



## Capturing the King – Recording the Moves

Capturing the King keeps the readers busy. But I sincerely hope that this is the last time before the FIDE Congress I will have to write about this subject. I also received some letters about recording moves.

### COLUMNISTS

## *An Arbiter's Notebook*

Geurt Gijssen

**Question** Dear Geurt, I have been reading your excellent columns on ChessCafe since their inception and was pleased to finally see you in action when I visited the World Championships in 1999 in Las Vegas.

With regards to the issue of capturing the King in Blitz chess, I believe that the current confusion is due to the failure of the FIDE Rules Commission in 1992 from pointing out the significance of the changing of the Lightning (Blitz) Rules back then.

From 1977 when the FIDE Central Committee meeting approved the "FIDE Regulations for Five-minute Chess" thru to I believe 1992 the section of those regulations on The Won Game stated in rule 8:

*The game is won by the player a) who has mated his opponent's King b) whose opponent declares that he resigns c) whose opponent completes an illegal move, which includes leaving his King in check or moving his King into check, but only if the player claims the win before he himself touches a piece (see rule 17) or captures the King as valid proof d) whose opponent's flag falls first, at any time before the game is otherwise ended.*

So for nearly 15 years that these FIDE Regulations existed taking the King was a valid means of claiming an illegal move. However in 1992 these regulations were replaced by "Regulations for Five Minute (Blitz) Chess" which were approved by the 1992 General Assembly and amended by the 1993 General Assembly. In these rules the rule regarding the won game was now rule 14 and section d replaced section 8c above. Rule 14d now reads:

*Whose opponent completes an illegal move, which includes leaving his King in check or moving his King into check, and neutralizes his clock (but only if the player claims the win before he himself has completed his move.)*

As you are aware in late 1996 the FIDE rules were completely revised and incorporated all the rules regarding the general law, the supplemental laws regarding competitions, the rapid laws, the quickplay finish laws and the blitz laws into one complete set of laws. These came into force July 1st 1997.

The essence of 14d above is now in C3 of the current laws. If in 1992 when the law changed effectively prohibiting the capture of the King had been raised and highlighted then, we would all probably accept it or have argued at the time for the old 8c rule to be re-instated. It could be argued that since 1977 no other rule in the laws of chess has been so fundamentally changed as the capturing the King rule has been.

As far back as when you first started your column on ChessCafe in April 1998, the issue of capturing the King and the outcome/penalty that should apply was discussed. Having failed to highlight the significance of the rule change in 1992 it is a shame that the Rules Commission did not clarify the issue of capturing the King when the rules were revised in late 2000.

Serious consideration should be given regarding the wording and interpretation of this rule and hopefully consensus amongst the Federations can prevail so that a decision can be reached as to whether the current rule C3 should apply and if so what the outcome should be of capturing the King or whether a return to something similar to the original 8c rule would be better considering we lived with it for 15 years and it is the rule most chess players appear to know.

Given that the laws are only updated every 4 years it appears that the chess players of the world will now have to wait till 2004 for something hopefully to be done to determine the fate of capturing the King, or can a decision be made at the FIDE Congress later this year.

I would appreciate hearing your thoughts on the above. **Bill Gletsos (Australia )**

**Answer** Thank you, Bill, for your excellent survey of capturing the King. Frankly speaking, I was not familiar with a large part of the history. I agree with you that we have to clarify as soon as possible the whole situation around this issue. And I will try to do so. That is why I made my proposal.

You have mentioned that since 1992 capturing of the King has not been set out in the Laws of Chess as it was previously. I know that in 1998 it was decided that capturing the King would not be permitted; in fact we confirmed in 1998 what was decided in 1992.

The only remaining issue is what should an arbiter do if a player captures a King. I made a proposal, along the lines of the decision of the Board of the Dutch Chess Federation. If somebody would like to propose something else, he is free to do so. I was told that the meetings of the Rules Committee are very democratic, some people told me, even too democratic. Let us see what will happen.

**Question** Dear Geurt, I'm sorry to return to my question about the reason for not capturing the King in Blitz games, but your reply - that this ends the game and could have been made by an illegal move - is still unconvincing to me, as it seems to be to many others.

Let me modify my previous objection in a way that clarifies it. Compare the capture of a King with a checkmate move. The former must never be performed. One must stop the clocks and call the arbiter. The latter must necessarily be played (never stop the clock without a good reason). Yet both types of move end the game immediately, and either could have been made with an illegal move (even unwittingly). So, either your argument is only one of a number of arguments or there is an inconsistency in the laws of Blitz chess.

I know that laws do not have to be justified, but in this case why not say that the rule is such because the Rules Committee, in a moment of spiritual enlightenment, decided so. **Pietro Rotelli (Italy)**

**Answer** You compare the capturing of the King with a checkmate move. I prefer to compare the move that leaves the King in check or moves into check with another illegal move, for instance Nb3-d5. In the last case the opponent, after the player has completed that illegal move, has to stop the clocks, summon the arbiter and claim the win. About this there is no discussion as far as I understand. Well, why not to act in the same way if a player leaves his King in check? I think that almost everybody will agree that this is not unreasonable.

But there is also a difference. If a player plays Nb3-d5, it is possible that the opponent does not notice that the move is illegal and the game will be continued. If a player takes the opponent's King, it is impossible to continue the game. The game is over. And more important, it is quite clear that the player who left his King in check, made the "last" illegal move.

**Question** Dear Mr. Gijssen, Regarding the take-the-King issue, this time you may have painted yourself into a corner. And to the many relevant and crucial arguments from real life you simply repeat: "see my previous answers" rather than assist the chess community to understand, or change, your rigid position.

The issue is bigger than the mere FIDE regulations. Any non-tournament player in the world, and that is 98% of all chess players, will automatically take the King if it is en prise. It is natural and satisfactory. And that is what he or she has been taught. And that is what we *still* teach school children.

You may consider the taking of the King to be a bit silly, a bit unbecoming

behaviour, like gloating upon victory (and school children do gloat!). But, seriously, losing the game because your opponent's King can be taken, and you do so, that is unrealistically rigid, and out of touch with real life.

We can look forward to some examples of sharp practice, where a losing player deliberately puts his King en prise, and then claims a win when his opponent automatically takes it. What a lot of meaningless discussions and arguments in the vast playing halls around the globe. Your ruling is not just, it does not make sense, and please, please, refrain from being "principled" (stubborn) and let us see your sage kind human mind prevail. **Niels Lauritsen (Uganda)**

**Answer** When I wrote: "See previous answer", I never intended to offend anyone or not to answer that particular question. The reason was very simple: the question or the comment was the same as before; there was no new element in the question. I know that probably 98% of the games are played at home and not in tournaments. But in my columns I try to solve problems that have occurred in chess tournaments.

**Question** Dear Sir, I thank you for answering my question about illegal moves in your last column. But more precisely, I would like to know something about article B5. The arbiter shall not intervene if an illegal move is made (only when the opponent makes a claim). So why are articles 7.2, 7.3 and 7.5 mentioned in B5, and not 7.4? **Stephane Escafre (France)**

**Answer** A good question. Let us go to Article 7. As you will see, Articles 7.2, 7.3 and 7.5 deal with irregularities. Article 7.4 describes illegal moves. The original intention of the Rules Committee was to handle an illegal move the same way as in normal chess, i.e., as per Article 7.4. That is the reason why Article 7.4 is not mentioned. Later on we came to the conclusion that it is better to follow the same procedure for illegal moves as we put in the Laws of Chess for touched pieces and irregularities. And this was decided during the Congress in Greece.

What made things unclear was putting "Irregularities, illegal moves" in brackets, although it has only to do with irregularities.

**Question** I have two questions, one concerning scoring and one concerning pre-arranged draws. According to the FIDE laws, a player is required to record each move before making the next one. My question is what should an Arbiter do about a player who has to be continually reminded to update his score sheet. Should such a player be warned and then have a time penalty imposed or suffer a forfeit if he still continues to make several moves without updating his score. Or is that too harsh?

My second question is: If an Arbiter finds out that two players agreed to a draw before a game, what should the Arbiter do? Is that viewed as a very serious offence by FIDE? **Lyndell Halliday (Barbados)**

**Answer** In your question you refer to a part of Article 8.1 of the Laws of Chess:

*A player may reply to his opponent's move before recording it, if he so wishes. He must record his previous move before making another.*

To make it clear: a player does not have to write the opponent's move after the opponent has completed the move. He may think about his own next move and after he has completed this move, he then may record the two completed moves.

Yes, a player, who does not fulfil the requirements of Article 8.1 should be penalised. And as you know, the first penalty is a warning. It depends on the circumstances, but the arbiter has the possibility of imposing an additional penalty: he may increase the remaining time of the opponent and reduce the remaining time of the offending player. All these penalties are described in Article 13.4 of the Laws of Chess. But what if a player, in spite of the penalties mentioned above, refuses to record the moves?

I think that the arbiter has no choice. He has to apply Article 12.7:

*Persistent refusal by a player to comply with the Laws of Chess shall be penalised by loss of the game. The arbiter shall decide the score of the opponent.*

I never applied this Article in my career as an arbiter. And it is my opinion that every arbiter should be very careful before using it, seeing if there are other ways to solve problems without applying it.

Regarding your second question, every chessplayer knows that quite often players agree to a draw before the game. Sometimes it has to do with the standings in the tournament. Sometimes they are good friends and they do not like to "fight" against each other. I am able to make a very long list why players may agree to a draw before the game. I agree completely with you that this is not nice and contrary to the Laws of Chess. See Article 5.2(c):

*The game is drawn upon agreement between the two players DURING [emphasis added] the game. This immediately ends the game.*

An arbiter must be very sure before reacting to an offence of this kind. Of course, much worse are the cases where a player loses the game intentionally. But again, it is very hard to prove.

**Question** Dear Mr. Gijssen, in a league match the following happened: Our player had at move 30 about 6½ minutes and his opponent about one minute. As often happens, our player forgot to record the moves and played Blitz like his opponent. The arbiter was sitting on the left side of our player and recorded the moves.

When the arbiter noticed that our player did not record the moves, he told him: "You have to record the moves". Our player, who was in deep concentration and also a little bit deaf in his left ear, did not react. A few moves later the arbiter repeated his demand. There was again no visible reaction from our player. Two moves later the arbiter stopped the clocks and declared the game lost by our player. He stated that he had warned the player twice.

In my opinion the arbiter failed on several points: 1. He did not check whether our player had heard that he had to record the moves. 2. He did not stop the clocks, when he spoke to our player. 3. He did not give an official warning. 4. He had the possibility to reduce the time of our player and/or to add some time to the opponent's time when he warned him for the second time.

In my opinion the penalty is disproportional and furthermore there was never an official warning. When our player told the arbiter that he is a little bit deaf on his left ear and that he had not heard anything, there came only a cynical smile on the arbiter's face. I am wondering if an arbiter may act in this way.

In the last Hogeschool Zeeland Tournament I saw that in two comparable situations that the arbiter officially warned the offending player, gave a time penalty to the offending player and time compensation to the opponent. In both cases it was clear that the player had heard very well that the arbiter had ordered him to record the moves. I would like to know your opinion about this incident.

**René Tiggelman, Middelburg (The Netherlands)**

**Answer** Your question has already been answered to some extent by my answer to Mr. Halliday (see the previous question). If all facts are as you described, then the penalty is in my personal opinion too severe; at least I would not have penalised your player in the same way. Alternative penalties were possible.

I would like to raise another point: A problem is also what *persistent refusal* means. Every arbiter has probably his own opinion about it. The league arbiter's opinion was apparently, that a player, who made the same offence twice, was refusing persistently. After what I wrote you will understand that I am more flexible.

But, you, Mr. Tiggelman, were the captain of the penalised player. I assume you knew about your player's handicap. I was wondering why you did not inform the arbiter about this. I am sure if you had done so, the outcome would have been different.

**Question** Dear Mr Gijssen, I would like to ask a question based on article 8.1 of the rules of chess, which concerns the recording of the moves during a game. The article states:



*In the course of play each player is required to record his own moves and those of his opponent in the correct manner, move after move, as clearly and legibly as possible, in the algebraic notation (Appendix E), on the 'scoresheet' prescribed for the competition. A player may reply to his opponent's move before recording it, if he so wishes. He must record his previous move before making another.*

In a recent tournament game, I was down to my last five minutes before the first time control, and so not recording the moves. My opponent, who had more than five minutes remaining, started to (in accordance with the rules) play his reply to my move before recording my previous move and his subsequent reply, obviously in order to deny me thinking time. However, a number of captures were made, and instead of writing down, for example, Bxd4, he merely placed 'x' in the appropriate section of the score sheet, which clearly allowed him to devote less time to the recording of moves, and play on my time pressure. While I did not press the matter during the game (when I asked him after the game, he claimed it was an acceptable shorthand notation) my own feeling is that it contravenes rule 8.1 in that the moves were not recorded in the correct manner and in the algebraic notation, and was wondering if you agreed, and if so what outcome you would have prescribed if I had called the arbiter?

On an incidental note, the rule clearly specifies algebraic notation be used to record the moves, yet I note in tournaments (including FIDE rated ones) that a significant number of players still use descriptive notation. Should these players, in your opinion, be penalised? **Paul Heaton (UK)**

**Answer** I agree with you that the way your opponent recorded the moves was not correct. And when the arbiter did not intervene, you had full right to protest. The outcome, had I been the arbiter, would have been to force your opponent to record the moves correctly, while his clock was running with some time compensation to you.

I am surprised to read that there are still players, who use descriptive notation. I think that only older players (I think they are over 70) are still using it. I agree with you that it is not correct that players record their moves in this way, but I suggest that each arbiter should keep in mind that these players have been using this notation their whole life and that it is very difficult to switch to another system. I am really wondering if this happens in FIDE rated tournaments. By the way, long algebraic notation (Ng1-f3 instead of Nf3) is not even the official notation, but there is no arbiter who would blame a player for using this long notation.

**Question** Dear Mr. Gijssen, In your last column Mr Nolans described a situation where a player overstepped the time in a blitz game when mate in a legal series of moves was - though not obvious - still possible. His opponent, being a nice person, agreed to a draw to escape the arbiters' lengthy discussions about the case. I wonder whether such a *post festum* agreement is formally valid at all.

Shouldn't the arbiters, however unsure they may have been about the right decision, claim that at any rate it is now up to *them* rather than the players to fix the result? In a similar case from my own practice, when I intended to courteously agree to a draw in an alleged borderline case, this was precisely what the arbiters told me. And I must say that it doesn't seem unreasonable to me to say that it is just a factual question and not a question of convenience to decide which of the possible ways to end a chess game, as defined in the Laws of Chess, applies to a given game. When it is clear to the arbiters that the game actually came to an end and hasn't just been interrupted, the players' agreement to a draw actually does seem a bit fishy. **Carsten Dutt (Germany)**

**Answer** Perhaps you did not understand the situation correctly. Let me quote Mr. Nolans:

“With just 2 seconds left, I stopped the clocks and claimed a draw as the drawing method is very simple, but with the clock on the “wrong” side of the board, I simply was not fast enough to bring my knight around in time. The arbiters had a lengthy discussion over the result, and eventually my opponent (being a nice person) offered to just take the draw and move on. The arbiters never made their decision, and I was wondering what the correct ruling would be.”

As you see, Mr. Nolans did not overstep the time. Therefore the (Blitz) game was not finished. He claimed a draw although as a matter of fact, he could not claim it; it is explicitly written in the Laws of Chess that claims pursuant Article 10.2 are not possible in Blitz games.

With two seconds on the clock Mr. Nolans claimed a draw and this is prohibited. What the arbiters could discuss was how to penalise Mr. Nolans. One of the possibilities could be increasing the opponent's remaining time. But even before the arbiters started a discussion, the opponent offered a draw and this ended the game.

**Question** Dear Mr. Gijssen, I would like to call to your attention what seems to be a hole in the FIDE Laws of chess. Suppose that two players are playing a game with a time control of all moves in three minutes with the addition of 3 seconds after each move. Furthermore, let us suppose that the players are using a clock, which cannot indicate which flag fell first (a Phileon, for example). Now let's see what happens when the arbiter sees both flags down and it is impossible to establish which flag fell first. This game is neither blitz nor rapid play because the time is not fixed (there is a three-second increment after each move). The final phase of this game is not a quickplay finish, once again because the time is not fixed. The only thing that remains in the Laws of Chess is Article 6.12: "If both flags have fallen and it is impossible to establish which flag fell first, the game shall continue". Quite obviously, this doesn't make sense in this context because the players could significantly upset the playing schedule of the tournament by bringing the game to its conclusion without any timing constraint. The same problem applies to games played at the World Championship rate of 1h30m for the entire game with the addition of 30 seconds after each moves but, fortunately,



DGT clocks are used in this event so there is no problem. I think that article 10.3 should be applied not only in quickplay finish, but also to the final time control of any game. **Pierre Dénomée (Canada)**

**Answer** I was already aware of this gap in the Laws of Chess and intend to discuss this at the next meetings of the Rules Committee during the Olympiad in Bled. But for the moment I think it is not a problem for each organiser to solve this problem as he wishes so long as it is announced in advance.

For the tiebreak games of the World Chess Championships there are, as you probably know, special regulations. They apply to the games with a time limit of 25 minutes for the whole game and an increment of 10 seconds, to the games with a time limit of 5 minutes for White and 4 minutes for Black with an increment of 10 seconds and even to the final sudden death game with 6 minutes for White and 5 minutes for Black. And these regulations are very simple: The normal Laws of Chess will apply with the exception that instead of the players, the arbiter will write the moves. But as I mentioned already before, we have to discuss new rules for games with an increment for each move.

**Question 1** Please advise what time controls will be used in the coming Olympics. We use those time controls in our national championships coming up next July. We have been using game/90 + 30 seconds in our local and international tournaments since last summer as that is what has been used in international tournaments.

**Answer** The time limit mentioned by you, 90 minutes for the whole game with an increment of 30 seconds per move from move 1 will be used in the Olympiad in Bled.

**Question 2** Has a decision been made on how many rounds per day for the next Olympiad?

**Answer** Yes, one round per day.

**Question 3** Pocket Fritz and other chess playing games are available for Palm and Palm-like devices. It would put the arbiters in a position to have to learn how to operate such devices to determine if one is being used. The chess playing and analysing can be kept hidden from view. I have to warn players to leave such devices at the arbiters' table for safekeeping until their games are over. The same applies for cellular phones and beepers. I answer the cellular and pass the message if an emergency. It is hard work just to keep them from talking to others. **Frankie Torregrosa IA (Puerto Rico)**

**Answer** We are living in a strange world. Perhaps you know that during the World Chess Championships in Moscow 2001 and 2002 the players were checked when they entered the playing area. Guards, armed with metal detectors, checked the players. I understand completely that this kind of checking after some experiences in several tournaments is necessary, but nevertheless strange.

About mobiles I have a very simple solution. They must be switched off. Before the round I inform the players about this, give them a warning when the mobile rings and declare the game lost when it happens for the second time. I am happy to inform the readers that the ultimate penalty was never levied.

It is quite reasonable that in amateur tournaments an exception will be made for, e.g., doctors. Your suggestion that the arbiter takes care of them is possible. But I repeat: it should be an exception!

**Question** Hello, I hope that you can help us in detecting what is the correct interpretation of the following:

Chapter C06.V The Conduct of The Players of the FIDE Handbook says:

4. When a player or team withdraws or is expelled from a round-robin tournament the consequence will be as follows:

*If a player or team has completed less than 50% of his games and leaves the tournament, the score remains in the tournament table (for rating and historical purposes), but the points scored by him/it or against him/it are not counted in the final standings. The unplayed games of the player or the team and his/its opponents are indicated by "-" in the tournament table and those of his/its opponents by "+". If neither players or teams are present, this will be indicated by two "-".*

*If a player or team has completed at least 50% of his games, his/its score shall remain in the tournament table and will be counted in the final standings. The unplayed games of the player or team are indicated as above.*

The problem is: what "completed" means, as in several parts of the FIDE Handbook, namely on the point 5 of this, "actually played" is used. We have now a real problem in our 3rd Division National Teams Championship. A team played in the first round, did not show up in the second round, played in the third, fifth and did not show up in the sixth round. After its second default on round 6 (9 rounds round-a-robin) the team was expelled from the competition..

Is it possible to argue that the team had completed 5 matches, because it was on the tournament table after the fifth round? The team did not play one match but the result was considered and if the team did not made any other default the result would be counted normally. If FIDE's intention was in other way the expression actually played was in the "handbook"

Is also possible to argue that 'completed' is the same as 'actually played', etc.? So what is the correct interpretation? **Luís Costa, President of the Portuguese Chess Federation (Portugal)**

**Answer** The terms “ actually played” and “completed” mean the same. In your case the team involved completed 4 of 9 matches. This is less than 50% of the matches. Therefore the results of the completed matches will not be counted for the final standings. Decisive is the number of matches completed and not the moment the team was expelled.

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

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