

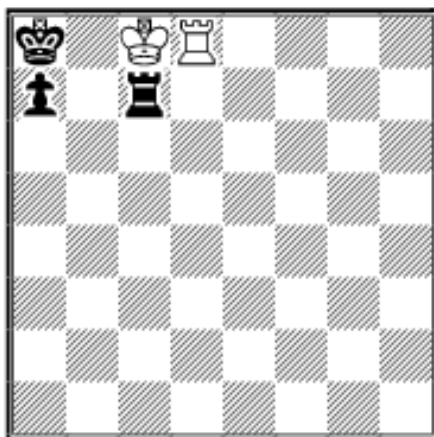


C O L U M N I S T S

## An Arbiter's Notebook

Geurt Gijssen

### Losing a Game after Mating the Opponent



**Question** Dear Mr. Gijssen, I have a follow-up question to Alex Shternshain's question on Article 1.3 (= 9.6, etc) in your Feb 2 column. Suppose that a position is an automatic win for White, i.e., no matter what legal moves White and Black play, White cannot avoid checkmating Black. Does it not make sense that the game should be declared a win for White, even if White would otherwise lose on time? In other words, why are only mandatory draws protected from the clock, and not mandatory wins? It's obviously not a big deal, but I am curious as to the rationale. A simple example of this is illustrated in the diagram. **Andrew Buchanan (USA)**

**Answer** Your question is very interesting. I never thought about the possibility that a player may be forced to mate his opponent. Personally I share your opinion that it is very logical to treat winning positions in the same way as positions that are forced draws. But on the other hand, as you yourself already indicated, it happens very rarely, I am sure that there is no majority in the General Assembly of FIDE for this proposal.

**Question** I have to admit that I have not read all your columns because I have no problems with the Laws of Chess. You have probably answered my question in one of the previous columns. Nevertheless, I am wondering what happens in the following situation: In a team competition, one of the players asks his captain permission to accept the draw proposal of his opponent. The captain, quite a strong player, even stronger than the players on his team, notices that the last opponent's move is a blunder and he advises his player to continue.

The question is of course: Is this 'advice'? The question to the captain can be considered an evaluation of the current position. The same may occur in the situation where a player wants to offer a draw, asks his captain for permission but in fact the players and the captain are using a kind of code. For instance: "Continue", means: "Check your position, because your position is much better, even winning". An arbiter cannot detect these tricks. What is your opinion? **Yves Surmont (Belgium)**

**Answer** I understand your question very well and I agree with you that there is a huge chance of cheating. And I am sure that it sometimes happens. But to prove it is very difficult. Let us see what the FIDE Handbook writes about the role of the captain:

*1. The role of a team captain is basically an administrative one. Depending on the regulations of the specific competition, the captain may be required to deliver, at a specific time, a written list naming the players in his team who will participate in each round, report the results of a match to an arbiter at the end of the play, etc.*

*2. A captain is entitled to advise the players of his team to make or accept an offer of a draw or to resign a game, unless the regulations of the event stipulate otherwise. He must confine himself to give only brief information, based solely on the circumstances pertaining to the match.*

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

*4. The captain should abstain from any intervention during play. He should not give any information to a player concerning the position on the chessboard, nor consult any other person as to the state of the game. Players are subject to the same prohibitions.*

*5. Even though in a team competition there is a certain team loyalty, which goes beyond a player's individual game, a game of chess is basically a contest between two players. Therefore, the player must have the final say over the conduct of his own game. Although the advice of the captain should weigh heavily with the player, the player is not absolutely compelled to accept that advice. Likewise, the captain cannot act on behalf of a player and his game without the knowledge and consent of the player.*

*6. All discussions shall take place in sight of the arbiter and he shall be entitled to insist on hearing the conversation.*

*7. A team captain should influence his team always to follow both the letter and the spirit of Article 12 of the FIDE Laws of Chess concerning the conduct of the players. Team championships should be conducted particularly in the spirit of the highest sportsmanship.*

Let me comment on these Articles:

1. This is very obvious and not dangerous at all.

2. The first danger appears: the captain may advise his player based on the circumstances pertaining to the match. How can an arbiter check that the advice given is not based on the actual situation on the board? The answer is simple: the arbiter is not able to check it.

3. The same comment as in 2.

4. It is impossible for the arbiter to monitor the captains. Many times they leave the playing hall to get drinks for the players, to smoke a cigarette or simply to take a walk. It means the captain has the possibility to talk to other persons and even to go to his room, check the position with a computer and return to the playing hall, advising the player to accept or to offer a draw.

5. This is a good article. The player should decide himself and the captain cannot take any final decision.

6. I think that this is a good article, but the arbiter again has the problem that it is absolutely impossible to control the situation. Another problem is that a player and captain speak their own language and it happens very often that an arbiter does not speak or understand that language.

7. A fine article, but many times the interests are so high that players and captains forget what good sportsmanship means

You understand that I am not very happy with the role of the captain. Even if the captain may say only "Yes" or "No" the way he is saying this or the face he makes can be an indication of something else.

In my opinion the best would be for the captain *to delegate the decision to the player himself*, but this demands a lot of wisdom from a captain.

**Question** Dear Mr Gijssen, I am national chess player (ELO 2186) and chess arbiter. I have been elected to the city arbiters' council.

Although my chess career commenced about 25 years ago and I recently played in the Istanbul Chess Olympiad, I have the following questions:

a) May a player claim that the game should be adjusted due to an illegal move he discovered after he has signed the scoresheets, but before the next round starts?

b) May a player claim a draw when a stalemate occurred in the game but they continued and obtained a score 1-0 or vice versa (after they signed the scoresheets but before the next round starts)? Such a position has been discovered in a game between junior players.

c) Should an arbiter intervene when he notices that a stalemate or mate has

occurred during the game or is he only charged to react when a time limit is exceeded? **Zeki Sayber (Turkey)**

**Answer** As far as I know an updated FIDE Handbook in printing does not exist, but on the FIDE website: [www.fide.com](http://www.fide.com) you may find the updated version of the FIDE Handbook. It is possible to download it. The Laws of Chess, the duties of the arbiters and all items related to chess tournaments are in this Handbook.

I start with the last question because this is the easiest one. If in a normal game the arbiter notices that the game has been finished by stalemate, mate or overstepping the time limit, he must intervene immediately. If this happens in a rapid or blitz game, he should not intervene. He has to wait for a claim by either player.

For the first question I refer to Article 7.4:

*If during the game it is found that an illegal move has been made, the position immediately before the irregularity shall be reinstated.*

As you can see, only where an illegal move has been discovered DURING the game is a claim is possible.

For the remaining question I intended to give the same answer as for the first one, but when I thought it over, I hesitated. To be honest, your question is a very difficult one.

There are several articles I can cite:

*Article 5.1(a): 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.*

*Article 5.2(a): The game is drawn when the player has no legal move and his king is not in check. This immediately ends the game, provided that the move producing the stalemate position was legal.*

*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.*

I agree with everybody who states that all moves played after a king is checkmated or stalemated are not relevant and do not belong to the game. This means that the result is clear, but the players were unaware about the fact that the game was finished and continued. Then they signed off on a result that probably was not the correct one. According to Article 8.7, the arbiter has an opportunity to correct the result, although I am sure that this was not intended for this kind of

situation. The main question is: Should the arbiter correct an incorrect result in such cases? In my opinion, it depends on several circumstances, for instance the type of the tournament, the round in which it happened, the moment it was discovered and so on. I agree that this seems a little bit vague, but look at some examples:

1. There is a team competition between team A and team B. One of the games is finished, white (team A) won the game and both players signed off on the result. The captain advised all other players to offer their opponents a draw. This happened, but immediately after these draws were agreed it was discovered that in the decisive game black (team B) has checkmated his opponent. Is it fair to correct the result of this particular game? I do not think so.
2. In a round robin tournament of 11 rounds the same thing happens. Before round 2 the checkmate is discovered. I think it is reasonable to change the result. But if it is discovered after round 8, I am not so sure that I would change the result.
3. In a Swiss tournament it is even more complicated as everybody will understand. The arbiter makes pairings based on a wrong result and it may affect the course of a tournament when the arbiter corrects the result.

I can give more examples, but I am inclined to say that if the course of a tournament would be changed by the correction of a wrong result, the arbiter should not change the result. We probably have to change Article 5 and to add something like was done for illegal moves.

**Question** Dear Mr. Gijssen, I was surprised to read the following sentence in your last article: "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." After a little thought, I think that I understood what you said, but could you please confirm it: In case one player takes the other king, it can be considered similar to a mate (even if we consider that the one who takes the king has lost). When one player plays an illegal move (let's say Nb3-d5), the move does not end automatically the game, but the opponent must claim the win. Is that a correct interpretation of your thoughts? Furthermore, if White plays Nb3-d5 AND Black claims a win for illegal move, am I am right in assuming that Black wins the game?

In a recent blitz tournament, the following occurred: White has queen and king, while Black has only a king. Black plays his move and completes it by pushing the clock. It is now mate in one on the chessboard. White takes his queen and before he can play the mating move, his flag falls and Black claims a draw (or at least says something like "fallen"). Both players agree to a draw.

But the arbiter was watching the game and decides that White wins the game since there is a mate in one on the board. I suspect that the arbiter made a mistake and that the game should be a draw. What is your opinion? **Damien André**

## (Belgium)

**Answer** Regarding the first part of your letter my response is: Yes Damien, this was exactly what I thought.

Regarding the incident in the blitz tournament you describe, there is no doubt the arbiter was wrong. How could he, for instance, know that White intended to checkmate his opponent with the next move?

**Question** Dear Geurt, I am sorry to bother you with another question about 10.2, the Law, which we arbiters always talk about but hardly ever apply. However I am puzzled by your comments in the last two columns about the situation where the arbiter postpones the decision and then the claimant's flag falls. You say that only how the game was played should be taken into account and not the final position. I found this surprising because:

(i) The Laws do not say anything at all about what should be taken into account in making the final decision. The player may be awarded a draw as soon as the claim is made if the arbiter (at that point) is satisfied that either the position cannot be won by normal means or that the opponent is not trying to win by normal means. If the arbiter is postponing the decision because one of these points is unclear (and it is often the first) why should the second issue be more relevant in determining whether the draw can be awarded after the flag fall later?

(ii) One of the purposes of Rule 10.2, I understood, was to protect a player from losing on time in a position he could not otherwise lose. However, suppose that a player claims a draw in a position where the opponent is still trying to win, but the position is almost unwinnable by normal means. The arbiter, not instantly sure if the position is winnable by normal means, postpones the decision. The claimant then reaches a position, which really cannot be lost by normal means, but his flag falls soon after. Assuming that the opponent has been consistently trying to win and the position cannot be taken into account, the claimant loses, and has been punished for claiming in an unclear position.

(iii) Another purpose of Rule 10.2 seems to be to discourage the claimant from repeatedly claiming draws. In the case I mention in (ii) above, the player might claim a draw every single move in the hope that the position has reached one that cannot be lost by normal means, even though a previous claim has already been postponed. In that way once a position, which the arbiter considered not possible to win by normal means had been reached, the player would be able to get a draw. If the arbiter is not going to take the final position into account and the opponent is trying to win, this is their only way (short of reaching a draw by some other method) of getting a draw, but it would be very disruptive to have to deal with repeated draw claims.

(iv) It is usually very easy to recognise a player who is clearly not trying to win the game by normal means. In one of the cases you mentioned in the previous column, it seemed that a player who claimed a draw and then did try to win the



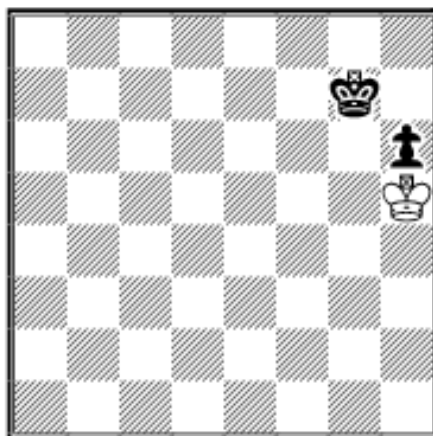
game, but had his flag fallen without a subsequent draw offer, should be awarded a loss. My problem here is that I do not think it is always easy, particularly with low - level players, to say from the moves that a player is trying to win. A player who is shuffling pieces is often clearly not trying to win, but a player who is trying to trade off all the opposing pieces may be trying to win the resulting ending, or may have no idea how to win that ending and simply be trying to avoid a loss on time. I would not like to be in the situation of having to decide whether someone should lose a game because he had been trying to win it.

It therefore seems to me that it is sensible for the arbiter to take both the subsequent play and whether the final position can be won by normal means into account in making a final decision. In either case, the Laws should be worded more clearly so that the arbiter knows what the basis for his decision should be. Best regards, **Kevin Bonham (Australia)**

**Answer** I agree with you that we talk more about Article 10.2 than apply it. This should probably be the last time it is discussed, but I am not very optimistic. I myself was never in a position to have to apply Article 10.2.

Article 10.2 says that the arbiter should agree to a claim if the opponent is making no effort to win the game by normal means, or it is impossible to win by normal means.

I will try to interpret what this means, although I see some difficulties. What, for instance, is meant by the phrase 'by normal means'? Does it mean without tricks? Does it mean that he tries to take advantage of the fact that he has more time? Yes, I think this is what we had in mind when we made this Article. The opponent does not care what is going on the board; he is only watching his opponent's clock and waiting for the moment that the opponent's flag falls.



As far as I know, many claims are related to positions which are theoretically a draw, but where someone blunders. Let me give an example. In this position, it is clear, that the ending is a draw. About this position, Stewart Reuben says in the second edition of *The Chess Organiser's Handbook*: "If White claims a draw, it depends on the strength of the players. If they are weak, they should be told to play on. Otherwise it should be given a draw." I agree more or less with Mr. Reuben about this position, but it shows also how difficult it is to define possible or impossible to win by normal means. Probably it depends also on the strength of the arbiter who is involved.

In your introduction you asked me where is it written that the arbiter, if he postpones his decision, should take into consideration how the game was continued. I think the fact that Article 10.2(b) says that the game shall continue in

the presence of an arbiter, if possible, indicates clearly that the continuation is essential.

Your remark that it is very difficult to recognise that a player is not making effort to win the game is 100% correct. I remember that Mr. Maeser related the following to me: Once he showed a part of a Polugaevsky game to a lot of players. All agreed that Polugaevsky did not try to win the game by normal means. Then he showed the players the comments to the game written by a grandmaster. This grandmaster was of the opinion that Polugaevsky played that ending in superb style, making very little, but decisive steps to win the game. And as a matter of fact, I do not blame the players who did not see what really happened in that game, but it shows clearly what can go wrong with Article 10. And as the reader knows, appeals against an arbiter's decision regarding Article 10 are not possible since the Istanbul congress.

Finally I would like to draw your attention to Article 12.5 of the Laws of Chess:

*“It is forbidden to distract or annoy the opponent in any manner whatsoever. This includes unreasonable claims or offers of a draw.”*

**Question** Dear Mr. Gijssen, In a recent tournament where I was the arbiter, I witnessed the following situation at the end of a round. It was a classical time control, with a quickplay finish and no extra time added. The player with the white pieces had 6½ minutes on the clock in the last phase of the game, but was an exchange down and had a clearly losing position. The player with the black pieces had less than 3 minutes on the clock and had therefore stopped recording moves. Two or three times in a row, trying to save a few seconds, the black player made a move before the opponent had even released his piece. The white player did not protest, but I was watching, since it was the last game of the round, and I instructed the black player to wait until the opponent had released his piece before moving. I could imagine what would have happened had the White player changed his mind at the last moment and played his piece on a different square...

The black player complied with my request and nobody protested. But later I had a discussion with other arbiters about this case. Their opinion was that I also should have instructed the player to wait until his opponent had pressed the clock. They said that under article 6.8.a of the Laws of Chess, since the opponent had not pressed the clock, his move was not completed, and the player had therefore no right to move a piece. I disagreed with that, and said that since the article 1.1 says a player has the move when the opponent has made a move (it does not say 'completed'), playing before the opponent pressed the clocked was not explicitly forbidden, and therefore should not be prevented, provided the opponent is still allowed to press the clock. We could not come to an agreement on this point.

What is your opinion on this matter? Has a player the right to play a move before the opponent has pressed the clock, or do the Laws of Chess forbid such behaviour? In other words, is the following sequence 'White plays - Black plays -



White presses the clock - Black presses the clock' correct? **Thomas Lemoine (France)**

**Answer** I would like to congratulate you because your actions were absolutely correct. After the player has released a piece on the new square, the opponent may start making his own move. And as you described in your letter, it is not uncommon that a player has already made his move, before his opponent had pressed the clock. I think that the Laws of Chess have an Article that covers this case. Article 6.8 (a) says:

*A player must always be allowed to stop his clock.*

And you should add: and to start the opponent's. It means the following: player A made a move without pressing his clock, player B makes his move, then player A has still the right to press his clock, although it is his move.

**Question** This question is obviously a joke, but it covers a situation that could be discussed on a real tournament. The rules of chess states:

6.7 Any player who arrives at the chessboard more than one hour after the scheduled start of the session shall lose the game unless the rules of the competition specify or the arbiter decides otherwise.

So, the player has one hour before losing by forfeit... but this rule also applies to blitz and rapid chess. And there could be discussions about a player losing on time, not by forfeit and so on. The change of the rule is obvious, I do not understand why it stands that way. I hope the text is corrected in the next Congress.

Proposed text:

6.7 Any player who arrives at the chessboard more than one hour (or his total allotted time, whichever is less) after the scheduled start of the session shall lose the game unless the rules of the competition specify or the arbiter decides otherwise. **I. A. Eduardo Saucedo Salazar (Mexico)**

**Answer** You are right if the text of Article 6.7 had been: *Any player who arrives at the chessboard more than one hour after the scheduled start of the session shall lose the game.*

But as you may see, each tournament committee has the ability to make his own rule. A committee may even decide to declare the game lost for a player in case he is not present at the start of the round. It is obvious that this must be announced in advance. Mr. Maeser from Switzerland, a member of the Rules Committee, wrote me a letter proposing to change Article 6.7 in this way. And he makes a point, asking whether there is any sport in which the players do not have to be present at the start.

And I think he is right. OK, somebody will probably say that a player who arrives after the start shall lose time, but still, it is not nice.

I remember an "incident" from my own experience. In January 1998 the final match of the World Chess Championship Knock Out tournament was played in Lausanne. Karpov and Anand were the finalists. And it is always customary that at the start of the first game there is a little ceremony. A VIP makes the first move or there is a small speech. At 14.30, the time of the start of the game, everybody, the president of the IOC, Mr. Samaranch, the president of FIDE, Mr. Ilyumshinov and Vishy Anand, were present, but Karpov had not shown up. And really I did not know what to do: I had two options: 1. To start Karpov's clock, but then it would be impossible to have any ceremony. 2. To wait for Karpov, to have a very short ceremony and then to start the game. And in the event I went with the second option, how long to wait for Karpov. I decided for option 2 and not to wait longer than 5 minutes. Waiting a longer time would be very unpleasant for Karpov. After about 5 minutes Karpov appeared and there was a very short ceremony.

As a matter of fact, I understood Karpov's attitude. He does not like all the photographers with the very disturbing flash-cameras and many players agree with him. On the other hand he has to take into account that publicity is very important for a sponsor of an important. It is very difficult to find a compromise position in this situation.

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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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