



COLUMNISTS

An Arbiter's Notebook Geurt Gijssen

Do You Know the Time Limit?

During a seminar in Stuttgart (Germany) I discussed the Laws of Chess with arbiters from Germany, Austria, Switzerland and Luxembourg. One of the questions we discussed was the role of the arbiter in Rapid and Blitz chess. It is clearly written in the new Laws of Chess that the arbiter shall not signal a flag fall. What happens in case of an illegal move? The Blitz rules are clear. At the moment a player completes an illegal move (this means that he has made his move and pressed his clock) the opponent is entitled to claim a win before making his own move.

But the situation in Rapid chess is not so clear. Article B5(b) says: *"The player loses the right to claim according to Articles 7.2, 7.3 and 7.5 (Irregularities, illegal moves) once he has touched a piece according to Article 4.3."*

I agree with everybody that it is very unclear what this means exactly. In the Laws of "normal" Chess it is not written that an illegal move must be claimed. It is written that you have to return to the position before the illegal move was made. And it is not mentioned what the arbiter has to do. It is also not important who discovered the illegal move.

Let us go to the Laws of Rapid Chess. Apparently the opponent must claim an illegal move. But what happens if the arbiter observes an illegal move? I put this question to the meeting of the Rules Committee during the FIDE Congress in Halkidiki (Greece). We had a quite long discussion about this. The final result was as follows, and I quote the minutes: *"It was unanimously agreed the arbiter must not interfere with such moves. Federations are asked to circulate this to arbiters."*

The matter is in my opinion clarified: **When the arbiter in a Rapid game sees an illegal move, he shall not interfere.** Not only the flag fall, but also noticing illegal moves is the exclusive right of the players themselves. Only after a claim does the arbiter get involved.

Dear Mr. Gijssen, I read with great interest your column in **ChessCafe.com** of August 15th. Let me explain the background. In July of this year I made a submission to FIDE that the current limit is cumbersome, that the (useless) 40-move control should be dropped and that serious games should be played with a 'pure' Fischer mode of a base time plus an increment of 30 seconds from the start. For your interest I append a copy of this submission.

I was delighted to see in your column that you had in bold letters suggested the exact same thing! The only difference was that I suggested some flexibility in the base time. Maybe a 90-minute start (+ 30 seconds) would allow for two games in a day. No matter, we are clearly on the same wavelength.

I did not get a reply from FIDE on the letter below, however I did from Stewart Reuben (whom I copied) who said: "As far as I am concerned, the problem of having just one time control is solely that players will sit around and use all their time until the last moment. This would be very boring for spectators. There is an element of nannyism in having the 40 move control and I fully recognise that."

Frankly I find this reasoning most unconvincing, as does everybody else that I quote it to. Even if it were true (which I doubt), what spectators are we discussing? A TV broadcast of a 4-hour game? This is unheard of. The very many difficulties with the 40 move control - including, as you point out, the frequency with which the clocks can become out of sync with actual moves played - surely outway this 'spectator element', if there is one. We pay too high a price for this 'nannyism'.

At the moment in Australia the pure Fischer mode is being used everywhere. The Australian Masters used 2hours + 30 seconds, I recently played a 30 min + 30 seconds weekender; another next month will use 40 minutes + 30 seconds and so on.

As I have said, the base time is fine-tuned to the circumstances of the tournament. These

tournaments work like a dream; so much nonsense is gone, people just sit down and play chess.

I gather FIDE will shortly be making a decision with regard to the time control. Let us hope that they will drop the anachronistic 40-moves control once and for all. **Roland Brockman (Australia)**

To the FIDE Secretariat,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

The new standard time control (40 moves in 75 min, then 15 min to finish with 30 sec. increment from the start) is a very sound one, however I think it can be improved further. For many years now I have been campaigning against the guillotine finish (when ALL moves have to be completed in a set time), mainly because it is quite impossible to stop players attempting to win on time: see for example my article NIC (8/95). The current limit, which has the 30-second increment throughout, completely solves this problem.

With the proliferation of the DGT, increments of some form or another are being ever more widely used and this is an excellent thing. With the problems of the guillotine finish now becoming a thing of the past, perhaps it is time to examine the 40-move time control and its place in things. The DGT when set to the current official limit will count the moves played so that it knows when to add the 15 minutes. Unfortunately there are many ways, in which this can get out of sync, e.g.: a neighboring player accidentally presses your clock instead of his, an illegal move is played etc. etc. All of this is a nuisance to fix up and we ought to re-examine why we need a control at move 40 or indeed anywhere.

The time control at move 40 or elsewhere was introduced in the days of adjournments. One couldn't allow players to reach a complicated position at (say) move 12 and suddenly call for an adjournment! Hence a minimum number of moves before adjournment had to be set. Now of course adjournments are a thing of the past and it is suddenly apparent that the 40 moves control serves no purpose whatsoever except to complicate things for everybody!

I strongly support the pure Fischer mode (a fixed time, plus an increment from move one and that's all) and suggest that it be adopted as the standard. The most sensible increment is 30 seconds, since this enables all games to be fully recorded by the players. The base time could be a bit flexible. Perhaps organisers could fine-tune this, within guidelines supplied by FIDE, to suit their schedule and circumstances. A minimum of 90 minutes for a serious game seems sensible.

The advantages of a limit such as this are immediately apparent:

- (i) Undignified time scrambles are a thing of the past;
- (ii) Games can be fully recorded (by the players not the arbiters!) with obvious benefits;
- (iii) There are no longer any arguments about whether 40 moves have been reached;
- (iv) The concept of playing to win on time vanishes all together; and
- (v) The time control is simple for everybody, players, arbiters, spectators, and organisers.

Since chess players are creatures of habit, one has to ask whether players are ready to drop the 40-move control that they have grown up with. Recent experience in Australia suggests that they are, the pure Fischer mode seems to be catching on like wildfire over here with many clubs and established tournaments switching over to it. I played in one quite recently. There was one problem I found; namely that inexperienced people setting the clock on mode 23 sometimes don't realise that the increment has to be set twice (i.e. for both players). That aside however the tournament in question ran exceptionally smoothly; with a minimum of fuss people just sat down and played chess.

Hence the advantages of the pure Fischer mode are not just theoretical, they are proven in practice and both players and organisers have shown that they are ready for it. The time has well and truly come to drop the control at move 40. The pure Fischer mode restores the clock to where it should be something that regulates the length of the game but does not become part of the game itself. Under the pure Fischer mode the game of chess is restored to what it was always supposed to be; a dignified intellectual contest in which the only way to win is to checkmate your opponent.

I trust that you will find the above comments useful. Please feel free to publish or circulate the above as you see fit.

Best Regards, **Roland Brockman (Australia)**

My comment In fact, I have not too much to add to Mr. Brockman's letter. We both agree that the Fischer modus is the ideal modus for chess on a professional level. I would like to add that in all tournaments with the Fischer modus games lost by overstepping the time limit are very rare. With a new time limit 75 minutes for 40 moves with an increment of 30 seconds, the player has in fact $75 + 40 \times 0.5$ minutes = 95 minutes = 1 hour and 35 minutes instead of 2 hours as in the old system. Although the players have less time, the number of games decided by overstepping the time is less. And this is in my opinion very remarkable.

When we go to one period of, e.g., two hours with an increment of 30 seconds per move from move 1, then we need for a 60-move game a maximum of 5 hours. In this case we have to consider whether two games a day is possible or not. I would like to suggest 3 games in 2 days. It saves some money for the organisers and the chessplayers have the opportunity to play in more tournaments.

Latest news During the meeting of the Executive Board of FIDE in Greece the following decisions were taken:

1. For the World Championships to be organised in Moscow the time limit of 40 moves in 75 minutes, then the remaining moves in 15 minutes with an increment of 30 seconds per move from move 1 will be applied.
2. In 2002 the aforementioned time limit of 90 minutes for the whole game with the same increment will be used for events organised by FIDE or organised on behalf of FIDE. For the Olympiad the 90-minute time limit will be used.
3. During the FIDE Congress in Bled (at the time as the Olympiad) the General Assembly will make a final decision. This decision will be based on the experiences with both time limits during the year 2002.
4. It was also agreed that 3 games in 2 days are permitted. This means that tournaments played according to the schedule 2-1-2-1-2-1 and so on are valid for titles and rating calculations.
5. The Olympiad in Bled will be played according to the old schedule: 1 game per day.
6. Organizers of private tournaments are free to choose the time limit. As long as it is according to the regulations the rating changes will be calculated and title norms are valid.

Question Dear Geurt, As I have received some negative feedback on the impressions given by my letter on "mock resignation" type incidents I want to post a clarification. Both the folding of the scoresheet and the player believing his opponent had resigned occurred in the same case, at which I was present. In the other case, at which I was not present, I'm now told that everyone present including the opponent and the arbiters was aware that the player was simply trying to reduce his own time prior to attempting to "blitz out" the opponent, and no-one believed he was resigning. I still find this very strange as

- a. I cannot see why a player would willfully reduce their own time unless they wanted to evade the requirement to score
- b. It would seem to me that the player wishing to do this should sit still at the table instead of leaving the table and
- c. A player getting up out of his seat cannot know whether this will distract or annoy or not the opponent unless they know that opponent very well. All the same, it seems that in the second case the opponent was neither annoyed nor deceived and therefore it may be no issue under the Laws.

Kevin Bonham (Australia)

Question Mr. Gijssen: I feel that Kevin Bonham's question to you (in your last issue) misled you in some ways for it was not entirely complete. I quote Mr. Bonham's letter:

Player A was clearly losing on the board and had lots of time left but Player B was very short of time. While A's clock was running, A stood up, and walked away from the playing table without making any move. In one instance, A also shrugged his shoulders and put his scoresheet in his pocket. A did not, however, leave the 'playing area' in either case. Later, A returned to the table and started making moves, B having in at least one case assumed that A was resigning. In both

cases B noticed A's return, and B won the game.

It seems to me that both cases (particularly the one with A putting his scoresheet away) could create a reasonable belief that A was giving up the game (although in an unusual way), and therefore violated Articles 12.5 1 'It is forbidden to ... annoy the opponent in any manner whatsoever.' Do you agree?"

Mr. Bonham was talking about two seemingly like scenarios, but with a little difference. In one, Player A simply gets up and walks away from the board (Scenario 1). In the other, Player A did much the same except that he folds his scoresheet and puts it in his pocket (Scenario 2). I'm not really interested here in the latter scenario. I'd like to talk about Scenario 1.

I personally witnessed Scenario 1. In fact, I mentioned it in my report of a weekender tournament here in Sydney. I suspect Mr. Bonham drew his example from that report. Here is what happened. Player A had 10 minutes left, while B had less than 5. Player A had only K + P to Player B's K + Q. The position was winning for Player B and he would have won quite easily if he had more time. At a particular moment, when it was his turn to move, Player A now got up and walked away from the board. He did not make a move. He did not leave the playing area. When his clock had wound down to less than 5, he returned and began to play. With the clocks now to less than 5 minutes, both players are in blitz mode. Praise to Caissa, B did eventually win. So Mr. Gijssen, can you see what Player A was trying to do?

He was desperate. Knowing his position lost, he turned to the last remaining tactic - to enter the blitz phase in order to confuse the opponent and maybe illicit an error that would, hopefully for him (Player A), maybe salvage a draw. Now tell me, where in the Laws of Chess is this particular tactic prohibited? And no, I do not believe that Article 12.1 applies.

I also do not accept the argument of 'distraction'. You can't possibly be distracting someone when you're not even there at all. The charge is preposterous!

Now I quote, in part, your response to Mr. Bonham:

"There is more. In my opinion they tried to mislead their opponents in an unacceptable way. " Actually, no, at least not in Scenario 1. It was clear to all witnesses what Player A was doing. The arbiter, too, who was also a witness understood what Player A was doing. Most important of all, Player B, the opponent, also understood. How could anyone think that Player A was "giving up the game"? His tactic alone demonstrated desperation. This is not a sign of someone giving up.

A.R. Rosario, Sydney (Australia)

Answer To sit down without making a move and waiting until he has less than 5 minutes on his clock, is, for a professional chessplayer, a not unusual practice. At the moment the player has less than 5 minutes he is not required to record the moves and has the possibility even to play like in Blitz games. I have seen this several times. A grandmaster who has a lost position against a weaker player tries in this way to bluff his opponent. And I have seen the stronger player succeed many. This is not wrong and not against the regulations.

But in the case you described, there was something else. I quote you: "Both the folding of the scoresheet and the player believing his opponent had resigned occurred in the same case."

According to Article 8.2, the scoresheet shall be visible to the arbiter throughout the game. A folding scoresheet that has been put in the pocket is not visible to the arbiter. In my opinion the player who did so gave a clear signal that he did not want to continue the game. He did not offer a draw, therefore only one conclusion is possible: he gave the impression that he resigned. At least he should be warned for this behavior.

Question Dear Geurt, According to Article 8.2 of the laws of chess, "The scoresheet shall be visible to the arbiter throughout the game." In many tournaments in the UK in which I have participated, I have observed many players when it is their turn to move. They write down their intended move on their scoresheet (ensuring their opponent cannot see the move by using their non-writing hand to conceal what they are writing). Then they use a pen or captured piece to cover a section of their scoresheet and thus prevent their opponent from seeing what they have written. While clearly the action is a method of preventing blunders, with no sinister motives, would you consider it to be a violation of the laws of chess? **Paul Heaton (United Kingdom)**

Answer There are several reasons why someone might like to hide the scoresheet from his opponent.

1. The opponent is in time trouble and is not writing the moves. In this case the player hides the scoresheet to prevent his opponent from finding out how many moves have been made and that time pressure is over.
2. The player is in the habit of writing his moves before he plays them. He hides his scoresheet to prevent his opponent from preparing for that move.

To hide the scoresheet from an opponent is not forbidden by the rules, but it must be visible to the arbiter at any moment during the game. The reason is simple: one of the duties of an arbiter is to check that the players really write all the moves as long they are required to do so. This means that the player has to find a way that the scoresheet is hidden from the opponent, but visible to the arbiter.

I know one player who succeeded: Tony Miles. He is one of the players who first writes his move and then makes it. He takes his watch, a big one, and puts it on his scoresheet just above the move he has written down. And really the scoresheet is visible. And when the arbiter takes the watch for a split second to check the part of the scoresheet that is under the watch, it is not a problem.

I have to admit that I expected some problems when we drafted Article 8.2 of the Laws of Chess. But up to now I am very encouraged. I am in the habit of checking the scoresheets from time to time. And the players know this. I saw several times that when I started to go around for checking the scoresheets, some players started to write the moves they were behind and others removed the object that covered a part of the scoresheet. Good cooperation.



Question I live in the USA and my question concerns how the touch-move rule affects draw claims. Although such a situation has not yet occurred in any event that I have been running, the possibility intrigues me. Suppose the position is as shown, with White to move:

White, with less than two minutes remaining in a sudden-death time control, grabs his pawn and then realizes that h7 allows Kf7 mate. Now, White puts his pawn back on h6 and tries to claim a draw by insufficient losing chances. The claim would certainly be valid if White didn't have to move his pawn. However, the fact that White must move his pawn completely changes the evaluation of the position on the board. How

should an arbiter rule in this situation? **Joshua Green (USA)**

Answer I am very curious to know what "insufficient losing chances" means. I am sure it is not a term described in the Laws of Chess. And apparently even with a Bishop against a pawn there are possibilities to win. In the case described in your question, the arbiter should order the players to continue the game, to order the white player to play h6-h7 and to see what is going on. This is the only way the arbiter should rule in this situation.

Question Dear Mr. Gijssen, My question concerns the threefold repetition draw. Player A is losing the game. And then, he notices that the position on the board has repeated itself for the third time. Naturally, he would like the game to be declared drawn. But player B does not accept this. He shows that between the second and the third "repetitions" the two knights (either his or his rival's) have "traded" places one with the other (as often happens). So, *visually* the positions are indeed identical. However, player B claims that the positions are *not* identical, because the "King Knight" and the "Queen Knight" are 2 individual pieces. So - is it a draw? (By the way, the same situation can arise with 2 rooks, of course). **Uri Adelman, Israel**

Answer I quote a part of Article 9.2:

*"Positions are considered the same, if the same player has the move, **pieces of the same kind and color** occupy the same squares, and the possible moves of all pieces of both players are the same."*

I think the answer is clear. It is written "pieces of the same kind and color" and not "the same pieces"

If I remember well, one of Bobby Fischer's requirements was that the Rooks and the Knights were clearly marked. The queen Rooks and queen Knights had a "Q" marked on them, and the king Rooks and king Knights, a "K". I am not sure that his reason was the reason you gave.

Dear Mr. Gijssen, My name is **Dimitris Skyrianoglou from Athens, Greece**. Before proceeding with my questions I would like to congratulate you for the excellent quality of your very informative column at **Chesscafe.com**. I have three questions for you:

Question 1 During a recent friendly blitz game (my question also applies for a regular game) the flag of player A fell in a position where he could mate his opponent B in one move. The flag fell before A even touched the piece to give mate. B claimed a win on time but A claimed that he could mate B in one move so the game should be declared won for him. As I see it, according to article 5.1 in the Laws of Chess, B was not checkmated so A should be declared lost on time. Since he didn't even touch the piece we cannot be certain that he even saw the mating move before the fall of the flag. What do you think?

Some variations of this situation could be:

- a) A touches the piece to give mate but the flag falls before he completes the move. I understand that he again will lose on time even if the move he was about to play and mates B was the only one or the only legal move with the touched piece.
- b) The flag of A falls before completing the move but he mates B before B makes a claim that the flag fall (this especially applies in blitz and rapid games where the arbiter should refrain from signaling a flag fall).

Maybe this question has been asked before but I would appreciate it if you could enlighten me on this issue.

Answer When in a Rapid or Blitz game a flag falls and the opponent has still mating material, the game is lost. Even the fact that he can mate his opponent in one move does not change the result. Article B6 of the Rapid Rules (and this applies also to the Blitz Rules) is very important:

"The flag is considered to have fallen when a player has made a valid claim to that effect. The arbiter shall refrain from signaling a flag fall."

The case mentioned under b) is a bit different. B did not claim A's flag fall in time. And as you know, mate finishes the game immediately.

Question 2 In a recent game one of the players was in time trouble and this made him quite nervous so instead of sitting in his chair he stood up and played the remaining game standing in front of the board. The opponent didn't complain and the game ended normally. Later I asked the arbiter if the player may choose to not sit in his chair and he told me that there is no rule against it. Personally I feel quite embarrassed and uncomfortable when my opponent does not sit in his chair during his thinking time but stands in front of the board (it has occurred to me a couple of times). I think this is impolite. It's like my opponent is giving a simultaneous exhibition. Can I, in this case, make use of article 12.5 and claim that my opponent is distracting me? I find it really embarrassing having my opponent looking over me from above while playing. It also shows as a lack of respect for the opponent. What do you think?

Answer The question is: what shall be considered disturbing or annoying? What is disturbing for one player, is not necessary disturbing for another. And if a player goes to the arbiter and starts to complain about the behavior of his opponent, it is not easy for the arbiter to judge the situation, to try to understand whether the behavior is really unpleasant or not, to take a correct decision and to inform the opponent about his decision in such a way that the opponent does not feel offended. The situation is even more complicated when one or both players are in time trouble and/or in the general area players are in time trouble.

What I am trying to explain is that the arbiter has to consider many circumstances. There are situations where a chess arbiter has to make a decision in a split second just like in football.

But, to return to your question. I can imagine that a standing opponent is quite disturbing, especially when he stands very close to the table. Even if the player does not complain I, as an arbiter, would interfere. Sometimes opponents are standing behind their own chair and watch their position. Generally I do not consider this as disturbing and accept it. But if the opponent moves, shakes his head, behaves in such a way that the player shall really notice his presence, I will interfere.

This brings me to another point. A constant problem for the arbiter is the player who has finished his game. According to the Laws of Chess he is considered a spectator. It means he should leave the playing area. But it is very difficult to remove them. Furthermore, especially in a Swiss tournament with sometimes more than 200 arbiters (Ohrid) it is very difficult for each arbiter to find out whether a player has finished his game or not. And when there is time trouble in a game or an incident, all players run to this board, blocking the view of the board for the arbiter and disturbing their colleagues. And although you politely request them to stand a certain distance from the board, apparently they do not care. Only when you order them in a quite unfriendly way are they ready to make space. Really, sometimes I do not understand chessplayers.

Question 3 Is the position where each opponent has a King and a bishop of opposite colors a 'dead position' as defined in article 5.2.b.? In my opinion not, since with this material it is possible to produce checkmate.

This means that both players may keep playing expecting for a flag to fall. In this case according to article 6.2 the players whose flag falls, has lost the game (since again there is mating material). Is it correct? If yes, do you consider it fair?

Answer I agree that there are positions as you have described which may produce a mating positions. To be mated, the King must stand in a corner. If neither King is in the corner and I see that neither player intends to play his King to the corner in which the King can be mated, I would not step in, but would immediately accept a draw for a claim according to Article 10.2 in case of a normal or a Rapid game. I would like to point out that the arbiter has to wait for a draw claim.

In a Blitz game the situation is different, because claims under Article 10.2 are not possible. But if the players have enough time, let us say 30 seconds or more, I would interfere, pointing out Article 12.1: *"The players shall take no action that will bring the game of chess into disrepute."*

Question Dear Mr. Gijssen, At a blitz tournament at our club, player "X" left after some 4 rounds from a total of 14 rounds. But he beat player "A", who later on was second, if I gave every opponent of "X" a score of 1, but who would have finished first, if I cancelled "X" completely from the tournament table. Usually, a player is cancelled if he does not complete 50% of a tournament - but I could not find any such regulations for "Usually". I found a regulation in German team competitions where this applies, but nothing else. Are there any such rules or regulations for this? Could you please give me a link or a hint? **Jens Nissen (Germany)**

Answer The answer to your question can be found in the FIDE Tournament Rules, Article V.4:

"When a player withdraws or is expelled from a round robin tournament the consequence will be as follows:

(a) If a player has completed less than 50% of his games and leaves the tournament, his score remains in the tournament table (for rating and historical purposes), but the points scored by him or against him are not counted in the final standings.

(b) If a player has completed at least 50% of his games, his score shall remain in the tournament table and will be counted in the final standings."

And Article V.5 says:

"If a player withdraws from a Swiss-system tournament the points scored by him and by his opponents shall remain in the crosstable for ranking purposes. Only games that are actually played are rated."

As you can see, there is an essential difference between withdrawals from round robin tournaments and Swiss tournaments. If a player has played less than 50% in a round robin, the player will be removed from the crosstable. If he had played at least 50%, the results of played games stand and the remaining games are declared lost. In a Swiss tournament the results of played games stand; it does not matter how many games are played by the withdrawing player, but in the remaining rounds, he will not be paired. In all cases played games are rated.

Question Dear Mr. Gijssen, The new Laws were hardly in place and we already had an incident. I was playing in a one-day 30/30 tournament and in round 5 the following happened (the board next to mine). White had 1 second left on his clock and Black had 2 minutes and 37 seconds (they were playing with a DGT 2000 clock). White then stopped the clocks and claimed a draw. Both players

argued whether the position was a draw or not. The arbiter rejected White's claim and according to the new Laws, he now awarded Black 2 extra minutes. Black now had 4 minutes and 37 seconds. The arbiter then instructed the players to play on which they did. Black started White's clock. White made a move and pressed his clock. NOW - about 30 moves were made BUT Black never pressed his clock. Eventually Black's flag fell and White claimed the game on time. White has mating material on the board but his position was totally lost (Black had an extra rook, 4 extra pawns and was about to mate White in 5 moves). The arbiter awarded the game to White. Black was not happy with the decision and lodged an appeal. The appeals committee's decision – *They overruled the decision of the arbiter* and awarded the point to Black because he "would have won". Am I correct in saying that the arbiter's decision was 100% correct and that the appeals committee was wrong? **Günther van den Bergh (South Africa)**

Answer This is really an unbelievable story. First of all I cannot believe that Black did not press the clock. He had to press the clock probably once or twice and White would have overstepped. But OK, it happened and instead of White, Black overstepped. The arbiter declared the game lost for Black. Let us observe the actions of the arbiter:

1. He rejected White's claim. According to Article 10.2 (c) he has the right to do so.
2. He awarded 2 extra minutes to Black's time. According to the same Article 10.2 he is obliged to do so.
3. After Black's flag fell he declared the game lost for him. He had no other choice, because he had previously rejected the draw claim. Again a correct decision.

And then other unbelievable things happened:

1. Black went to the Appeals Committee.
2. The Appeals Committee discussed the case.
3. The Appeals Committee awarded the point to Black

Apparently the Appeal Committee overlooked the new Article 10.3, coming into force July 1, 2001: "***The decision of the arbiter shall be final relating to 10.2 a. b. c.***" This means that the Appeals Committee had no right to discuss the case at all. Somehow I have this feeling that Mr. Van den Bergh's question is a hoax or a trap. Let me know, Mr. van den Bergh.

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

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