



COLUMNISTS

An Arbiter's Notebook

Geurt Gijssen

Capricious Captains

Question Dear Mr. Gijssen, In the spirit of your customary and very entertaining reports from the tournaments you supervise, I would like to contribute my input, mentioning my latest experiences as well as some concerns and questions regarding the Laws of Chess.

I served as Deputy Chief Arbiter at the European Club Cup, held in Chalkidiki, Greece from September 22-28, under the instructions of Mr. Dirk de Ridder. Immediately afterwards I also worked as an arbiter at the European Rapid & Blitz Championships, also in Greece (in Chania this time), again Mr. de Ridder being the Chief Arbiter. What follows is a collection of thoughts and queries generated by these two events.

At the ECC everything was running quite smoothly. The organizers had done a very good job, the players were generally satisfied and the event was very interesting from a chess point of view. Mr. de Ridder impressed me with his zeal, inputting many hours of work into his Excel lists, updating them with all kinds of relevant info - results, performances and other details. The pairings were up shortly after the end of each round, so were the standings and the individual board results as well. In the meantime I was left in charge of the playing hall, a seemingly daunting but eventually rather comfortable task. Once again it was, in my mind, confirmed that one doesn't need to be an International Arbiter to be a good arbiter; a few young (younger than my age of 28, that is) people served as such and did an excellent job, thanks to their great sense of responsibility and penchant for hard work. Somehow I get the impression that the title of IA is suffering from a symptom similar to the one of GM, too many people achieve this title and not all of them are as competent.

Question 1 One issue that arose was with the DGT clocks. I myself checked each and every clock the day before round one, and although ONE clock (out of approximately 130) did escape my attention with a wrong setting (sure enough, an incident occurred - more about that later), I may say that everything else was in order. However, there were a few occasions during the tournament where the clock would refuse to add the allotted time when entering the next period (the time control used was 100min/40 moves + 50min/20 moves + 15min/rest of the game + 30sec increment from move 1).

As of course every arbiter checked his clocks before the start of each round, I refuse to believe that in every such occasion the clock was improperly set. So what is the problem then? A bug in the software? I am wondering if other arbiters have noted such occurrences as well and if you may have an idea about this issue.

In general no other problems occurred, related to the arbiters' work. Of course, there was the usual Korchnoi show of shouting, commenting quite loudly on various occasions etc. I can testify that he is always very amusing, even to a person with as poor a knowledge of the Russian language as me, but some of the players were visibly disturbed by his behaviour and the respective arbiters horribly embarrassed by his stubbornness to comply to their instruction. There also was one incident involving him, during his round 6 game vs. Adrian Mikhalchishin, but more about that when I move on to the European Rapid & Blitz.

One other issue that really bothered me was the hygiene habits of some players, especially very young ones. Haven't they ever heard of the concept of a shower? I personally had at least two players complain about the annoying smell coming from their opponents (one particular team seemed to be using this as a team strategy - apart from their top boards) and I myself decided after much deliberation to assign an assistant to pick up the scoresheets from the boards of these players. Seriously, how on Earth can a tournament director confront this problem? In a crowded playing hall with 21 6-board matches, lots of spectators and other people it can be very annoying.

The players were generally satisfied with the time control used as well. It seems to me that most top players favour longer time controls, they even explicitly stated so in the short interviews they did with me for the tournament website (<http://ecc02.chessworld.info>) - you can read their opinions there. Several good games were played, some very instructive endings as well, and in general the quality of the games was rather high.

The eternal question is, what to do with the spectators? They ignore all kinds of warning signs at the playing hall entrance, they leave their mobile phones switched on when they enter the hall, causing some disturbance to the players on occasion, they make too much noise, they hover their heads above the players' boards, they ignore all restricting ropes and other devices (proceeding to demolish them when they become TOO restrictive) etc. Maybe you have some suggestions for the future?

On to the round 1 incident with the clock now... I served as arbiter on the stage, hosting the top match, throughout the event. In round one the French team NAO Chess Club was playing there against some Israeli team, the captain of which seemed to spend the entire week complaining about everything, including the fact that the organizers hadn't provided for lower prices for the chess people at the hotel mini-market and that the title of a

Spanish opponent (!!) of one of his players on his name tag had been printed as GW (instead of GM), thus misleading the spectators.

Question 2 The incident occurred after move 31 of the board 5 game between Finkel and Nataf. The clock had been set to add the 50 minutes of the second period after move 30 (instead of 40) - it does sound like incredibly irresponsible work by myself but after checking 130 clocks a mistake *was* likely to occur, especially with one of the special clocks used for internet transmission that were also handled by the internet relay team. I was standing above this particular board at the time, since the game was both quite interesting and approaching time trouble. I immediately noticed the defect in the clock settings after the players made their 30th move, but a rapid exchange of pieces took the game to move 32 before I stopped the clock. I of course realised what the problem was, so I proceeded to correct the times on the clock with some simple mathematical calculations, eventually leaving Finkel with about 1½ minutes and Nataf with 5. This whole process took about two minutes and in the meantime nobody complained or interfered in any way. I explained to both players what the problem was, they nodded in agreement and I restarted the clock for Nataf to make his 32nd move.

Immediately after the game restarted the lovely captain of the Israeli team, who complained that Nataf had used the time it took me to reset the clock to think about his move, approached me. I couldn't exactly understand the point of this argument, as obviously Finkel (who, by the way, is an extremely nice and polite person) had been doing the same. The argument apparently revolved around the fact that it was Nataf's turn to move, so this time was more important to him than his opponent. In fact this had already occurred to me, but I had declined to take any sort of action about it for three reasons: a) both players used this short interval to think, regardless of whose turn it was to move; in fact Finkel was the one in serious time pressure; b) it felt silly to force the players off the board while I was correcting the clock, thus disturbing their concentration - this seemed more important than the extra thinking time given to them; c) it also felt silly to try and compensate Finkel for this incident; he was already getting some much-needed time to think; while punishing Nataf in any way was absolutely out of the question, as the whole incident was clearly due to *my* fault.

I tried to explain all of this to the Israeli captain while the game was still going on, but he refused to accept my decision and rushed off to summon Mr. de Ridder. This he managed, requesting from him to detract two minutes from Nataf's clock (!!!!!). Of course this was unacceptable so Mr. de Ridder, in an obvious effort to reach some sort of reconciliation with his pursuer, decided that Finkel should be compensated by receiving two extra minutes. Thus I had to stop the clocks again, the game already having reached move 35 or so and with both players having less than 2½ minutes on the clock. This action caused an outburst by Nataf (if I were in his shoes I would have been quite nastier to the arbiter), who complained about this decision, in turn summoning

his team captain.

Mr. de Ridder tried to explain the logic of his decision to Nataf but failed, finally setting off to attend some other critical situation. Then the following amusing situation occurred: Nataf was refusing to continue the game if Finkel was to receive two extra minutes; Finkel was pleading to continue the game anyway, since he never asked for extra time - he didn't want his two extra minutes; the Israeli team captain refused to let Finkel continue the game unless he received the two minutes. Quite amazing, huh? Finkel suggested he offers a draw to Nataf - his captain also declined this. In fact Nataf had been much better throughout the game but had blundered his extra pawn a few moves back and now the position was roughly balanced, while the outcome had no real bearing on the match score (the French team was winning).

Eventually I managed to "trick" the Israeli team captain into another pursuit of Mr. de Ridder (to get rid of him, to be more exact) and in the meantime Finkel and Nataf agreed to a draw without resuming the game, left the playing hall and analysed their game outside in a very friendly spirit. Now come my questions, after first stating the obvious fact that the whole incident was primarily my fault, not having rechecked the clocks immediately before the start of the round:

1. Were my initial actions proper or should I indeed have tried to compensate Finkel?
2. What would you have done in my place?
3. Is it proper to add time to a player in a time trouble situation when the incident is entirely the fault of the arbiter and the short interruption of the game is to no obvious disadvantage for that player?
4. Should the Chief Arbiter overrule my decision (as he did) or simply let the game continue and advise the team captain to make an appeal?
5. Should a team captain interfere in such cases during the game?

Considering that such problems with digital clocks occur quite frequently, I believe your views on this matter are very important and useful. **IA Sotiris Logothetis (Greece)**

Answer 1 I am not sure, but I think the same thing happened at the 1998 Olympiad in Elista 1998. I wrote about it previously:

“But, in round 5 the captain of the Portuguese team came to me and informed, that he had discovered several years ago that the DGT clock had a bug. I looked into this with some people from the DGT Company, who were present in Elista. They had to admit that he was completely

right. I hope that arbiters will read the following paragraph very carefully, an official statement issued by DGT, on how to avoid this bug.

"We had report of a bug in the setting of the Fischer Tournament methods. It appears only in option 25 'Fischer' tournament. Manual set, (Option 22 for DGT+) and only when the manual setting is skipped by pressing the Start/Stop button.

The following happens: When in option 25 ('Fischer' Tournament up to 4 periods) (option 22 for DGT+) the manual entry of the settings is skipped by pressing the Start/Stop button at the first flashing digit, the setting of the third and fourth period gets lost and is set to zero.

Solution: When the above option is used with more than 2 periods, always step through all parameters by pressing OK for every figure."

Answer 2 Let me start by quoting the FIDE Tournament Rules about the role of the captain:

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 o a match to an arbiter at the end of the play, etc.

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.

1.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.

2. 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.

3. 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.

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

5. 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.”

I have intentionally cited the entire chapter about the role of the captain in a team competition. From my point of view, the first sentence of Article 3 is particularly important: *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.

If the players agreed that all measures taken by the arbiter were acceptable, how can the captain interfere? In my opinion, the captain was absolutely wrong

Let me answer briefly to your questions:

1. Your actions were correct.
2. I would have done the same as you.
3. There are situations when I would add some time, but in the situation you described there was no reason to do so.
4. Based on my first answer, there was no reason for the chief arbiter to overrule you. However, there are situations that a chief arbiter may overrule a match arbiter.
5. I did not see any reason for the captain to interfere in the described situation.

I just finished the Olympiad in Bled. All games were played with DGT clocks. There were not really incidents with the DGT clocks. I remember only three "situations" which I will describe.

1. In a game in the women's section a player informed me that there was something wrong with one of the clocks. She noticed that the total expired time on the adjacent clock was different from her clock. What she did not notice was the fact that the number of moves was also different. And in the Fischer modus the number of moves must be taken into account.
2. In another game a player overstepped the time. His captain noticed that the lever of the clock was up on the opponent's side. I had to make a lot of efforts to convince this captain that his player had overstepped the time before he stopped his clock.
3. The third case was very strange. On one clock the digits occasionally disappeared from the display. The arbiter decided to replace this clock. He installed another clock correctly, but suddenly 1 minute was added. There was no explanation for this. I spoke with the producer of the DGT clocks. He told me that he had been told about this once before and that it probably is a bug.

Question Dear Geurt, I have a question regarding a recent game of mine. It concerns the situation arising from a game that was played for more than a dozen moves before it was noticed that one of the players had started the game with the King and Queen inverted. He had thus castled with the Queen thinking it was the King around move ten or so. Now the arbiter informed us that the game had to return to the move before the "castling" which was an illegal move, and that the positions of the King and Queen had to remain in their unnatural positions, since more than six or eight moves had been played

by that time. So far, so good. Now come my questions:

- 1) Since castling is usually done by first moving the King two squares and then the rook, was the first part of this combination; the move by two squares of the Queen in this case (a perfectly legal move) to be considered as having been played. So the game would be restarted with a move of the opponent of the illegal castling.
- 2) Can the King in the incorrect position still castle (it had not been moved) or is castling only valid from the squares e1 or e8.
- 3) How should the electronic clocks (with a 30 second a move addition from the start) have been handled?

By the way, in my game all the problems were avoided by an immediate agreed draw. **P. Rotelli (Italy)**

Answer You do not mention what kind of game was being played. There are three possibilities:

It was a normal game. In that case you have to start a new game. I quote Article 7.1(a):

“If during it is found that the initial position of the pieces was incorrect, the game shall be cancelled and a new game played.”

2. It was a rapid game. Let me quote Article B4 of the Laws of Rapidplay:

“Once each player has completed three moves, no claim can be made regarding incorrect piece placement, orientation of the chessboard or clock setting. In case of reverse king and queen placement castling with this king is not allowed.”

Regarding the illegal “Queen castling” I refer to what was decided at the congress in Kallithea: In case of an illegal move the arbiter shall only interfere after a claim of the opponent. What does this mean for the case you described? Go back to the situation just before the ‘queen castling’. The player has to play the Queen to the square where he “castled” the queen before. If it was white, he has to play Qc1 or Qg1, dependent how he “castled” before.

3. It was a Blitz game. Regarding wrong placement, see Rapid game. In case of a completed illegal move, the opponent is entitled to claim a win, provided he has material to checkmate his opponent.

Your last question is interesting. There are two Articles in the Laws of Chess, which deal with the question how to adjust in a normal game the chess clocks when an illegal move was discovered during the game. I quote these Articles:

“If an irregularity occurs and/or the pieces have to be restored to a previous position, the arbiter shall use his best judgement to determine the times to be shown on the clocks. He shall also, if necessary, adjust the clock’s move counter.” (Article 6.14)

“If during a game it is found that pieces have been displaced from their squares, the position before the irregularity shall be re-instated. (.....) The clocks shall be adjusted according to Article 6.14.”

I agree with you that this answer is not really helpful. But let me try to give you a useful answer. Let me first of all explain how possibly to handle if there is no increment. Suppose that at move 30 it is discovered that at move 21 an irregularity took place, e.g., an illegal move was played. White’s clock shows 1 hour and 30 minutes, i.e., 90 minutes used time, and Black’s clock shows 1 hour used time. The may be adjusted proportionately.

White’s clock will be adjusted to $20/30 \times 90$ minutes = 60 minutes used time and Black’s clock will be adjusted to $20/30 \times 60$ minutes = 40 minutes.

Suppose the clocks show the same times as in the previous example, but with an increment of 30 seconds per move from move 1. White has used 1 hour and 30 minutes + 30×30 seconds = 105 minutes; Black’s used time is 1 hour + 30×30 seconds = 75 minutes. For 20 moves the players used respectively: White $20/30 \times 105$ minutes = 70 minutes, Black $20/30 \times 75$ minutes = 50 minutes. But, for the first 20 minutes there was a total increment of 20×30 seconds = 10 minutes. These 10 minutes we have to deduct from the used times we calculated before. So, White’s clock will show 70 minutes – 10 minutes = 60 minutes and Black’s clock 50 minutes – 10 minutes = 40 minutes. And as you see, the clocks show the same times as without increment.

Question 1 Dear Geurt, As you may remember there was a recent question about Dutch Blitz Championships. White has promoted a pawn to a black queen and the opponent with only the king claimed a win. Although I think he is right under the current rules, my chess mentality does not accept that someone who does not have enough material may win the game from the point of view of sake of chess.

This is also may be valid with the problem of capturing the king! It is more dangerous. You propose that one who captures his opponent’s king must lose the game since it was an impossible move; I agree with this.

But on the other hand how about when Black has only King on h8 (let us make it very basic), and White's King is on h5 and white has a rook on f8 checking Black's King. Therefore it will be checkmate in a few moves. Black does not have enough material to win the game. Maximum possibility to make a draw. Black does not play Kg7 or Kh7 and instead play Kg8. White captures the King. Now with your proposal white has to lose the game. But Black has not have enough material to win the game.

As a solution for the case of the game played in the Dutch Blitz Championship and also for the situation of capturing the king, I propose to change the second sentence of C.Blitz Rules as follows: "However, the opponent is entitled to claim a win before making his move. But he has to have sufficient mating material before having made the impossible move completed on the board otherwise the game will be considered a draw."

I think this will solve a lot of problems. Even in the situation of capturing king or promoting black queen.

Answer 1 In my opinion this is already covered in the Laws of Chess. In both cases the opponent's last move is an illegal move (wrong promotion and capturing the King). I quote Article C3 of the Blitz Rules and ask your special attention for the second sentence:

"An illegal move is completed once the opponent's clock has been started. However, the opponent is entitled to claim a win before making his own move. If the opponent cannot checkmate the player's King by any possible series of legal moves with the most unskilled counterplay, then he is entitled to claim a draw before making his own move. Once the opponent has made his own move, an illegal move cannot be corrected."

Question 2 Another problem occurs in some cases with Article 5, the completion of the game:

We know that Articles 5.1 (a), (b) and 5.2 (a), (b), and (c) end the game immediately. However, many times, especially in youth events, one of the players makes either a stalemate or checkmate, but they continue the game and sign the scoresheet. Then after some rounds it is noticed that the game is a draw or loss; pairings and everything will be affected. My proposal is to add somewhere, maybe in the tournament rules, a sentence to improve the situation:

"If after the completion of a round and after the pairings for the next round are made or after the final standings of a tournament are declared official, it is discovered that the result of a game is incorrect, because the game had already finished under Article 5 of the Laws of Chess, then the result of the game will be corrected only for title norms, rating calculations and databases. The

standings and pairings will stay as it was signed on scoresheet." **Ali Nihat YAZICI, President, Turkish Chess Federation**

Answer 2 I agree with you. We have to consider your proposal when we have the possibility of changing the Laws of Chess in 2004, although we have already an Article, which is very close to your proposal: 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.”

Question Hello, and thank you for your excellent column at **ChessCafe.com**. In one column Mr Wayne L. Rohricht asked an important question about a player continuing to play, and winning, after his opponent had made an illegal move (promoting to an enemy Queen), instead of claiming a draw by the rule of illegal move. You answered him with an example where white makes an illegal move, losing/drawing the game (depending on the time control), but not winning as the diagram claims, as certainly you cannot win with an illegal move. I think Mr Rohricht's question is worthy of an answer. It has practical relevance, as players quite often promote a wrong-coloured Queen in Blitz games. So, to paraphrase the original question: can you continue to play after an illegal promotion (or any other illegal move) by your opponent, as if nothing had happened? **Pasi Terästi (Finland)**

Answer In normal and in Rapid games the position before the illegal move had to be re-instated if the illegal move had been found during the game. In Blitz games the opponent has to react immediately after the player has started the clock. And the player may claim a win if he has sufficient material to checkmate his opponent or he may claim a draw if he is not able to checkmate his opponent. You may say that a completed illegal move in a Blitz game finishes the game immediately, provided the player has noticed that the opponent completed an illegal move. If in any type of chess an illegal move is not discovered, apparently the players continue the game.

But we have to think about the following: If a player makes an illegal move and the game continues, we have the possibility that the position on the board is illegal, for instance two Kings attacking each other. As far as I can see, this is not covered in the Laws of Chess.

Question Hi Mr Gijssen! I haven't had much time to read all your columns yet, but I will in the near future. They seem great! I'm a chessplayer junior and have played chess for about 7 years. Today I re-read the FIDE Rules of Chess (from Fritz 6 - it might be an old version of the laws?). I discovered quite a few interesting rules and decided to e-mail you about them and have some questions. **Henrik Karlzin (Sweden)**

Question 1 If white makes his/her move and does not press the chess clock, can black answer with a move or does he/she have to wait until white has pressed the clock?

According to these references black has to wait:

Article 6.7. (a) *"During the game each player, having made his move on the chessboard, shall stop his own clock and start his opponent's clock. A player must always be allowed to stop his clock. His move is not considered to have been completed until he has done so."*

Article 1.1 *"A player is said to 'have the move', when his opponent's move has been completed."* Is that so?

Answer 1 Allow me to point out that you are referring to the Laws of Chess that were valid until 1 July 2001. The last word of Article 1.1 is not "completed", but "made". In many situations, especially in Blitz games, it happens very often that a player makes his move, before the opponent has stopped his own clock and has started the player's clock. In this situation the player has still the right to stop his clock and to start the opponent's clock.

Question 2 From the FIDE laws of chess: "2.4. The eight vertical columns of squares are called 'files'. The eight horizontal rows of squares are called 'ranks'. A straight line of squares of the same colour, touching corner to corner, is called a 'diagonal'."

So it is only a1-h8 and h1-a8 that are called diagonals? I was thinking of the phrase 'corner to corner' that indicates that a diagonal is a line from corner to corner.

Answer 2 You are right. We have to change the phrase of the diagonal in 2004. Also the line b1-h7 is a diagonal.

Question 3 Is the game drawn if it is a stalemate position or a "no-mate-possible" position, even if one of the players declares that he/she resigns? Did the game automatically end when it became a stalemate/no-mate-possible position or what? Can a player claim a draw a day after the game if he resigned in a drawn (stalemate/no-mate-possible) position?

Answer 3 See Article 5.2:

"The game is drawn when the player to move has no legal move and his king is not in check. The game is said to end in 'stalemate'. This immediately ends the game provided that the move providing the stalemate position was legal."

See Also Article 9.6;

"The game is drawn when a position is reached from which a checkmate cannot occur by any possible series of legal moves, even with the most unskilled play. This immediately ends the game."

Question 4 If in a Blitz game the 'Player 1' misses that his king is under attack and 'Player 2' (black) realizes this and takes the king, is that a legal move to take the king? Who wins the game, black or white?

Answer 4 See the previous column. The player who captures the King loses the game.

Question 5 What happens if both 'flags' have fallen and it is impossible to establish which flag fell first? According to 10.4. "If both flags have fallen and it is impossible to establish which flag fell first the game is drawn."

The game is drawn, but according to: 6.11. *"If both flags have fallen and it is impossible to establish which flag fell first, the game shall continue."*

The game shall continue. Which is right and is this a mistake in the rules? Or does 10.4. relate to the absolute end of a game while 6.11. relates to the first 'time mark' (if you play 40 moves in 2h and then 1h for the rest of the game - does 6.11. relate to the time mark after 2 hours?) ?

Answer 5 Yes your assumption is right.

Question 6 What is the rule here: a player intends to castle and touches the king and the rook at the very same time. He then realizes that he cannot castle with those two pieces. What happens?

According to: 4.4. c) *"If a player, intending to castle touches the king or king and a rook at the same time, but castling on that side is illegal, the player must choose either to castle on the other side, provided that castling on that side is legal, or to move his king. If the king has no legal move, the player is free to make any legal move."* He must move his king or castle at the other side. If the king has no legal move, the player can move any piece he wants to. But the rook he also touched then?

According to: 4.3. *"Except as provided in Article 4.2, if the player having the move deliberately touches on the chessboard (a) one or more pieces of the same colour, he must move or capture the first piece touched that can be moved or captured..."* The player must move his rook, right?

Answer 6 If a player touches his King and a Rook at the same time, provided both pieces are still on their initial position, then it is clear he intends to castle. It means he has the intention a King-move. And castling is considered as a move with the King. He cannot be forced to make a Rook-move.

Question In rapid games, the arbiter shall refrain from indicating a flag fall, (See Article B6). A quickplay finish looks like a rapid game. That's why some experienced arbiters told me that we should not intervene for a flag fall in quickplay finish. Do you agree with this interpretation of rules? **Stephane Escafre (Corsica)**

Answer Their interpretation is simply wrong. Article 10 is a part of the "normal" Laws of Chess. That the arbiter shall refrain from indicating a flag fall is explicitly mentioned as an exception for Rapid games.

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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