



The King En Prise Redux

The King En Prise was the title of my first column in April 1998. In this column I informed the readers that it was forbidden to take the king. But what should happen if the king was taken was not decided and is still not decided, but this will probably be changed.

COLUMNISTS

An Arbiter's Notebook Geurt Gijssen

Recently there was a meeting of the arbiters' committee of the Royal Dutch Chess Federation. In this meeting it was discussed what to do if, in a blitz game, a player leaves his king in check and the opponent takes the king. In the Rules Committee of FIDE I tried several times to discuss this matter, but a lack of time or the absence of a unanimous opinion were the reasons that a decision was never made. After a long discussion in the meeting of the Dutch committee it was decided that the game would be declared lost by the player who had taken his opponent's king. The reason for this decision was the following:

It is clear that the player who had left his king in check completed an illegal move and Article C3 says: *The opponent is entitled to claim a win before making his own move.*

A very important issue in the discussion was that when the king was captured, there was no evidence that the player whose king was taken had completed an illegal move. Therefore the opponent who had let this evidence disappear had to be punished.

The arbiters' committee advised the organisers of Blitz tournaments in the Netherlands to apply this rule and to have

the arbiter announce before the tournament what would happen if the king is taken. I would be very happy if arbiters would react to this proposal. Please let me know and probably we can insert something in the Laws of Chess about this during the congress of 2004.

The Presidential Board of FIDE decided that the time limit for the World Chess Championships in Moscow would be 90 minutes for the whole game with an increment of 30 seconds per move from move 1. The Organising Committee of the 5th World Team Championship in Yerevan decided after consultation with me to apply the same time limit. One of the reasons was that many players of this event would play in Moscow and it was better for them to be acquainted with the new time limit. It was also my first experience with the new time limit. For the reader's information: 1. Within 4 hours most of the rounds were finished; 2. There were no incidents; 3. Generally the players wrote their moves properly. There were a few cases where the arbiter had to inform the players that they have to write the moves; and 4. I had the impression that there were more mistakes in the endgame than before.

The question, what is better, 75 minutes for 40 moves and then 15 minutes for the remaining moves or 90 minutes for the whole game, with an increment in both cases, is very hard to answer. With time controls being used that require the game to be completed in one time period, I found the situation occasionally difficult. The reason is very simple: there is not a required number of moves for a certain period of time.

Some players preferred two periods. In that case they have after the finish of the first period some time to relax, to smoke a cigarette or to go to the bathroom. There was even in the captains' meeting before the first round a proposal from one of the captains to insert a short break three or three and half hours after the start of the round, but this proposal was not accepted by the other captains.

Immediately after the tournament in Yerevan, I was chief arbiter in Amsterdam in a tournament between Veterans and Ladies. The time limit in this tournament was the old one: 40 moves in 2 hours, then 20 moves in one hour and finally 30 minutes for the remaining moves, without an increment per move. With this time limit a player is not required to write the moves with less than 5 minutes left. Nevertheless, all players wrote all moves. It was clear to me that they were not aware of the fact that they did not have to write the moves when they had less than 5 minutes left. It is obvious that the chessplayers are beginning to confuse the Laws of Chess. And this is not so strange, because in each tournament there is a different time limit. It is not only quite confusing for the chessplayers, but also for the arbiters. We have to find a solution for this problem and to reach a uniform system.

I received the following:

Letter 1 Dear Geurt, you replied to John Mazzieri of Australia concerning Article B7 of The Laws of Chess. This says: *To claim a win on time, the claimant must stop both clocks and notify the arbiter. For the claim to be successful the claimant's flag must remain up and his opponent's flag down after the clocks have been stopped.*

You speculated about the reason for the difference from the standard Laws of Chess. There a player can win on time, even if his own flag has fallen, provided it can be established that of his opponent fell first. You suggested the reason for the difference is solely because of lack of arbiters.

This may have been part of our intention. However, there is another reason. The act of claiming a win is an intellectual and sporting effort and requires time. It is seen to be part of a rapid play or blitz game. Thus, if a player fails to do so before his own flag also falls, the game is drawn.

Certainly I found the rule useful in Mazatlan at the World Rapidplay Championship when Seirawan played Karpov. The latter's flag fell first, but Yasser's flag fell before he could stop the clocks. Everything happened too fast for total certainty.

However, the Laws of Chess provided for absolute certainty that the game was a draw. **Stewart Reuben (England)**

My comment I had the same situation in Lausanne 1998. The FIDE President had organised a KO blitz tournament for journalists. The Rules for Blitz games were applied. Bouton (France) and Gik (Russia) were the opponents in the final. Bouton's flag fell and Gik claimed a win without stopping his own clock. In the meantime his flag fell also and pursuant to the regulations I had to declare the game drawn. I did so, but I was not happy and as everybody understands, Gik was also not very amused. But rules are rules. Your statement that the act of claiming is an intellectual and sporting effort and requires time cannot convince me. But OK, statements like this are very difficult to discuss. I am still happy that in the tiebreak games of the World Championships the arbiter may call a flag fall, even in Blitz games and I sincerely hope that this never shall be changed.

Letter 2 I would like to comment on the question by Juan Lopez about when the arbiter should call flag fall. I have known cases where both players are in time trouble and playing so quickly that the flag fall has been called after the opponent replied to move 40. There was no way to determine if the flag fell after move 40 or after opponent had replied and therefore during move 41! The last time it happened was at the Puerto Rico National Championship. I was on another game and the arbiter was writing the moves and could not determine the actual moment of the flag fall. As always, onlookers "saw" both ways and I decided to continue since the actual arbiter could not determine. In this case, if the opponent had not replied, he would have won the game and the championship. The game ended in a draw, the opponent tied for first place and lost the tie-break match! Both players involved are IM's!

What I do is the following: I appoint another person for writing the moves and I concentrate on the flag and call flag fall on the very moment to preclude the opponent to reply or make a claim. If several games are in time trouble, I name two persons to write and watch flag fall. In this case there was an assistant who

was covering the game.

As always, I look for your column every month and thoroughly enjoy them. I hope this can help other arbiters. **I.A. Francisco Torregrosa (Puerto Rico)**

My comment If there are enough people available, the method of appointing two persons to observe one game is ideal. But unfortunately it happens many times that there are not enough assistants. A problem is also that many people present at a tournament, do not know the rules. Recently I saw an assistant who wrote the moves. At the moment both players completed their 40 moves he gave his scoresheet to the players indicating that the time trouble was over. It is very important before the round to ask some people to assist in time trouble. But it is also important to instruct these assistants.

In The Netherlands a league competition is organised. The national federation appoints for each match of 8 or 10 games a neutral arbiter. My observation is that the majority of these arbiters have the opinion that they do not need any assistance. And in my opinion they are wrong. I saw several times that players overstepped the time and no arbiter was present on the board. This is, of course, a bad situation.

Question Dear Mr. Gijssen, At a Swedish seminar on the FIDE Laws of Chess recently, the following situation came under debate:

Player A makes a move (which A erroneously believes is mate) and stops the clocks. His opponent, B, (also under the impression that it is mate) shakes hands with A, without saying "I resign" or anything similar (which, by the way, would seem somewhat out of place when a mate has been delivered). Both scoresheets are signed wherein the result is noted as a win for A. During the post-mortem, the players realize their mistake. The questions are:

a) Has A won the game and if so, under what rule in the Laws of Chess? (Comment: Article 5.1 (a) and (b) should be the most

relevant ones, although as it was not mate, (a) should not be applicable, leaving only (b) resignation. Is it reasonable to say, that B has in fact "resigned" the game by shaking hands, signing the score-sheets etc?)

b) If A should be declared winner, would it have made any difference if B had realised the mistake before signing the score-sheets?

c) May A "agree" to a resumption of play?

I can mention that the meeting came to the conclusion that A should stand as winner and that B's actions should be regarded as equal to resignation. Some of the participants (including myself) felt that the situation is somewhat unfortunate, as it is not clearly covered in the Laws of chess and could lead to confusion if it occurred. **Johan Sigeman (Sweden)**

Answer A long time ago we had interpretations of the Laws of Chess. And about resigning there was an interpretation saying: shaking hands will not be considered as resigning the game. In fact it is very funny that in the Laws of Chess it is not clearly written how a player should resign. Is it verbally or by laying the king on the board or by leaving the playing hall?

Article 5.1.b says: *"The game is won by the player whose opponent declares he resigns. This immediately finishes the game."*

OK, it can be declared verbally, but it is still not clear and furthermore it is possible that nobody noticed this. I remember a tournament in which a player offered a draw in two games, but the opponent did not hear this and the player won both games as well as the tournament.

A better help is Article 8.7:

At the conclusion of the game both players shall sign both scoresheets, indicating the result of the game. Even if incorrect, this result shall stand, unless the arbiter decides otherwise.

Well, it is clear that, after signing the scoresheets, the result stands.

Let us discuss the other possibilities: B resigns, the scoresheets are not signed and the players start to analyse the game. During this analysis, they discover it is not mate. What to do now? In my opinion a resumption of the game is impossible. The game is over, but what is the result of the game, especially when B declares he did not resign? The only thing the arbiter can do in this situation is to rely on his sound judgment and, as I have previously stated, his intuition. The players started to analyse the game. This means clearly that the game is over. A resumption is in my opinion impossible. When B tells me that A resigned I am ready to believe him and I shall award the point to B. I should take the risk that A will go to the Appeals Committee to change my decision. But the lesson is of course: when the game is over, the arbiter should rush to the board and let the players sign for the result.

Once I had a case where two players were already analysing the game when I saw that the game was finished. White wrote on his scoresheet 1-0 and Black protested and told me that it was 0-1. There were no witnesses and I decided to talk to the players to convince them that they should agree to a draw, although I was sure that White was right. Finally the draw was agreed. The next day a spectator came to me and confirmed that Black had resigned, but he was not ready to confirm this in writing. When I thought the whole incident over after the tournament, I came to the conclusion that my interference was wrong. I should have declared the game won for White. I based this on the way the players acted and reacted: White was very emotional (almost crying); Black was cool, without any emotion, and only asking for the evidence that he had resigned.

Question Geurt, Thanks for your lessons. Please, imagine a final like this: both players had king and knight. Player A had only a few seconds left on the clock. A possible, but fool mate position would be: White: Kf2, Ng3, Black: Kh1, Nh2. Is it a draw or can B continue playing, waiting for the flag to fall? Thank you. **Mónica Muíño (Spain)**

Answer Well, let me quote Article 6.10:

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. 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 counterplay.

In an ending King + Knight vs. King + Knight it is apparently possible to mate a King. And pursuant Article 6.10 a flag fall means simply that the game is lost for the player whose flag fell. In a normal or rapid game it is of course possible to claim a draw according to Article 10.2. Another possibility is to sacrifice the Knight, because King + Knight vs. King is a draw.

Question Dear Mr.Gijssen! I have a question concerning an illegal move. When does an arbiter have to interfere? Is it after the illegal move has been made on the board or after the move is completed (i.e. after the player has pressed his clock)? I'd opt for the latter possibility but I would like to know whether there is some paragraph in the Laws of Chess. In my opinion, the player can replace the illegal move made on the board by a legal move without penalty as long as he has not pressed his clock. I think that the arbiter is allowed to interfere after the player completed his move, but I'm not sure if I'm correct in this case. **Axel Eisengraeber-Pabst (Germany)**

Answer First of all I have to mention that the arbiter has to interfere in case of an illegal move, but only in "normal" games and not in Rapid and Blitz games. In Rapid and Blitz games the opponent has to claim that the player completed an illegal move.

In my opinion there is nothing wrong when the arbiter interferes in a normal game at the moment the illegal move has been made, before the player has pressed his clock. It makes the task of the arbiter much easier. What should he do? He

stops both clocks and adds 2 minutes to the opponent's thinking time. If he does it after the player has pressed his clock and started the opponent's clock, he has to adjust the opponent's clock a little bit and if the game is being played with the Fischer modus it is even more complicated. Then he is also to correct the clock of the offending player because some time, usually 30 seconds, was added.

I think, from a practical point of view, it is better to interfere immediately. I remember a case during the World Championship in Groningen 1997. There was a game Akopian – Luther. Akopian played his pawn to the last rank, did not replace the pawn by a piece, but pressed his clock. If I remember correctly, Luther pressed the clock immediately. By these actions time was added on both clocks. Therefore both clocks had to be adjusted. It took some time before this happened. When I mention also that both players were short of time and it happened on move 39, then everybody should agree it was better to interfere immediately

Question Dear Geurt, In a recent tourney game, the Arbiter was recording the game during time trouble and witnessed one player making an illegal move, but did not call it. I think he was more concerned about the time trouble. Should he have intervened and insist that the player make a legal move? What is the Rule on this one? **G. Gibbs, President Jamaica Chess Federation**

Answer Yes, you are right. The arbiter should have intervened, if, and I repeat if he had seen the illegal move. But I would like to request some mercy for the arbiter. In time trouble he must see a lot. He has to write the moves played; he must observe the clocks very carefully and call a flag fall immediately. Many times he has also to keep spectators and other players at a distance. I can see how he overlooked an illegal move.

Question Dear Geurt, Are there any rules, or indeed any generally accepted guidelines, on the use of mobile phones?

I'm sure most players would agree that it is unacceptable for them to be left on during play. But I have never seen any instructions to this effect in a tournament entry form, nor heard any tournament controller make any announcement to remind players to turn them off (which, it is true, is an easy thing to forget).

It's therefore not clear what recourse a player has if the opponent - or anybody else within hearing distance - should have their mobile ring during a game, perhaps at a vital time: nor clear what a controller or arbiter should do in those circumstances. (Would they be justified in disqualifying the miscreant that seems harsh? But if not, should they add time to the opponent's clock, and if so, under which Law?)

Moreover there remains the problem that some players may genuinely need access to a phone - doctors, for instance. I'm sure that this question and incidents arising from the use of these phones must have been discussed by experienced arbiters, at least informally. Can you advise? **Justin Horton (England)**

Answer Let me quote the first sentence of Article 12.5:

It is forbidden to distract or annoy the opponent in any manner whatsoever.

Well, I think everybody will agree with me that a ringing mobile, and for sure if it is your opponent's, is very annoying. And such an infraction shall lead according to Article 12.6 to a penalty. The only question is what kind of penalty. I announce in each tournament that I give an official warning for the first ring and declare the game lost if it happens for the second time in the same game to the same player. And I can assure you that this system works.

The case is a little bit complicated if a player, for instance a doctor, needs a mobile. In such cases ad hoc decisions must be taken and I like to leave these decisions to the arbiters involved.

How to treat spectators with ringing mobiles is easier. First of all, they leave the playing hall as soon as possible. And when they return, the mobiles are definitely switched off. Normally they feel very ashamed. If I see the same spectator again in the playing hall during one of the next rounds, I approach him immediately and in 99% of the cases the mobiles are already switched off. It is already a normal procedure to have a poster at the entrance of the playing hall with the message to switch off the mobiles.

Question Hi Geurt, In the Championship of our region the following happened: A player checkmated his opponent, but neither player saw it and they continued the game. And then, you can guess, the opponent won the game; both players signed the scoresheets and delivered them to the arbiter. They started to analyse the game and then they discovered that the player, who resigned, had checkmated his opponent.

I have two questions. 1. Is it possible to correct the result? As a matter of fact, this happened, because the player, whose king was checkmated, did not want to win the game in this way. 2. My real question is how much time can be passed to correct a result? **Huub Blom (The Netherlands)**

Answer There is an important Article in the Laws of Chess that says:

The game is won by the player who has checkmated his opponent's king. This immediately ends the game, provided that the move producing the checkmate position was a legal move.

This is Article 5.1 (a) of the Laws of Chess. Very important is the second sentence: This immediately ends the game. It means that everything what happened after the opponent's king was checkmated is irrelevant, even a lot of moves.

I would like to quote another Article:

At the conclusion of the game both players shall sign both scoresheets, indicating the result of the game. Even if incorrect, the result shall stand, unless the arbiter decides otherwise.”
(Article 8.7 of the Laws of Chess)

I think that the aforementioned case is clear – the arbiter shall decide otherwise. This means what happened in the case mentioned by Huub is completely correct.

What about the second question? Let me start by saying that there are no regulations or laws for cases like this. Therefore all what I will write about this is my personal opinion. It is reasonable to change the result if the mistake is discovered before the end of the last round of a round robin tournament. For Swiss tournaments I would handle it in a different way. Suppose this happened in round 1 and the mistake is discovered in round 7 or 8. In my opinion it is impossible after so many rounds to correct the standings. If it is discovered after one round I am ready to change the result. Finally I would like to say that it is possible to correct the result for rating calculations, even after the finish of the tournament. But this is still my personal opinion.

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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