we deleted the last part of the Article - "or that he failed to press the clock" deliberately - or whether it was incorrectly published. Well, the answer is, that it was omitted on purpose. Playing with a clock with a move counter—and as you know the Fischer modus has one—it happens very often that it seems that a player oversteps the time control, but in fact he did not, simply because the players did not press the clocks after making a move. This often happens when a lot of pieces are exchanged. By the way, once there was a match—I think it was the match Botvinnik – Bronstein, Moscow 1951 –and the regulations of this match said that the arbiter should notify the player who had forgotten to press his clock. In the match Kasparov – Karpov (Seville 19987, game 2), Kasparov forgot to punch his clock; I saw it, but at that time the Laws stipulated that the arbiter had to refrain from informing the player.

**Question** Mr. Gijssen, Congratulations for your excellent column. Keep up the good work. I have only one small question for you today: In open tournament pairings, what is the importance (in priority) of floaters? Is it widely used everywhere (or should it be)? I can appreciate their use, but I'm not sure to what extent. Thank you for your help. **Serge Archambault (Canada)**

**Answer** Let me first of all explain to the readers what a "floater" is. In Swiss tournaments players with the same score are paired against each other as much as possible.

Suppose there is a group of 6 players with the same score. Depending on the pairing system used in the tournament, the arbiter may have several options available for pairing: 1–4, 2–5, 3–6. Another possibility is: 1–6, 2–5, 3–4. A third possibility is 1–2, 3–4, and 5–6.

In this example I did not consider colours and I suppose that all these pairings are really possible.

But if there is a group of 7 players, one of the players has no opponent in this group, but has to be paired against a player with a lower score. This player is called a floater and in this case a "down" floater. His opponent is called an "upfloater". The question is now: who shall be the downfloater?

Using the first system of pairings, #7 will be the downfloater, because #1 plays the first player of the second half, #4, and so on. If the second system is used, the pairings will be 1 – 7, 2 – 6, and 3 – 5 and in this situation #4 shall float down and finally in the third system #7 will be the downfloater. In these three systems the player who remained unpaired, floated down.

There are also systems where the downfloater is chosen from the group before the arbiter makes the pairings. For instance in system 2 it is usual, that #1 floats down and that the pairings are: 2 - 7, 3 - 6, 4 - 5. It is clear that the system concerning what procedures will be used must be

announced before the start of the tournament.

Sometimes another player will float down. An example: in a previous round, a player already had been a downfloater, or even two rounds before. In these cases another player will float down. Again using the second system: suppose #4 floated down in the previous round, the pairings would be: 1-7, 2-6, 3-4 and #5 floats down.

**Question** Mr Gijssen, as you rightly noted in your column, there is no perfect tiebreak system. However, I am not clear what the rationale is for using the sum of progressive scores (PS) for tie breaking. In fact, I can think of a reason for not using it. If PS is used, a player who performs well in the beginning is likely to have a higher PS than a slow starter. For example, A scores 1, 1, 1, 1, 1, 0; B scores 0, 1, 1, 1, 1, 1. A has a PS of 20 and B has a PS of 15. Although B has a lower PS, he scores from the later rounds and therefore has a better performance against stronger opposition, unlike A whose first-round opponent could be a weak player. Why should we penalise B because of his poor start? Perhaps you can explain.

One objection against the use of tournament performance rating (TPR) or Buchholz (sum of opponents' scores) as a tie-breaker is that a player could be disadvantaged by meeting a first-round player with either a low rating or a low final score. Now, TPR is the sum of the average rating of opponents (ARO) and the performance rating difference (DP). Because ARO is an average number, the handicap of meeting a lowly rated first-round opponent is not that serious given the mitigating effect of averaging. The distortion will be smaller the larger the number of games played. Another way of circumventing this problem is to use a modified TPR where first round results are ignored. This also applies to the Buchholz score. Of course, TPR is of not much use where many of the participants are not rated.

A variation on the first-round cut-off is the Koya System where only results against opponents with scores of 50% or more are considered. The logic appears to be quite sound: reward those who have good performance against other good performers. But what happens when the lowly rated first-round opponent turns out to be a good performer? Perhaps where TPR is used, we could confine the pool to players with above average TPR. As you rightly noted, the fairest way is to decide by a play-off. But organisers will disagree as this means a bigger budget. **Chan Tat Wong (Singapore)**

**Answer** Dear Mr. Chan, I agree completely with you. You confirmed exactly my opinion why I am against Progressive Scores as a criterion. And I repeat, the only "advantage" of this system is the possibility to calculate before the start of the last round the result a player needs to win the tournament. And I am really surprised that recently a member of the board of the Dutch Chess Federation supported the idea to use PS as a criterion.

By the way, I like your example very much, because it makes very clear the weakness of PS. Suppose, that B won in round 6 against A. Then it is, at least for me, completely clear, that this system is incorrect. Note that if all players involved played against each other, the best score among them is decisive. It is quite similar to the Koya system.

**Question 1** Dear Mr. Gijssen, Is it possible to rule on credibility in a situation where it is obvious that one of the players is lying?

**Answer** Not an easy question. In the Preface it states that the Laws of Chess assume that the arbiter has the necessary competence, sound judgement and absolute objectivity. I think, that an arbiter has the ability to rule on credibility based on a sound judgment. I recently had a situation in the Olympiad. A player claimed that his opponent overstepped the time on move 38. The scoresheets showed 40 moves had been played, but he stuck to his assertion that at move 38 the flag had dropped. I was 100% sure that the claimant was lying and thought about letting the game continue, even if the claimant disagreed. But at the same time I tried to convince him that he was wrong. And finally he admitted it. But I do agree that it is very difficult to make the correct decision in the face of conflicting assertions.

**Question 2** I also have some questions about ruling on displaced pieces under article 7.4. During play white by mistake puts his king on g1 instead of h1 after picking it up from the floor, after accidentally knocking it over when making a move. The game continued. Later on in the game the players, noticed the mistake. However, when the king was mistakenly on h1, a black bishop made its way to f3, checking the king on h1. The rules says "the position before the irregularity shall be

reinstated". What is considered the "irregularity"? Is it the fact that white didn't move his king from h1 (where it should have been) when the bishop came to f3? Since the players don't know when the king was misplaced, shall they return to the point before the king moved from g1 to h1?

**Answer** The players have to go back to the position before the king was put on h1. If the players do not know when it happened, they have to go back to the position when the white king had been played to g1 (probably after castling).

**Question 3** What if the mistake is revealed during reconstruction after a time control after a player has lost on time. Does the reinstatement of the position before the irregularity overrule the loss on time? **Jonas Magnusson (Sweden)**

**Answer** In your question you refer to Article 7.4. But what about Article 6.13? This article says:

*If an irregularity occurs and/or have to be restored to a previous position, the arbiter shall use his best judgement to determine the times to be shown on the clocks.*

Article 7.4 says:

*If during a game it is found that an illegal move has been made, or that pieces have been displaced from their squares, the position before the irregularity shall be re-instated. [Emphasis added]*

The question is of course: Is the game still in progress or is the game over by overstepping the time limit? I am inclined to say that the game is not over, in other words: the position immediately before the illegal move should be re-set on the chessboard, the clocks times adjusted and the game continued from this position.

**Question** I have read the FIDE Circular on the introduction of the title of FIDE Arbiter (<http://www.fide.com/release>). Could you please explain why a new Arbiter title has been created? **Pierre Dénomée (Canada)**

**Answer** I did not attend the meetings of the General Assembly in Istanbul, because they were scheduled during the rounds of the Olympiad. Frankly, I was quite surprised when I read about the introduction of the new title. I compared the requirements of the two arbiters titles: International arbiter and FIDE arbiter. I discovered that the differences are minimal. As a matter of fact, there is only one difference: One of the requirements for the title of International or FIDE arbiter title is: Experience as chief or deputy arbiter in at least four FIDE rated events (national or international) But for the title of FIDE arbiter this requirement may be replaced by passing an examination set by the Arbiters' Council. This is done for applicants from federations that are unable to organise any tournaments valid for titles.

**Question** Dear Mr.Gijssen! Imagine the following situation: A game with 40 moves in 2 hours and one hour for the rest of the game is played. White makes his 40th move, after releasing his piece the white flag falls and then he presses his clock. Has he lost the game?

A friend and I had an interesting discussion. He pointed out that White had made his move. According to FIDE Article 6.2, each player must make a certain number of moves in an allotted period of time. He said that White made his move (he didn't complete it, no question) before the flag fall. Therefore, White fulfilled the requirements of FIDE 6.2.

One may say that he didn't complete his move and therefore, White lost the game (which is the usual ruling in this case, as far as I know). FIDE Article 6.7a says that the move is not considered to be completed if the player doesn't press his clock. But FIDE Article 6.2 doesn't require a completed move, it requires a made move. FIDE Article 4.7 states that a move is considered to be made when a piece has been released on a square and it was a legal move according to FIDE Article 3. Is there a loophole in the Laws of Chess or am I missing something? Thank you for your answer. **Axel Eisengraeber-Pabst (Germany)**

**Answer** When I read your letter, I was really surprised and thought that we had overlooked something in Istanbul. I even thought that that we might have overlooked this in Yerevan 1996, and not only the Rules Committee, but the whole chess world as well. But fortunately, there is another article, Article 6.10 (coming into force on 1 July 2001):

*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 moves in the allotted time, the game is lost by the player...*  
[Emphasis added]

I think Article 6.10 solves the problem.

It was probably better in Article 6.2 to write "complete" referring to Article 6.8 (from 1 July 2001).

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

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