



COLUMNISTS

An Arbiter's Notebook

Geurt Gijssen

The Laws Are Enacted

The final version of the Laws of Chess has been published by FIDE on the FIDE web site. How to find it? 1. Go to the FIDE web site: www.fide.com; 2. Click on Handbook; 3. Go to Chapter E.

Recently I was present at a seminar in Stuttgart (in southern Germany) for arbiters from Germany, Austria, Luxembourg and Switzerland. We discussed the changes of the Laws of Chess which went into effect on July 1, 2001. Article 10 was again one of the topics. But there was a lot of discussion about the Rapid and Blitz Rules. And I have to admit that there are some Articles that remain quite unclear. We shall discuss this in more detail in upcoming *Notebooks*. Generally the arbiters were happy with the new Laws of Chess, saying that they are shorter than before and closer to the practice of the game of chess.

Question Dear Mr. Gijssen, I have been reading the FIDE Handbook, section B01 5.5: The speed of play must not exceed 46 moves in two hours at any stage of the game except that a sudden death (quickplay finish) final time control of at least 30 minutes may be used in a tournament with games lasting at least seven hours. (GA '93) With electronic clocks, the speed of play must not exceed 46 moves in 2 hours at any stage of the game and an additional time of at least 15 seconds for every move from move 1 may be added. (GA '93). The rate of play of 40 moves in two hours followed by all the moves in one hour is permitted for title results. However, only one such result can be used in support of a title application. (GA '93)

I hope there is a typo in the second paragraph. Of course no quickplay finish is possible with a Fischer clock, nevertheless a rate of play that does not exceed 46 moves in 2 hours at any stage of the game would require an adjournment. Is there anything newer than that in the 2001 FIDE handbook?

The rate of play in the third paragraph is not very attractive now that our decisions for article 10.2 are final and without any appeal. Furthermore, only one norm can be based on tournaments using this "fast" time control. This restriction looks suspicious because the new FIDE time control is considerably faster than that. Title tournaments at the rate of play of 40 moves in 100 minutes followed by all moves in 40 (or 50) minutes with the addition of 30 seconds from move 1 would be appealing to a local organizer. Even 30 moves in 75 minutes followed by all moves in 40 (or 50) minutes would be good and is faster than the usual rate of play but this might be suspect for an International competition because players from my federation are used to this rate of play whereas those from other federations might be disturbed because the first time control is not 40 moves.

Unfortunately, the time limit of 40 moves in 75 minutes followed by all moves in 15 minutes has very few supporters locally: the only Canadian tournament in which this rate of play is scheduled to be used is the FIDE Zonal. There is a real need for a rate of play valid for International Title tournaments that uses the addition of 30 seconds after each move, that supports games of expected length between five and six hours and that does not require the use of outmoded adjournments.

It looks like if a title tournament were to be run tomorrow and the organizer and the players wanted to use a clock that adds 30 seconds after each move (a very sensible decision in view of the impossibility to appeal article 10.2 decision), it wouldn't be legal to use any other rate of play than the official FIDE rate of play. **Pierre Dénomée (Canada)**

Answer 1. Using any Fischer modus, that Article will not apply. 2. When the FIDE board in Tehran, December 2000, made the decision about the new time limit, it was overlooked that the Title and Rating Regulations must be changed. 3. I understand that during the FIDE board meeting in Dubai, June 30, 2001, a committee was appointed to reconsider the new time limit. 4. Any organizer who prefers a time limit set forth in the FIDE Handbook may use it.

From June 20 until June 30, 2001 I was the organizer of the Dutch National Championships for men and women. The time limit in these tournaments was 40 moves in 2 hours, then 20 moves in

1 hour and 30 minutes for the remaining moves. After the European Championship with the new time limit it was quite difficult for me to work with this "old" time limit. And if it is difficult for me, how difficult will it be for chessplayers themselves. I think, as a matter of respect to chessplayers worldwide, the time limit should be made uniform.

Question I have a question that I hope that you will be able to resolve. Our chess club runs USCF-rated scholastic tournaments. We have several sections with different levels of skilled players. Here is a problem that I hope that you are able to resolve because I was not able to find anything specifically related to the following scenario in the rulebook.

Player #1 makes a strong move with a piece and announces checkmate. Player #2 is not sure if it is a checkmate and asks a tournament official to come over to their table and asks the tournament official if it is a mate or not. The tournament official looks it over and realizes that it is not a mate and mentions it is not. Now the first player is upset because he feels that if the tournament official had said nothing, then player #2 might have resigned not knowing that there was a saving move that forces player #1 to lose the potential mating piece. Now that player #2 knows that it is not a checkmate, he will look for the saving move, something that he would not have done had the tournament official not said anything.

Should the tournament official simply not say anything whether or not it is a checkmate and thus force the players to decide on their own whether or not it is a checkmate. The tournament official saying anything either way is thus affecting the match. How would you rule on this? **Jose Olivera Jr. (USA)**

Answer The question is very interesting and has a lot of aspects. Officially there is no difference between a game between two schoolboys, who just learned to play chess and a game between two professionals. In practice there are of course differences. A chess professional would never announce that he has mated his opponent although I understand fully that this happens at the level of beginners. As I have mentioned many times before, arbiters should realize that they have also a teaching job for beginners.

Now the answer to your question: A player who announces mate when it is not so disturbs his opponent, although he does not intend to disturb him. In addition it is one of the duties of an arbiter to investigate whether a game has finished or not. I think it is clear that the arbiter did not make any mistake when he told the second (and the first) player that the game was not finished.

Question Dear Geurt, In a previous column you wrote: "It happens very often that during the game (even a few minutes after the start of the round) the captains start to speak to each other and inform the players to agree to draws. I am not happy with these kind of agreements, but according to the regulations of team matches, the captains are allowed to do so." My question is: are they really allowed to do so? Where is this written? Certainly nowhere in the rules for Danish team matches! If your statement is true I am very surprised, because in my view this is in direct conflict with the FIDE laws article 9.1 which states: "No conditions can be attached to the offer" (of a draw). It seems to me that the offer a multiple draw is very much to attach conditions to each draw offer! **Lau Bjerno (Denmark)**

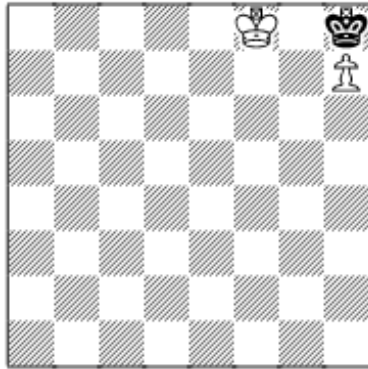
Answer I quote Article 6.3.9.4 of the Regulations of the Chess Olympiad: "*During the games the captain must refrain from interfering in any way. He is, however, entitled to advise his players on the offering or accepting of draws or resigning of games, provided that he makes no comment on the actual position on the chessboard, and confines himself to giving brief information which can in no way be construed as an opinion about the progress of the game. The exchange between captain and player must take place in the presence of a controller.*"

In the Tournament Rules there is some clarification. I quote from the Tournament Rules:

"He (the captain) may say to a player "offer a draw", "accept the draw" or "resign the game". For example, if asked by a player whether he should accept an offer of a draw, the captain should answer "yes", "no" or delegate the decision to the player himself."

Question Mr. Gijssen: My question has perhaps been asked before. Not having seen it (or another like it), I ask it anyway: What kind of impact would disallowing the option to draw by agreement have on chess? Considering that a draw by repetition would still be allowed, would there be any significant changes in results? **Jason Lippert (Germany)**

Answer Of course, it is impossible to prove that I am right, but I think there would be no difference in results at grandmaster and master levels. If it were impossible to agree a draw, I am sure that the players would finish their games by repetition of position. There were many tries in the past to avoid quick draws. I remember a period in which draws before move 30 were forbidden, but players found a lot of tricks to do what they liked to do. See also my article about the 1924 New York Tournament (in the [ChessCafe.com](#) Archives).



Question Dear Mr. Gijssen, In your last column you answered a question about a flag fall; do you agree with me that in this position, when black oversteps the time it's still a draw? This because the only legal move that black can make will lead to a position with only two kings on the board. **Jos Vlak (The Netherlands)**

Answer Relevant for the answer is a part of Article 6.10: *“If a player does not complete the prescribed number of moves in the allotted time, the game is lost by the player.”*

It seems that the position is apparently irrelevant. Flag falling means loss of the game. But, there is a second, very important sentence of this Article. I quote: *“However, the game is drawn, if the position is such that the opponent cannot checkmate the player’s king by any possible series of legal moves, even with the most unskilled counter-play.”*

Well, this sentence makes it clear that a flag fall does not always mean that the game is lost. The position mentioned in the question is such that White has no chance to win the game; therefore the game is drawn. I agree with your conclusion. One final remark: this position is an excellent example for arbiters’ courses.

Question Dear Geurt, Pierre Dénomée asked about computerisation of the Dubov System. You made no comment. I have not heard of any official or unofficial computerised version that exists, apart from Christian Krause who has an experimental version on his PROSIM disc. This is not available to the general public. I have not investigated the tournament chart for the European Championship. Did you observe, or seek to observe, whether anybody was disadvantaged in the pairings, as I believed would be possible? This would most likely have happened to players at the top of the second half of the original draw, especially if they drew a number of early games. **Stewart Reuben (England)**

Answer You are talking in your question about two things: (1) Dubov system; (2) the fairness of the pairings in Ohrid. I was wondering, is there any connection between these two questions? Or, to be direct, do you prefer the Dubov system for this type of tournaments?

Back to your questions. As far as I know, there is no computer program of the Dubov system. I know also that Christian Krause, Chairman of the Pairings Committee of FIDE, has an experimental version of it and is testing it.

Regarding your second question I can give you the following information. 203 players played in this tournament. I calculated the average ratings of the opponents of the players with ranking number 1 –25, 26 – 50, 51 – 75 and so on. The results are as follows:

Ranking numbers	Average ratings opponents	Number of qualifiers
1-25	2547	20
26-50	2532	13
51-75	2532	9
76-100	2540	3
101-125	2525	5
126-150	2527	1
151-175	2516	0
176-203	2461	0

I have to add that the players who already qualified based on their ELO rating (5) are included in column 3. Their ranking numbers are in the group 1 –25. The group with ranking numbers 76 – 100 played a difficult tournament and as you can see in the table, the group with ranking numbers

101 –125 had an easier tournament, with even 5 qualifiers.

Question According to the Laws of Chess, in Blitz games, after one of the players makes an illegal move and presses his clock, his opponent may stop the clock and claim a win. However it is not clear to me what happens when the player makes an illegal move (e.g. plays Ng1-f4 or leaves his King under check or moves his King to a square that is under attack, and so on...) but realizes it before pressing his clock. I don't know if this question has been raised before.

During a recent blitz tournament in which I acted as a TD, the rule that I used was that if a player makes an illegal move (any of the cases I described above) but realizes it before pressing his clock he is free to take it back. If the touched piece can make a legal move then the player should make a move with this piece otherwise he is free to make any other legal move. I know that there are some unclear points here, e.g., what if the player makes an illegal capture with a piece that cannot move. Can the player make another move with another piece or should he capture the piece with a legal move? What is your opinion on this? **Dimitris Skyrianoglou (Greece)**

Answer I quote from the Laws of Chess a part of Article C3. This Article belongs to the Blitz Rules: *“An illegal move is completed once the opponent’s clock has been started. However, the opponent is entitled to claim a win before making his own move.”* Apparently a player may correct an illegal move before he stops his own clock and starts his opponent’s clock. What if a player touched a piece, takes an opponent’s piece and then discovers the move is illegal? I quote a part of Article 4 of the Laws of Chess:

“If the player having the move deliberately touches on the chessboard a. one or more of his own pieces, he must move the first piece touched that can be moved, or b. one or more of his opponent’s pieces, he must capture the first piece touched, which can be captured c. one piece of each colour, he must capture the opponent’s piece with his piece or, if this is illegal, move or capture the first piece touched which can be moved or captured. If it is unclear, whether the player’s own piece or his opponent’s was touched first, the player’s own piece shall be considered to have been touched before his opponent’s.”

Question Dear Mr. Gijssen, We have a problem in our local Gauteng Chess League. The initial time control is at 40 moves, followed by a 15-min allegro finish. All FIDE rules apply except the following: "A team captain has the right to point out to his player that the time control has been reached, that the opponent's flag has fallen, or if an illegal move has been made." There is also a rule that if there is a dispute, the dispute is noted but the players complete the game. The League Director may rule on the dispute later.

In a very recent match Player X (White) was playing Player Y (Black - from my own team) and a time scramble occurred. Initially X had several more minutes than Y. Y had continued to keep score, even with only two minutes left, for the last approximately 16 moves - but X stopped when he had about 6 minutes left. With about a dozen or so moves to go the captain of X' team kept the score of the remainder of his player's game so that he would know if his player had reached the time control. Y himself was the captain of his team.

During the time scramble black shed a few pawns, as so often happens in such situations. Y stated that he saw X glance at his captain, who was next to him, during the time-scramble. After 40 moves (both flags were hanging) had been made, X said that the time control had been reached. Y said to him "How would you know?" upon which X indicated his captain's scoresheet next to him.

Y's teammates claimed that they saw X's captain write down the moves and allow his player free access to the scoresheet. The captain did not deny the accusation and stated that he was allowed to do what he did. It is the contention of Team Y that X would very likely have lost on time if he had not had his captain's scoresheet to refer to. The time that X would have had to take keeping score/ticking off the moves would have been sufficient to make the flag fall. FIDE rules also preclude a player getting outside assistance or reference to any notes. In other words, Team Y believe that Team X broke the rules and gained an unfair advantage. It has subsequently been discovered that the Captain of Team X had done this in a previous match against Team Z. The team Z player claimed that during a time-scramble the captain kept score for his player and allowed his player free access to the scoresheet. As in the latter example, the captain claimed that he was allowed to do this - perhaps one could say that a prudent captain would have ascertained whether he did in fact have these powers. The team Z player was not happy with the explanation, but did not pursue it further.

Team X maintains that its captain was allowed to do what he did. It has been put forward that the Team captain, in effect, becomes the Arbiter and can therefore do what he did. Team X maintains that even if he does become the Arbiter, the Arbiter only has the right to point out when the time control has been reached or when a flag has fallen. There is a precedent in the League for defaulting a player for interfering with a teammates' game. This happened when a player was given a zero for claiming a win on time for one of his teammates. Thus team Y is claiming a win because of outside interference. We would be grateful if you would give us your opinion and what action you would take (if any). Please let us have your opinion as soon as possible as an appeal has been sent to the League and the matter may be discussed shortly. **Laurence Ball (South Africa)**

Answer To be honest, the rules in your competition are very strange. As you wrote in your letter, a team captain has much more rights than mentioned in the FIDE Tournament Regulations: 1. He may inform the players that they reached the time control; 2. He may inform his player that the opponent overstepped the time; 3. He may inform the player of his team that the opponent made an illegal move.

The first case is especially strange. Not even an arbiter may do this. Regarding #2 and #3, it is not completely unreasonable, because the arbiter has the same rights. If both captains are doing so, they act more or less as a team of arbiters. With the regulations used in your competition, it is clear that the games cannot be calculated for FIDE rating.

If a tournament is not FIDE rated, each federation or organizer may make his own regulations. And apparently this is what happened in the Gauteng Chess League. In your league, the captain may give notice to his players that 40 moves haven been completed. In your League there is also a rule that a player, having less than 5 minutes, does not have to record the moves. This means, in my opinion, that the captain has the right to record the moves and at the moment a player completes 40 moves, the captain may inform his player. The conduct is more questionable if and when he informs his player after each move how many moves have been made.

The main problem is that you have your own rules. At one moment you state that help from the captain is permitted, and later you state that outside interference is not permitted. In my opinion there is only one solution: from now on you should play according to the FIDE Laws of Chess, and the captain of the home team, who may not be a playing captain, is the arbiter.

Question In a recent tournament player A - who had the white pieces - was present and his opponent B was late for the beginning of the game. Instead of making the first move on the board he only wrote it on his scoresheet. I asked why he did not made the move on the board and he told me that the arbiter told him it was not necessary and that he only had to show the scoresheet to him. I would like to know if this is correct because he could change his mind and cross the move and make another one. **David Borensztajn (Brazil)**

Answer You are right. There is nothing written in the Laws of Chess that the player should not to make the move, but should only write it down. On the other hand it is not unreasonable that the move should only be written down, but in that case the move should be sealed. Then it cannot be changed.

Question Dear Mr. Gijssen, I'd like to comment on a question from Mr. Sauberli. He asked what the purpose was of modifying Article 4.6, which now says that a player loses his right to claim a draw once he has "touched" a piece deliberately. In my opinion, this rule can for instance be applied when the player touches a piece, then realizes he was going to play a bad move, puts the piece back in place (he hasn't yet violated the touch move rule, since he hasn't played), and thinks further about his move. At that time, he can no longer claim a draw. That's, at least my understanding. **Damien André (Belgium)**

Answer About what we are talking? A player touches a piece and moves another one? At that moment the opponent may claim that the player must play the piece that was touched first. If the opponent does not claim this, then the fact that the player played another one is of no consequence. The question is only: How long does the opponent have to make a claim? Is it one move or can he wait for 5 moves or must he do it immediately? The Rules Committee decided to make it very clear how long the opponent may make the claim. The result of discussions in the Rules Committee was: the opponent has the right to claim before he himself touches a piece with the intention of moving this piece. By the way, when an arbiter sees a player touching a piece but

then moving another, he should interfere immediately.

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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