



Leave the King Alone!

Last month I was the arbiter at the Amber Chess tournament in Monaco. It was the 11th edition and the 10th time there was a blindfold competition. After ten years it is quite interesting to see what has happened in these tournaments and to investigate developments.

Let me start by informing readers why Kasparov never participated in this tournament. When he was initially invited, and I remember very well that this happened during the Olympiad in Manila 1992, he reacted immediately stating that he did not want to play blindfold games. He said: "I don't like to play blindfold, I like to save my health."

In 1993 the first blindfold competition in Monaco was organised. Many players had a lot of problems playing blindfolded, especially the older ones. I remember the problems Polugaevsky and Korchnoi had remembering the positions. Some young players, who were invited for subsequent also had problems and made terrible blunders. Exceptions were Ivanchuk, Anand, Piket and Kasparov. But really amazing were players as Shirov and Kramnik. And I have to add two more names: Bareev and Morozevich. These two players played this year for the first time in this tournament. 2 minutes of explanation were enough for them. They understood immediately how the system works. And also during the tournament itself it was amazing to see how Morozevich played his games. The debutant won the blindfold competition with a score of 9 out of 11.

To play blindfold in the past was a really challenge, but for the new youngsters it looks like that it is a simple routine. I think it has to do with the way the young players prepare for tournaments. They take their databases, read the moves without a chessboard and nevertheless they 'see' the whole game. Perhaps I should advise Mr. Van Oosterom, the sponsor of this tournament, to look for another challenge for the players.

Taking the King is still a topic for many chess players and arbiters. In this *Notebook* the reader may find several letters on this subject, among them three from Scotland. It looks like that the Scottish arbiters decided to attack the proposal en masse to declare the game lost for the player who takes an opponent's King.

Question Dear Geurt, The Scottish arbiters' committee discussed 'taking the king' in blitz. We are strongly of the opinion (which we think would be

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An Arbiter's Notebook Geurt Gijssen

overwhelmingly backed by Scottish players) that taking the king should not lose. It may be undesirable in a competition, but no more than that.

However, the discussion made me think much more about illegal moves and the following are my own comments. There are three types of position: (a) reached by legal moves; (b) reached after one or more illegal moves but could be reached legally; and (c) as (b) but not reached legally.

A problem arises in applying the last sentence of Law C3. Playing on after an illegal move has not been noticed/claimed is OK in a type (b) position but I do not know how to do this in illegal positions of type (c) because I do not know what is then legal. The Laws do not define an illegal move, except by the implication that it is a move, which is not a legal one. The legal move is not explicitly defined either, but implicitly by Art 3 and some other details such as 1.2. However, these definitions relate only to legal positions. The Laws plainly do not define an illegal move in an illegal position, e.g., with both kings 'en prise', nor could they.

Law C3 states that a player may claim that his opponent has made an illegal move. However, if the previous position was illegal, this is not defined and effectively the Laws seem to imply that it is the first player to point out that the position on the board is illegal who would win. Is that desirable? It seems to me that the Laws cannot apply to such positions and so how can one play? What actions are legal/illegal? It is analogous to deduction from a false premise.

I now look at your argument in the above context: The player who left his king in check completed an illegal move' – only if previous position was legal (evidence of this has gone).

The evidence destroyed by player taking king - this is the downside of taking the king (but see below). How does anyone now know that the capture was, say, Nf6xKg8 rather than Ne6xKg8, i.e. that the king capture was an illegal move in a legal position?

The opponent who let this evidence disappear must be punished' - possibly, but is loss of game proportionate to what is normally (though not necessarily) a casual means of pointing out an illegality? In an unrecorded game, every move destroys evidence. It is always possible that some irrelevant moves have been played with a king in check.

Finally, I come to Rapid play rule B5 (b). Art 7.2, 7.3, 7.5 are not concerned with illegal moves. The parentheses following should therefore not refer to illegal moves, only to irregularities. Accordingly, the normal Laws on illegal moves (7.4) should apply on the grounds that substantive statements take precedence over parenthetic 'explanations'. Why is C3 in the Laws if it is covered by B5? The less play in type (c) positions, the better. I think it would be dangerous to change the Laws in this way on the grounds of an accidental ambiguity. Any change should be left until the next revision. **Ken Stewart (Scotland)**

Answer Let me start with your last question. I agree fully with you that Article B5 (b) is very unclear. At the congress in Greece 2001 this Article was clarified: it is now very simple: in case of an illegal move the arbiter shall not interfere, unless there is a claim by a player.

You wrote that taking the King is undesirable. I consider this as an understatement. I would like to remind you how things developed. In 1998 at the FIDE Congress in Elista a proposal (not my proposal) was accepted that taking of the King is forbidden. But we made a mistake by not deciding what should happen if a King were taken. From that moment on there were problems. Some arbiters accepted that a king could be taken; other arbiters declared the game drawn, other arbiters declared the game lost. In the next congresses no decisions were made, mostly due a lack of time.

I agree fully with you that in cases where the recording of the moves is not required there is no evidence whether the just played move is legal or illegal. Cheating is always possible. But I repeat what I wrote before: not every illegal move finishes the game immediately as is the case when a player takes the opponent's king.

You are completely right that we have to think about illegal positions. They are not defined in the Laws of Chess. I am not sure we have to define all these matters in the Laws of Chess, because we have still our premise that an arbiter may decide in cases not covered by the Laws of Chess, using his sound judgment. I went to Mr. Haggenburg, a Dutch arbiter with a lot of experience in Blitz tournaments and asked his opinion. He told me that it happens very often that illegal positions occur, but that in almost all cases the players find a solution without the assistance of an arbiter.

Question Hello Geurt, This concerns the taking of kings in blitz. I read all the arguments for and against but the following has not been mentioned: I teach chess to beginners from scratch. One thing nobody at that most basic level ever understands is why the game should finish when the king can be taken and nothing can be done about it. The most effective way to teach them is by allowing them to make any move and then taking the king. This saves a lot of unnecessary explanations. At this level nobody understands or wants to listen to longwinded explanations. Everyone understands that you aren't allowed to play without the king. This is a simple rule.

Since the new rule was introduced, Scotland has adhered to it. So, here you are not allowed to take the king anymore. It's not a good rule, because your opponent gets embarrassed, when you have to point out to him that you can take his king. It's also boring. The first thing a player should learn is to look after the king. Nobody should be allowed a second chance, if they overlooked the danger to the king. It's more fun, if you can take the king and wave it in the air triumphantly! Long lives the king! I was pleased when I found out that in England you are still allowed to take the king in blitz games. Long may they disregard this artificial

rule. As to the cheating (pretending the piece came from another place), you can't ever stamp it out by introducing new rules. I hope that Fide will not make it a punishable offence to take the king. **Siegrun MacGilchrist (Scotland)**

Answer You will understand that I disagree with you. I think it is easy to teach pupils from the very beginning that taking the King is forbidden, but to put him in such position that he cannot escape. By the way, to explain stalemate was for me always a big problem. I do not like to start a discussion about stalemate, but personally I never understood why stalemate means that the game ends as a draw.

Question Dear Geurt, I have a problem with your argument against the capture of a King in rapid or blitz play. You say that the capture could have occurred by means of an illegal move and the removal of the King conceals this fact from the arbiter if the move is contested. But why is this allowed in say, the capture of the Queen, (or indeed any piece) which may even end a game. Even in these cases the capture could have been made with an illegal move. **Pietro Rotelli (Italy)**

Answer See my previous answers.

Question Dear Geurt, Another question about the capturing of kings. If - in a blitz game against you - I move a knight from b3 to d5 and you want to claim a win, you have no evidence that the knight did not come from c3! If I castle illegally, you can't prove I moved my king earlier in the game! If you capture my queen, there is no way you can prove me wrong if I tell the arbiter that you did it with an illegal move! If I checkmate your king by an illegal move, there is no way you can prove it! If I take a pawn that you captured three moves ago and place it on the board again, you will not be able to prove it was ever captured! If I simply remove your queen from the board, you can't prove I didn't capture it legally earlier in the game! Then why on earth is it so important to you, that after the capturing of a king there is no evidence of the illegal move? In blitz chess there is hardly ever any evidence of any illegal move!! **Lau Bjerno (Denmark)**

Answer See my previous answers.

Question Dear Sir, In your last column, you wrote about the King "en prise" in blitz games:

"In a 'normal' game Article 7.4 covers this case: (...) In a Rapid game it is different. First of all the arbiter may not intervene. Only after a player's claim must he act as described in the aforementioned Article 7.4.

I thought it was obvious, but looking at the Laws of Chess I read:

E.I.01B. Appendix B. Rapid play

B5. The arbiter shall make a ruling according to Article 4 (The touched piece), only if requested to do so by one or both players. 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.

Those articles mention illegal moves, but not art. 7.4. So my question is "Which article do you refer to?" **Stephane Escafre (France)**

Answer As already noted, during the FIDE Congress 2001 B5 was clarified in a very simple way. The arbiter shall act only when the opponent makes a claim regarding an illegal move.

Question Mr. Gijssen, I have one question regarding the laws of chess. In a recent tournament this happened: Player A overstepped the time limit on move 40. The arbiter was not present to observe this. Player B pointed out to his opponent that he had overstepped but he discovered that he no right to win the game on time and offered draw and player A agreed. Both players signed the scoresheets and handed them to the arbiter. Immediately afterwards Player B claimed a win because Player A had overstepped the time limit. The DGT-clock indicated that Player A had lost on time and a witness confirmed that the draw offer had been given after Player B had overstepped the time limit and that both players were aware of the fact that Player A had overstepped the time limit. Rules that apply to this situation are, in my opinion:

Article: 5.2.C: The game is drawn upon agreement between the two players during the game. This immediately ends the game.

Article: 6.9: A flag is considered to have fallen when the arbiter observes the fact or when either player has made a valid claim to that effect.

IA Rikhardur Sveinsson (Iceland)

Answer You mentioned correctly two Articles of the Laws of Chess, which should be applied. In my opinion there is a third Article that should be considered to find the correct decision. I mean Article 8.7:

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.

Let us analyse the situation: Player B informed the opponent that he had overstepped the time limit, but as far as I understand Player B made no claim to that effect. He did not go to the arbiter and did not inform him that Player A had overstepped the time limit. Instead of doing this, he in fact offered his opponent a draw, which offer was accepted and both players signed the scoresheets accordingly. It is crucial that he did not make any claim and signed the scoresheets indicating that the game was a draw. In my opinion the draw stands.

But I would like to add something. This is again a nice example that the Laws of Chess are written for situations with one arbiter, who sees everything what is

going on and one board with two players. If the arbiter had been present at the board, the result is different, because in that case the arbiter would have observed the flag fall, would have noticed that Player A had overstepped the time limit and would have had the game declared lost for player A. I have to admit, that it is a little bit bizarre.

After I had written my answer to the previous question I received a second letter about the same case. I do not see any reason to change my answer. However, for the sake of completeness, here it is.

Question Dear Mr. Gijssen, The chief arbiter, Rikhardur Sveinsson has told me that he already had sent you an e-mail regarding this matter. Anyhow, I send you my version, which hopefully can even give you more information about it.

A strange incident happened in the last Reykjavik Open where I was an arbiter. One grandmaster and a FIDE-master were playing. The GM had more time and the better game. When his opponent had played his 40th move the GM had a few minutes to make his final move before the time-control so I went to follow other games where I thought I might be needed more. But then the unexpected happened. The GM got into deep thought and forgot to make the 40th move and his time ran out. The players used a digital clock, so there was no question that the flag had fallen. His opponent points out to the GM that he has run out of time. They shake hands but suddenly, for some reason, the FM offers the GM a draw, which the GM agrees to and they sign their scoresheets with the result being recorded as a draw.

Shortly thereafter other players tell the arbiters about the incident. The FM also approaches the arbiters and tells them that, confused by the unexpected turn of events, he had made this strange decision to offer his opponent a draw.

We, the arbiters, did have a meeting and decided that since the GM's flag had fallen before he completed 40 moves (nobody disputed that fact) he had lost the game. The GM appealed and the appeal committee decided that there were not good enough reasons to reverse the arbiter's decision.

Some players did disagree with the decisions and simply said the game was not over by article 6.9 because there was no claim to that fact and the arbiter did not observe that the flag had fallen until later. The arbiters decided that the draw offer was not valid because in our opinion it was not proposed during the game. It would be very interesting to hear your opinion of the arbiter's decision.

Here are the relevant FIDE-laws, which could be applied:

- 5.2. The game is drawn upon agreement between the two players during the game. This immediately ends the game. (See Article 9.1)
- 6.2. When using a chess clock, each player must make a minimum number of moves or all moves in an allotted period of time and/or may be allocated an additional amount of time with each move. All

these must be specified in advance. The time saved by a player during one period is added to his time available for the next period, except in the 'time delay' mode. In the time delay mode both players receive an allotted 'main thinking time'. Each player also receives a 'fixed extra time' with every move. The countdown of the main time only commences after the fixed time has expired. Provided the player stops his clock before the expiration of the fixed time, the main thinking time does not change, irrespective of the proportion of the fixed time used.

6.9.A flag is considered to have fallen when the arbiter observes the fact or when either player has made a valid claim to that effect.

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.

9.1. A player wishing to offer a draw shall do so after having made a move on the chessboard and before stopping his clock and starting the opponent's clock. An offer at any other time during play is still valid, but Article 12.5 must be considered. No conditions can be attached to the offer. In both cases the offer cannot be withdrawn and remains valid until the opponent accepts it, rejects it orally, rejects it by touching a piece with the intention of moving or capturing it, or the game is concluded in some other way. The offer of a draw shall be noted by each player on his scoresheet with a symbol (See Appendix E). A claim of a draw under 9.2, 9.3 or 10.2 shall be considered to be an offer of a draw.

IA Gunnar Bjornsson (Iceland)

Question Dear Mr. Gijssen, The much discussed article 10 of the laws of chess stipulates that a player may claim a draw if he has less than 2 minutes on his clock and his opponent cannot win, or is making no effort to win, etc. However this rule applies to the situation on which "all the remaining moves must be made in a limited time." My question is this: how does this rule apply to time controls such as, "all the moves in 1h 30 min with 30 sec added per move" as was the case recently? My overall instinct is that the rule ought to apply in some form, but "two minutes left" and "two minutes plus 30sec per move remaining" are worlds apart in my estimation. I would appreciate some guidance on the matter, as it may soon become an issue in some events that I should have to arbitrate. **Dr Gregory Boyce (Trinidad and Tobago)**

Answer You are right; there is a world of difference. Let me quote Article 10.1, which defines the quickplay finish:

A "quickplay finish" is the last phase of a game, when all the remaining moves must be made in a limited time.

But if 30 seconds or another amount of time per move is added, the time for the

remaining moves is not limited. Therefore Article 10 will not be applied in games when a certain amount of time per move will be added. This is the reason that in some tournaments in the last period time per move will be added to avoid the application of Article 10. And I think that is a very wise decision. In my opinion it is even much better to use the Fischer modus from move 1.

Question Dear Mr. Gijssen, I am writing to request your opinion about the following case: In a rapid game Player A formally claims a draw. The arbiter rules that the game should be continued (he postpones his decision). A little bit later, Player B's flag falls. My questions are: (1) When is an arbiter required to announce the result of the game? (2) Should he signal the fall or should he leave it to the players to do so? (3) What result shall he announce (a) if the nature of the position has remained unchanged; (b) if it has changed in favour of either Player A or Player B? **IA Janos Valis (Hungary)**

Answer The questions are very interesting. Let us analyse the situation:

1. In Rapid games a player may claim a draw pursuant Article 10 of the Laws of Chess (Quickplay finish).
2. According to Article 10.2 of the Laws of Chess the arbiter may postpone his decision, but he has to announce the result of the game after a flag has fallen.
3. The Rapid regulations say that the arbiter shall refrain from signaling a flag fall.
4. The Rapid regulations say also, that, if both flags are down, the game is drawn.

The first question is should, in a Rapid game, the arbiter stop the clocks at the moment a flag falls? According to point 2 he must do so, but if we consider point 3 above he shall not. In my opinion we have to keep in mind the Rapid regulations. Therefore the arbiter shall refrain from signaling the flag fall. If one of the player notices a flag fall, the arbiter shall declare the final result. The Dutch IA Wil Haggenburg pointed out that in a normal game the arbiter announces his decision *after* a flag fall: it means at the moment the game is over. A Rapid game is over when a flag has fallen and the opponent has claimed it or when both flags are down. He comes therefore to the same conclusion as I do.

If both flags are down, the arbiter has an easy job, because then the game has been finished and the result is a draw. But is this completely clear in the regulations?

The question is should the arbiter at the moment the second flag falls stop the game and declare the game drawn? By the way, this question has nothing to do with Article 10.2, but it has to do with the Rapid regulations generally. I am inclined to say that the arbiter shall stop the game at the moment the second flag falls. Therefore it is probably better to change the text of Article B8 in 2004 as follows: "If both flags have fallen, the arbiter shall declare that the game is drawn."

Your last questions are about the result of the game. As I have mentioned many times, the position is not relevant. The only thing that is relevant is the way the game was continued after a player claimed a draw. Not the position, but the continuation of the game is decisive for the arbiter's decision.

Question There is an issue that is not so clear for our local arbiters: In time pressure one of the players has a winning position, but he believes or feels he won't have enough time to win. In that case could he "claim" a draw? Some arbiters say if the player has a superior position he can claim a draw and if the arbiter acknowledges on this he can adjudicate the game as a draw. Is that so? If so, how can one say a position is obviously a winning one? Who decides if this is so? How clear the advantage must be? Assuming that this is allowed, must the one claiming do it with the flag on or he can claim the draw after the flag falls?

This is a very troublesome issue here. Does time turn out to be less important? The position is more valuable than time? Or does the old rule hold: if one has king and a pawn, the one whose flag falls lose the game? **Marco Moura (Brazil)** (translated from Portuguese by Jose Carlos Franco Nunes de Viveiros)

Answer I assume that your question is related to a normal game. Furthermore I assume it is not in the last phase of a game with a quickplay finish. In these cases claims as you mentioned are not possible. If a player oversteps the time and his opponent has sufficient material to checkmate the player (even only one pawn) the game is lost. Such claims are not possible in Blitz games.

Question Recently in a youth tournament (1 hour per player) Player A moved his knight, without releasing his hand, to a square, which stalemated his opponent. He then pressed the clock with the other hand. His opponent claimed stalemate immediately. Upon realization that it was stalemate, and his hand still on the piece, Player A quickly moved the knight to another square, defending his right to do so. Due to his lack of knowledge of the Laws of Chess, and also not wishing to call the arbiter, A's opponent let him do so. It is obviously wrong for A to make his move with more than one hand and thus violate Article 4.1, but does he have the right to retract his move? **Leung Weiwen (Singapore)**

Answer You are right that the order in which a move should be completed is as follows: (1) Move the piece from one square to another; and (2) Press the clock. These two actions must be done with the same hand. Therefore it is clear, that the played piece must be released before a player can press the clock.

But the question remains: What should an arbiter do if he sees this and the opponent claims that the move, which produced the stalemate position should stand? It is not covered in the Laws of Chess, but in my opinion the move stands. By pressing the clock the player loses the right to put the touched piece to another square from where it is at that moment.

Question Hello Geurt, I've read already a number of times what happens if

somebody oversteps the time in a Blitz game and I totally agree with the rules in case of, e.g., K+N against K+N, but you also mentioned that no claim based on article 10.2 can be done. I've seen games played like that between masters with each side still having 3 minutes on the clock. They continued to play on for almost 6 minutes with only 2 knights on the board until finally one of the flags fell. I think that both players played probably 300 moves.

In the end one of the players who was a little slower claimed a draw several times but the arbiter just let them play. I think if this is chess then I will quit playing blitz. This has nothing to do anymore with chess but is just a matter of how fast your arm can move while preventing your opponent from playing his move immediately.

I know this is illegal but tricks like letting your arm hanging over the board for just a second after you pressed your clock is enough to let your opponent lose on time. I have seen things like that turn into a real fight but with such rules they are asking for it. Amateurs like me don't care so much but for some masters it is their living and their life and such a Blitz game can cost them a tournament victory. So why not let the arbiter interfere at the moment the 2 knights appear on the board or at least when somebody claims a draw? What is the purpose of playing on such positions? Nobody can lose such a position so what are we proving by playing until a flag falls? Or can we claim a draw based on the etiquette of chess that means that playing on could be considered as a dishonor of chess? What do you think? Can anything be claimed? Can an arbiter stop the game because of the disgrace of our chess game and declare it drawn? I hope so. **Helmut Froeyman (Belgium)**

Answer I agree with you that there are situations that have nothing to do with the game called chess. And especially in Blitz games many questionable things may occur. Many of these dubious items are not covered and cannot be covered in the Laws of Chess. And it is precisely in these situations that we need strong arbiters. Unfortunately (or not) there is no type of chess, in which the arbiter has so little power. In fact in almost all situations he has to wait until a player claims that the opponent did something wrong or overstepped the time and so on.

But you are right when you point out that we have, apart from the Preface, Article 12 of the Laws of Chess:

The players shall take no action that will bring the game of chess into disrepute.

With this Article the arbiter has a weapon to act in a situation as described in your question. If both kings in the center and the player, who likes a draw, informs the arbiter that he shall never go to one of the corners of the board and both players have still 3 minutes left, it is absolutely reasonable to declare the game drawn.

And, of course, in the opinion of the opponent the arbiter is wrong. But this is the fate of the arbiter when he takes a decision: 50% of the players disagree with any

decision taken by an arbiter in case of a dispute.

Question Dear Geurt, This happened in blitz tournament. In mutual time-trouble my opponent made his move but he continued to hold the pawn. When I quickly did my move, he said: "Just a moment, I still did not complete my move," and changed the place of the pawn. He proceeded to do this three times in the game. I find this behaviour very irritating and unethical. My question is: Is there a rule against such behaviour? **Jovany Medeiros (Brazil)**

Answer I assume something like the following occurred: Your opponent played for instance a2-a3, but he did not release the pawn. You made a move and then he interrupted you, saying: "Just a moment, I still did not complete my move." And then he played the pawn to a4. As far as I can determine, your opponent did not make a mistake. I understand that you were eager to reply as soon as possible, but as long as the opponent did not release the piece he intends to play, you have to wait.

Question I am wondering if it is legal to use a "Palm Pilot" for use in recording my moves in tournament play. The Palm Pilot is capable of having a picture of the board and pieces (if you purchase the chess software) and you can just move the piece on the screen (after you make the actual game move) and this will record the move in a pgn file. It works just like a scoresheet, except it's on a small screen. **Pete Del Vecchio (USA)**

Answer In the Laws of Chess scoresheets are still mentioned. And a scoresheet is a piece of paper. A Palm Pilot is in my opinion not permitted. But I am sure that in a few years other ways for recording moves shall be accepted. Many years ago I suggested that there was no need, to record games that were already being recorded by computers. And I remember the time that screens showing the games, had been placed in such a way, that players could not see what was displayed on these screens. If the Palm Pilot is eventually allowed, it can only record moves, nothing else.

Time is needed for technology. I remember the Blitz World Chess Championship in Brussels 1987. A seller of electronic clocks offered digital clocks for this tournament. I started to consult the players about this offer. The first player whose opinion I asked was Kasparov. "No way", he answered me, "I play only with mechanical clocks." Today, all top events are played with electronic clocks. Therefore my advice: Do not despair, Pete.

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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