



COLUMNISTS

An Arbiter's Notebook

Geurt Gijssen

Paradise

I already mentioned in my previous *Notebook* that I was working in the Open Tournament in Dubai. The “old” Fischer modus was used: 40 moves in 100 minutes, then 20 moves in 50 minutes, 10 minutes to the finish of the game with an addition of 30 seconds per move from move 1. Until now, I had only experienced this time limit in the World Championships and the Olympiads, and generally there were no problems. In the Dubai Open there were several players, even grandmasters, and arbiters, who had no experience with this time limit. Normally I feel as if I am in paradise when this time limit is used. The job is quite easy: the players must write their moves during the whole game and claims based on Article 10.2 are not possible. It is in my opinion worthwhile to mention the problems I faced in this tournament using the Fischer modus.

First of all I would like to note that in case of a problem, the clocks must be stopped and the times shown on the clocks must be written down. This is very important.

It often happened that the players made more than 40 moves but 50 minutes had not been added at the end of the first period, i.e., after they had made their 40th move. The players, who were involved in such cases and also the arbiters, said immediately that there was something wrong with the clock. I checked the clocks and everything was OK. The next step was to replay the game and verify that the scoresheets were correct. What then was the problem? Very simple, it very often happened that the players had not pressed the clock at all or they had pressed the clocks so lightly that the clock did not register and the move not counted. The next question is how the problem must be solved. Generally it is recommended to replace a clock or to change something in the data of a clock immediately after a black move. Wait until the time is added and change then the number of moves on the clock. If, for instance, 43 moves were completed, change the number of moves for the second period to 17.

The matter is more complicated and even dangerous when the scoresheets show 39 moves and White has had already 50 minutes added. What are the possibilities?

(1) The scoresheets are wrong. Instead of 39 moves, White has already played 40 moves. In this case the arbiter shall order the player(s) to correct the scoresheets and the players shall continue the game. By the way, it is the duty of the arbiter to check the scoresheets regularly. It happens quite often that players do not write a move. It is the duty of the arbiter to point out that the players write all moves. (2) After the game was replayed on another board, it is clear that the scoresheets are correct and only 39 moves were played. This is the most dangerous situation and we had this case in Dubai several times. It is very likely that the players pressed the clocks without making a move or the clock was wrongly installed. The first reaction of almost everybody is that the game is lost for the player who received the extra 50 minutes for the second period. And I understand this reaction, but it is wrong.

I understand this misunderstanding. The explanation is the following: In the “old fashioned” time limit of 40 moves in 2 hours, then 20 moves in 1 hour and finally 30 minutes for the remaining moves, 1 hour is added at the end of the first period. This hour is added at the moment 2 hours has elapsed. It is the duty of the arbiter to check the number of moves completed by the player. If it is less than 40 moves, the game is lost, is it 40 or more the game will be continued. In the Fischer modus it is different. 50 minutes are added after 40 presses of the clock. It happens very often that White has not used all his time in the first time period. The time saved during the first period is then added to the time available for the second period. The best method is to correct the number of moves for the first period in the (new) clock using the remaining time for the first period.

Other cases: (1) It happened a few times that both scoresheets showed 40 moves for White and Black, but the clock showed that White had overstepped the time limit. The players and the arbiters had not noticed when exactly White's flag fell. There are several possibilities: White's flag fell after he had made his 40th move, but before he had pressed his clock. Nevertheless White

pressed his clock, Black completed his 40th move and then the arbiter saw White's flag down. We could only guess that this probably has happened, but had no proof. I decided that the game must be continued. (2) White's flag was down before Black completed (i.e. made his move and pressed his clock) his 40th move. This is the simplest case: Black wins the game. (3) Black's flag was down before White completed his 41st move. Also clear: White wins the game.

We used in Dubai a scoresheet that I do not like very much. The bottom of the scoresheets looks like this:

19			39			59		
20			40			60		

I think that
the reader

can guess what happened. Several chess players wrote the 21st move on the bottom line. And although I warned the chess players to take care, they nevertheless continued to write the 21st move in the wrong place.

Another issue are ringing mobile (cell) phones: In my previous *Notebook* I already stated what I had in mind: (1) Before each round I tell the players that they have to switch off their mobiles. (2) When a player's phone rings for the first time, I give an official warning; if it happens a second time, I declare the game lost.

I acted in Dubai accordingly and I am happy to inform the readers that the message before the start of each round worked perfectly. None of the players' mobiles rang in Dubai. From time to time a spectator's mobile rang. When it happened, these spectators felt very uncomfortable and disappeared immediately from the playing hall.

Another unusual item for many players and also for me was the "praying time". All rounds started at 17.00 hrs. The praying time started at 18.45 hrs. At that moment I announced the start of the praying time, requested the players to stop the clocks and to leave the playing hall. In the first round, some players were a little bit surprised, but from round 2 on, the players stopped the clocks immediately and left the hall when I made my announcement. After the players had left the hall, the arbiters checked all the clocks. After ten minutes I announced that the players could return to the playing hall. The arbiters restarted the clocks. Although the players did not complain about this break, the organisers themselves were not completely happy. Next year they will probably start at 19.00 hrs and in this case the new FIDE time limit is an option

The last item from the tournament was the fighting spirit, or rather the lack thereof. After 6 rounds some players were leading with a +4 score (5 out of 6). From that point, these players played only very short draws among each other. It is obvious that the organisers were not very amused. What is the solution to this problem? One possibility is an alternative scoring system, for instance 3 points for a win, 1 point for a draw and 0 for a lost game. But I am not sure that this is a solution, because when a player wins 4 games, the same situation shall occur. Another solution is probably that players with the same final score shall not share the money equally. In one of my next columns I may discuss this matter.

Question I give the following FIDE rule as the preface to my question: Rule 14 of Special FIDE Rules for BLITZ Chess. The game is won by the player (c) Whose opponent's flag falls first, at any time before the game is otherwise ended: [provided that] (ii) he has sufficient mating material. "Mating material requires that a position be possible where a mate in one is forced (opponent to move cannot avoid mate next move)". My question is this: White has King + RP/7th rank, and Black has King. Black's King is controlling the queening square. This is, of course, a position where black could ask for a draw based on Insufficient Losing Chances. But what if black's flag falls?

Does white have mating material as defined in the FIDE rule? With an unpromoted pawn (and one that will not be promoted) is there a position possible where a mate is forced? Now I know the argument that black might blunder and move away from the queening square, allowing white to promote, is a popular one. However, the spirit of the rules, as I understand them, is that no player should ever lose a game on time in a position that he would not otherwise lose over-the-board. As a second case, let us imagine that this position has arisen with black having, say, 20 minutes left on the clock. Black would not be allowed to claim Insufficient Losing Chances until he has less than five minutes. Should we require this type of position to continue, or could we intervene and

declare a draw? Could black be justified in asking us for a draw? I am of the notion that the answer to number 1 is that white does not have mating material, and that the answer to number 2 is that the game could be declared drawn. **Terry Winchester (USA)**

Answer Let me start with a question. Where did you find Rule 14 of Special FIDE Rules for Blitz Chess? The only text I know is the following Article C4 of Blitz games: *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.* By the way, this Article is valid until July 1, 2001. From July 1 we do not apply this Article at all.

Back to your question: First of all let us look to the position: White: Kh6 or g6, pawn on h7, and the Black king, controlling the queening square, must be on h8. Am I wrong? It is clear that the game is already finished, because with Black having the move, it is stalemate. And Black's flag can only fall if he has the move. Suppose it is White's move. To avoid stalemate the king has to move from the pawn and Black can take this pawn immediately, even without pressing the clock, and the game is drawn, because none of the players has mating material.

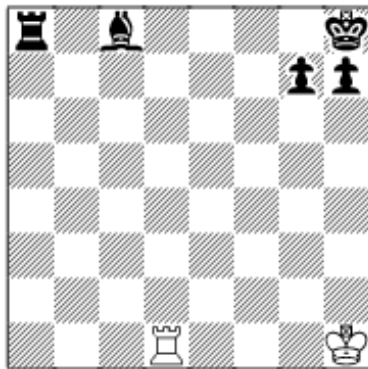
OK, your example is not the best one, but I understand what you mean: the position is a clear draw, one of the players is very short of time and the opponent is using this fact.

Let us start to look what should happen in a Blitz game. In fact, the arbiter has no power to take any decision and the player shall, when he oversteps the time, simply lose. And why not? In Blitz games the clock is a very important part of the game. The second case with 20 minutes left on the clock is different. This is not a Blitz game, but a Rapid game. In Rapid games Article 10.2 does apply. It means, that a player with less than 2 minutes on his clock, and not 5 minutes as you stipulated, may claim a draw.

Question Hello, my question is: "Is the use of chess clocks which continually display a move-counter (as, e.g., the "Excalibur" clock from the USA does) allowed? As far as I have read the "FIDE-Laws of Chess" there are not very explicit regarding this question !" **Claus van de Vlierd (Germany)**

Answer I quote Article 6.14 of the current Laws of Chess:

Screens, monitors, or demonstration boards showing the current position on the chessboard, the moves and the number of moves made, and clocks which also show the number of moves, are allowed in the playing hall. However, the player may not make any claim based on anything shown in this manner. It is clear that the clocks you described, are not forbidden, but claims made exclusively based on what these clocks show, are not valid.



Question Dear Mr. Gijssen, I have the following question: I was arbiter in a Blitz tournament. The FIDE Laws of Chess Appendix C were applied. I watched a game and the position was as shown at left. The continuation was: 1. Rd8+ Bb7+ 2. Rxh8 (taking the King). Black said: "It is forbidden to take the King; you must claim an illegal move."

I have two questions: (1) At which moment is a game finished? (2) What is the result of this game?

I tried to answer this question; there are two possibilities: (a) Mate finishes the game immediately (art. 5.1a). What happens afterwards, (I mean after the game) is irrelevant.

Therefore: (a) The game finished after 1. Rd8 # 1-0; *but* (b) In a blitz game the arbiter does not do anything and waits for the players to tell him the result. The opponent must, for instance, claim the illegal move, because there is no role for the arbiter. If the opponent does not claim and he makes a move, the game continues. It is unclear whether taking the King must be considered as an illegal move, therefore: Draw.

In my opinion the correct answer is based on the presence of the arbiter, who watched the game. And apparently his presence (sometimes by coincidence) is decisive. This is contrary to the general rule that the arbiter does not play a role in a Blitz game. **Piet Koster (The Netherlands)**

Answer Let me start with a general remark, not only related to Rapid and Blitz games, but also to "normal" games. The Laws of Chess are written for situations in which we have two players, one board and one chessclock and an arbiter who is constantly watching. I know that this is almost never the case, but nevertheless they describe this ideal situation. A long time ago, we had even in world championship matches three arbiters who watched one game, and even in this very ideal situation the arbiters missed things.

Now to your question: Does mate finish a blitz game and is the arbiter allowed to interfere in case of mate? In "normal" games the arbiter has this right; it is even his duty to interfere when a player is checkmated. From the Laws of Chess for "normal" games I go to Rapid games.

In Rapid games we apply the same Laws of Chess with some exceptions: players do not need to write the moves; only after a claim shall an arbiter make a ruling according to Article 4 (the act of moving the pieces, touching the pieces); Article 10 (Quickplay finish and illegal moves); and the arbiter may not call a flag fall. In Blitz games we apply the Laws of Rapid games with some exceptions: an illegal move cannot be corrected after the opponent has made his move and a player can claim a win after the opponent has made an illegal move, but before he himself has made a move.

Neither in the Rapid or Blitz Laws, I see an Article that there is an exception in case of checkmate. Apparently checkmate finishes the game immediately and as far as I can see the arbiter may interfere. I understand your ambiguous feeling that there is probably something wrong, because the arbiter cannot control all games, but, nevertheless, these are the Laws.

Question The following question has arisen regarding a computer-pairing program. Consider the example where four players are to be paired:

1 v 3 and 2 v 4 (actually 4 v 2 for colours). Player 2 and 4 have previously played each other so the next logical provisional pairing should be: 1 v 4 and 2 v 3 (player 3 must be Black to avoid 3 Whites in a row). Unfortunately, this pairing leaves two players without the colours they are due. By swapping players 2 and 4, all players get their due colour, but this means swapping between top half (S1) and bottom half (S2) of the pairing group. There is a large rating difference between player 2 and player 4. The computer program made the swap and paired: 1 v 2, 4 v 3

Do you believe that exchanges for colour should only be made within the lower half (S2) of the score group? Or do you believe that exchanges, to balance colours, should also be made liberally between S1 and S2, irrespective of the difference in rating between the exchanged players?

I understand that in the previous pairing rules a rating difference of 100pts was used when applying "Maxi-Swiss" rules, but the new pairing rules make no such provision. I personally think it is incorrect to exchange between S1 and S2 unless there is strong justification for doing this, since the basic principle of the Swiss pairing system is "top half vs. bottom half" but perhaps I am incorrect and I would like to hear your thoughts. **IA Gary Bekker (Australia)**

Answer First of all, I would like to point out that it is impossible to speak about *the* Swiss system. There are many Swiss systems and the organiser has to announce in advance which system and also which computer program he will use in the tournament. An example why this is important: In the FIDE Handbook there are two Swiss systems worked out: one is called Swiss System Based on Rating (also called the Dutch System) and one called Regulations for Swiss System Tournaments (short title: FIDE Swiss Rules). The difference between these two systems, in a tournament with 6 players, is as follows:

	Dutch System	FIDE System
1	1-4, 2-5, 3-6	1-4, 2-5, 3-6
2	1-4, 2-6, 3-5	1-4, 2-6, 3-5
3	1-5, 2-4, 3-6	1-4, 2-3, 5-6
4	1-5, 2-6, 3-4	1-5, 2-4, 3-6
5	1-6, 2-4, 3-5	1-5, 2-6, 3-4
6	1-6, 2-5, 3-4	1-5, 2-3, 4-6
7	1-3, 2-5, 4-6	1-6, 2-4, 3-5
8	1-3, 2-6, 4-5	1-6, 2-5, 3-4
9	1-5, 2-3, 4-6	1-6, 2-3, 4-5
10	1-6, 2-3, 4-5	1-3, 2-5, 4-6

11	1-3, 2-4, 5-6	1-3, 2-6, 4-5
12	1-4, 2-3, 5-6	1-3, 2-4, 5-6
13	1-2, 3-5, 4-6	1-2, 3-5, 4-6
14	1-2, 3-6, 4-5	1-2, 3-6, 4-5
15	1-2, 3-4, 5-6	1-2, 3-4, 5-6

In both systems we start trying to make the pairings according to row 1. If this is not possible we try row 2 and so on. And as the reader can see, already in row 3 there is a difference between the two systems. Therefore it is very important to announce in advance which system will be used and the players will be able to check the pairings.

Mr. Bekker objects to the fact that due to colours, there is an exchange between the first half, called S1, and second half of the group, called S2. In our example #1, #2 and #3 are in S1, #4, #5 and #6 are in S2. Well, I am not against these exchanges. I am sure that players much prefer the alternating or equalising of colours; they are especially unhappy when they have two blacks in a row. I will remember forever the face of the late GM Bagirov when this happened to him. He never complained verbally, but his face said enough. I would like to add something else: the ratings are used to make the pairings, but they are only used to be sure that the pairings are not made at random and that players can check them. Last remark: the players in a score group, this is a group of players with the same score, have proved that they have in the actual tournament more or less the same strength. Why not to pair them among each other?

Question Hi Geurt, Recently I had a problem in our Flemish Chess Federation. It had to do with a bye in an open Swiss tournament. In the FIDE regulations it is written that in case of an odd number of participants, one player receives a bye and for this bye a full point. In a competition between 17 school teams with 4 players per team the arbiter applied this rule and awarded 4 points to the team that did not play. The ranking was based on game points and not match points. A captain of another team complained and informed the arbiter that in the Olympiad in case of a bye only two points are awarded. I have the following questions: (1) Does this really happen in the Olympiad? (2) If the answer is "Yes", on which regulation is it based? In my opinion it conflicts with Reg A5 of Swiss Rules in the FIDE Handbook. Am I right? (3) Do we need to change our decision and in case of a bye to give only 2 points instead of 4? **Gunter Deleyn (Belgium)**

Answer (1) Yes, it happens in the Olympiad. (2) It is based on the Olympiad Pairing Rules. See D.II.07a-page 2, chapter E. I quote the regulations: "If there is an odd number of teams a bye should be given to one team which arbitrarily would be credited with 2 game points (men's teams) and 1½ points (women's teams). It is not in conflict with Reg A5 of Swiss Rules in the FIDE Handbook. In the Swiss Rules the pairings of individual and not team competitions are described. The problem is that there are not official FIDE regulations for Swiss team tournaments. This means each organiser of such a competition may make his own rules. It is in my opinion quite reasonable to give only 2 points if a team has 4 members. If 4 points are given, the jump is in my opinion too big. (3) I am not sure that you have to change your decision, because I do not know the regulations of your tournament. It is advisable to change the regulations for future team tournaments regarding byes. One final remark: if a team wins by forfeit (the paired opponent did not show up) 4 points will be given.

Question Could you please comment on the possible actions that the TD could have taken in the following situation: In a recent tournament, two of the highest rated players, also friends, arrived for the third round of a four-round tournament a half-hour late, paired against each other. Before setting up a board, they checked the other top boards, and proceeded to score a draw on the wall sheet without ever having set up the board. The TD called them on it, and required that they play, leading to a quick draw that was then scored. The players went on to share first-second prize. **David Howard (USA)**

Answer (1) Article 5.3 states: *The game is drawn upon agreement between the players during the game. This immediately ends the game.* (2) Article 12.1 (old version): *High standards of etiquette are expected of the players.* (3) Article 12.1 (new version, from July 1, 2001): *The players shall take no action that will bring the game of chess into disrepute.*

I gave both versions of Article 12.1. The meaning of both versions is the same, but the new wording is much clearer than the old version. In my opinion the two players took an action as described in Article 12.1; moreover the agreement was not taken during the game for the simple

reason that there was no game at all. In my opinion there is only one decision possible: the arbiter, or as you call him, the TD, should declare the game 0-0 (lost for both players).

Question Dear Mr Gijssen, I have two questions, one concerning the beginning of a game and the other one concerning the threefold repetition of a position. (1) When does a tournament game of chess start? To understand the reason for this question, I'd like to give you some background. In the last round of a recent tournament, the white clocks were started (either by the arbiter or the player with the black pieces). The player with the white pieces came, wrote his name and the opponent's name in the scoresheet and offered a draw. Black refused and White then said that he (White) would lose then the game by forfeit so that he could protect his rating. The game was ruled to be lost by time and not by forfeit because White had appeared at the board and obviously noted that his time was running. Was this ruling correct (of course, White was more than unhappy with that decision)? When does a game of chess start, then? Is it at the point, when one has filled in the scoresheet or when one has greeted his opponent or when one has made a move or when the arbiter declares the start of the game or something else? If the decision would have been correct, what should White have done to achieve his goal (i.e. to lose the game by forfeit)?

Answer What do the regulations say? I started to look in the FIDE Rating Regulations. There is a small chapter, called "Unplayed games": *Whether these occur because of forfeiture or any other reason, they are not counted.* It means that they are not counted for rating calculations.

Article 6.6 of the Laws of Chess says: *The player shall lose the game if he arrives at the chessboard more than one hour after the scheduled start of the session unless the rules of the competition specify or the arbiter decides otherwise.*

One thing is immediately clear: if a player does not appear within one hour after the start of the playing session, he loses the game by forfeit. After some discussions with other arbiters, I have also concluded that there is a game at the moment both players have appeared at the chessboard within one hour after the scheduled start of the session. It is not relevant whether or not they have made any moves. A player has the right to think for more than 2 hours for his first move and would in this case lose his game on time. In my opinion the decision of the arbiter was correct.

Your second question is: What should White have done to achieve this goal to lose the game by forfeit? I do not think it is appropriate to answer to this question.

Note: The questions of Messrs. Howard and Eisengraeber are very interesting. And when I read again my answers to these two questions, I have the feeling I am not consistent. In my answer to Mr. Howard's question, I speak about an agreement during the game and when I answered like I did, I really had in mind that some moves were played. In my answer to Mr. Eisengraeber's question I consider "during the game" as the time from the moment that both players appeared at the chessboard. This means, even when they did not play any moves, that the game is in progress and the players may agree to a draw. I agree that there is a little discrepancy in my two answers. Nevertheless, I am of the opinion that both answers are correct. In the situation described by Mr. Howard, the players bring the game of chess in disrepute.

Actually, I have to admit that it is not easy for an arbiter to punish players so strongly. I never punished any player for such behaviour, although I was several times a witness when players during breakfast agreed to a draw. But in all these cases they played about 10 moves and agreed then to a draw. I wait for reactions of my dear colleagues in this matter.

Question When a player claims a threefold repetition of a position he has to have the move. In the same tournament, a game was in the phase of quickplay finish. White was claiming a draw because of a threefold repetition of a position. Black urged him to make a move. White made a move and stopped the clocks to call the arbiter. An assistant was there to record the moves, which showed the threefold repetition of the position. Both players were in time trouble. The arbiter decided that the game was a draw, because White had already made the necessary claim before he made a move (actually, he was urged to make this move). Black was not content with that decision. The tournament director was called and he also decided that the game was drawn. But he said that White had not completed his move. Therefore, the position had just appeared for the third time (FIDE 9.2b) and the claimant had still the move. My question now is: Is the draw the correct decision and, if yes, what would be the correct reason for this decision? **Axel Eisengraeber (Germany)**

Answer Many things went wrong in this game. Let me try to reconstruct the facts and to give my comments.

Both players are in time trouble and do not write the moves. The arbiter sends an assistant to write the moves. (Excellent!) White claims a draw because of threefold repetition of position. (It is not clear to me that his next move produced the repetition or that the threefold repetition had already appeared). Black starts to talk to his opponent and tells him to make a move. (The assistant does not interfere. He should stop Black immediately and tell him that he may not talk to his opponent) White does not know what to do and decides to make the intended (?) move, stops the clocks and claims again a draw. Black protests saying that only the player who has the move may claim a draw.

It is clear that the behaviour of Black was not correct and that the assistant arbiter also failed to act properly. It is also clear that White claimed a draw at the correct moment, but that he made a move under pressure of his opponent. This was a mistake. In fact he lost his right to claim a draw after he made his move. But considering the actions by Black, I would agree with the final decision of the Tournament Director, although the motivation for his decision is incorrect.

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.

Copyright 2001 Geurt Gijssen. All Rights Reserved.



[\[The Chess Cafe Home Page\]](#) [\[Book Reviews\]](#) [\[Bulletin Board\]](#) [\[Columnists\]](#)
[\[Endgame Studies\]](#) [\[The Skittles Room\]](#) [\[Archives\]](#)
[\[Links\]](#) [\[Online Bookstore\]](#) [\[About The Chess Cafe\]](#) [\[Contact Us\]](#)

Copyright 2001 CyberCafes, LLC. All Rights Reserved.
"The Chess Cafe®" is a registered trademark of Russell Enterprises, Inc.