



## COLUMNISTS

# *An Arbiter's Notebook*

Geurt Gijssen

## Bled Awaits

From October 25<sup>th</sup> until November 11<sup>th</sup> the next Olympiad and FIDE Congress shall be organised in Bled, a little, but very lovely city in Slovenia. I have been there for some preparations for the Olympiad. The people of Bled were very proud that they were able to organise a lot of very important chess events. To name only two of these events, everybody knows of Bled 1931, won by Alekhine and Bled 1959, the famous Candidates' Tournament, won by Mikhail Tal. I was told that Bled was the favourite city of Bobby Fischer. I have no reason to doubt this; I understand Fischer's love for this city.

The playing hall is an ice hockey stadium. When I visited Bled a lot of people were working to transform it into a chess hall. I am very confident they will succeed although a lot of work has to be done. The hotels are excellent, the service is very good and almost everybody speaks English. The transmission system was tested and worked very well. The publishers are ready to produce the bulletins and all other necessary documents. The only thing we are now waiting for is the number of teams that will participate. In my next Notebook I shall be able to inform the readers about it, as the deadline to sign up for the Olympiad is August 15<sup>th</sup>. I expect that we shall again have a wonderful Olympiad.

I have already mentioned that the FIDE Congress will also be organised in Bled. There will be elections for the Presidential Board, always an interesting happening and a lot of meetings of FIDE committees and commissions. And the reader should not be surprised when I tell him that the Rules Committee will have several meetings. By the way, I have to make a correction: the official name of this Committee is Rules and Regulations Committee.

Mainly based on questions of readers and some incidents in the last few years I would like to discuss the following items in our meetings:

1. What should an arbiter do when a player is called on his mobile or his mobile is ringing? What should an arbiter do if a player tries to make a call? Should the players deliver their mobile to the arbiter? Should security officers check the players before and also during the game to see if they have a mobile with them? It is clear that we have to do something.

2. Do we need special rules for games played with Fischer modus and especially with a short primary time control? I have given this some thought and I would like to discuss the following proposal: (a) If the primary time control + 60 times the increment for each player is less than 15 minutes, the game will be considered a Blitz game. An example: the primary time control is 5 minutes and there is an increment of 5 seconds per move. In that case we get the figure 5 minutes + 60 x 5 seconds = 10 minutes; (b) If the primary time control + 60 times the increment is from more than 15 to 60 minutes, the game will be considered a Rapid game. An example: At the start if each player receives 25 minutes and an increment of 10 seconds per move from move 1, we get the figure: 25 minutes + 60 x 10 seconds = 35 minutes.
3. In 1998 the Rules Committee decided that in Blitz games it is forbidden to take the King if the opponent leaves his King in check or places his King under the attack. We did not decide what the penalty should be if a player takes the opponent's King. I think we have to make a decision. Players who have followed the Arbiter's Notebook know my proposal.
4. I would like to discuss the regulations of some FIDE events, for instance the World Chess Championships, especially which Laws to apply in tiebreak games.

I hope to receive a lot of reaction to these proposals.

Something else: recently I visited some tournaments. In one tournament the time limit was 90 minutes for the whole game with an increment of 30 seconds per move from the first move. In two tournaments the time limit was the so called "classical" time limit: 40 moves in 2 hours, 20 moves in 1 hour and 30 minutes for the remaining moves. In another non-rated tournament, played with mechanical clocks, the time limit was 40 moves in 2 hours and 30 minutes for the remaining moves.

Some observations: in the tournaments played with the "classical" time limit the majority of the games were finished within 6 hours. This means that less than 61 moves were played. In the A group of the Lost Boys tournament 47 out of 427 games, i.e., about 11% had less than 61 moves. And I was told that there were no claims pursuant Article 10.2. I spoke with one of the arbiters of this tournament and it was his opinion that Article 10.2 had a limiting effect. The players are generally sportsmanlike and do not like to claim a draw in an equal position. He would therefore like to maintain Article 10. I agree with him.

In Dortmund, the venue of the semi-final and final of the Einstein Candidates Matches there was something interesting. The time limit was the classical one. In 7 games out of 35 more than 60 moves were played. In all games with more than 60 moves either Leko, the winner of the tournament, or the runner-

up, Topalov, were involved. In the final between these two players all games had more than 60 moves. It was really a fighting event.

At the Bled Open the time limit was 90 minutes + increment of 30 seconds. I saw a lot of games with extreme time pressure, but without real incidents.

Then finally the unrated tournament: it was the only tournament with the old fashioned mechanical clocks. I do not like this time limit especially in combination with mechanical clocks. After the first control, let us say after about 4 hours, the clocks had to be adjusted by the arbiters while the games were still going on. If the organisers intended to play for 5 hours, as was the case with this time limit, it would have been better in my opinion to play 35 moves in 90 minutes and 1 hour for the remaining moves. By the way this tournament was also the Lost Boys tournament, but Groups C and D.

**Question** Dear Mr. Geurt Gijssen, I have a question that puzzles many chess friends and me. Are there copyright or patent rights to game moves? Article 8.3 of the Laws of Chess says:

*The scoresheets are the property of the organisers of the event.*

But this is about the *scoresheets*, not *moves*. In other words, although the scoresheets may belong to the organisers of the event, if anyone who knows (sees, remembers, records, etc.) all moves of the games in any events (tournaments, matches, etc.) copies and issues them (publishes, releases, transmits, pastes, etc.) in public, without any authorization of the organisers, does he break any laws or rules? A related question is: Do the organisers have an obligation to let public know the "moves" of games in any events (tournaments, matches, etc.)? **Michael Soong (China)**

**Answer** A really a difficult question. Tarrasch and Lasker had discussed this. And nowadays the Russian Grandmaster Evgeny Svesnikov is fighting for the copyrights of his games. I spoke with Svesnikov about it. He told me that he agrees that his games may be published when he wins money in a tournament. Otherwise it is forbidden for the organiser to publish his games. I understand players who are of the opinion that a game is their intellectual property. And they would like to be paid for this. But I know also that all attempts to legalise this matter have failed completely. There are several reasons for this. One of the reasons is that the majority of the chessplayers do not care if their games are published. Another point is that it is almost impossible to sue everyone who may publish games without permission. But the most difficult task is to unite all (professional) chessplayers so that they are of one mind on this matter.

Back to your question: you are right that the scoresheets are the property of the organisers. But that does not apply to the moves. To be honest, I actually

think that players and organisers are very happy that the games are published. It means publicity.

**Question** Article 8.1, 3<sup>rd</sup> paragraph, of the Laws of Chess says:

*If a player is unable to keep score, an amount of time, decided by the arbiter, shall be deducted from his allotted time at the beginning of the game.*

In a recent county game, white was unable to write his moves because of physical disability, his captain was unwilling or unable to provide secretarial assistance. Black drew my attention to Article 8.1, and in a time control of 40 in 120, deducted 10 minutes from White's time.

The question is this, I was minded if no-one had been in the room from white's team to impose no time penalty but keep an eye on the board and if any difficulty arose, to organise a neutral secretary from a player in another match. Were my putative and actual actions as correct as they could be? **Cyril Johnson (England)**

**Answer** Your question is a very important one and I will explain why. There are two Articles of the Laws of Chess about assisting a player who is unable to fulfil the requirements of the Laws of Chess:

*Article 6.8(d): If a player is unable to use the clock, an assistant, who is acceptable to the arbiter, may be provided by the player to perform this operation. The clocks shall be adjusted by the arbiter in an equitable way.*

*Article 8.1: If a player is unable to keep score, an amount of time, decided by the arbiter, shall be deducted from his allotted time at the beginning of the game.*

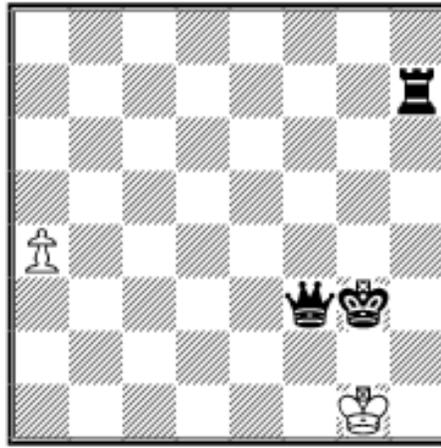
In 6.8 it states that somebody else shall press the clock. And the player who is unable to press the clock must provide this person. This person must be acceptable to the arbiter.

It was during the Olympiad in Elista that the American captain informed me at about 17.00 hrs during the round that one of his players might not press his clock from 17.30 hrs. I was a little bit confused, but with the agreement of his opponent a little Kalmykian boy pressed the clock after 17.30. Based on this experience I made a proposal about what to do if a player may not press his clock.

It is a little strange that we do not have the same possibility if a player cannot write the moves. The only thing that is written is, that some time shall be

deducted from his starting time. A deduction of 10 minutes is, as far I know, generally accepted. Probably we will have to add (in 2004) that, just as we did for pressing the clock, another person has to write the moves. When I look to the Laws of Chess we currently have, your actions were completely correct. Chapeau.

**Question** Dear Geurt, Further to your response to the questions posed by National Arbiter S.T Sahasrabudhe, I would add that it is not always true that a player can always win on time if they have at least one pawn remaining (as suggested in S.T. Sahasrabudhe's case 8). The pawns may sometimes be blocked. Consider the following.

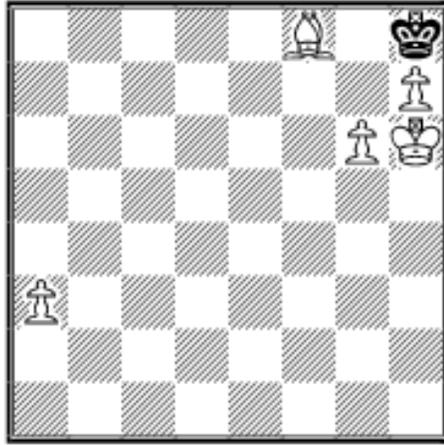


(White's last move was a3-a4) Black's flag now falls. White still has a pawn on the board, but every legal Black move either checkmates or stalemates White, so it is impossible for White to checkmate from that position with any series of legal moves, and so the game is drawn.

It is also possible to construct legally reachable positions (although extremely unlikely to every occur in a game)

where both sides have (at least minor) pieces as well as pawns, but most of the board is blockaded with pawns in a way that one side can not break out no matter what moves are played, but the other side can still checkmate. So, S.T. Sahasrabudhe's rule 8 is useful only as a guide - each individual position needs to be checked to make sure the side claiming the win on time is capable of checkmating in that specific position. **Kevin Bonham (Australia)**

**Answer** I understand your remarks, although your example is wrong. What, if Black plays Kh4? In that case White can play Kh2. And in that case White can still win, I think. Do you agree? I do agree with you that it is possible to construct the kind of positions you mean. An example:



I state in a previous *Notebook*: It is very dangerous to make a general rule that these positions are drawn. Some of them can lead to forced mate. I prefer that arbiters in these situations use their sound judgement instead of applying such a rule. I think that we have no different opinion about these cases. Do you agree?

**Question** The question sent by Mr Keles, July column, is very interesting and confusing. As a TD who plays more often than directs, I would like to be certain of your view- if there is a checkmate, and the last move played is a legal move, the game is completed and thus no recourse for an appeal regards an earlier illegal move... However, for a repetition claim the game remains in progress and thus the game can be reverted to the position before said illegal move? Additionally, let us suppose that Player A makes an illegal move. Player B decides at the time not to make a claim Later Player B makes a speculative sacrifice, no checkmate but instead perpetual check On the repetition claim, B notes the illegal move By declining to make the claim immediately B has benefited in the assessment of the position, realizing that the speculative sac isn't working. Not that we should have sympathy for those who make illegal moves, but is it not much less confusing for all to have the rule stipulate the claim has to be immediate in order to avoid the scenario above, which can of course be matched or exceeded by our audience's creative imagination! If not, is it possible for Player A to note the illegal move so as to not have the prospect of letting B play the position twice? **Andy Rea (USA)**

**Answer** Yes, you understood everything I wrote. And I have to admit you're observations are absolutely correct. When a player has completed an illegal move, the opponent has the possibility at any moment as long the game is in progress (and I am talking about a normal game, not a Blitz or Rapid game) to summon the arbiter that the player completed an illegal move some moves ago. The arbiter is then obliged to check the moves and to punish the offending player. And you are also right that the player can take all kind of risks, having in mind that he has the ability to return to the position that was on the board just before the illegal move was completed. The only danger for the opponent is that he overlooks that he has been checkmated. In that case the game is over.

Unfortunately I have to say again: If a player likes to cheat his opponent, it is possible to do so.

**Question** Dear Mr Gijssen, In the recent blitz tournament in Kotor, Yugoslavia one of the players (P) checkmated his opponent's king (R), but the player (R) whose king was mated called the arbiter. He said that he was the winner because the flag of the opponent had fallen. The arbiter declared a draw. Was he wrong? Must the flag be up in the checkmate position? **Goran Tomic (Yugoslavia)**

**Answer** Which Articles are relevant in this case? In my opinion the following Articles are:

*Article 5.1 (a): The game is won by the player who has checkmated his opponent. This immediately ends the game, provided that the move producing the checkmate position was a legal move.*

*Article B6: The flag is considered to have fallen when a player has made a valid claim to that effect. The arbiter shall refrain from signalling a flag fall.*

Article 5 is part of the “normal” Laws of Chess and applies also for Rapid and Blitz games. Article B6 is an article for Rapid games and applies also for Blitz games.

The situation is now clear: At the moment player R called the arbiter to claim the flag fall, the game was already finished and won by player P. Therefore I have to inform you that the arbiter’s decision was wrong.

What I wrote in the previous paragraph is valid for Blitz and Rapid games.

What about “normal” games? There is one essential difference. In normal games the arbiter must signal a flag fall, when he sees this. See 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.*

It is clear that the sequence, in which flag fall and the checkmate move take place, is very important. If a flag drops down a split of second before the opponent makes his checkmate move the player whose flag fell has lost the game.

More difficult is the situation if flag fall and making the checkmate move happen at the same moment. It is accepted that in that case the action on the board (making the checkmate move) takes precedence. As you see, the role of the arbiter in these matters is very important, even decisive!

*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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