



Unusual Events or Are There Still Normal Games?

This is the second part of a long letter I received from the Greek arbiter Sotiris Logothetis:

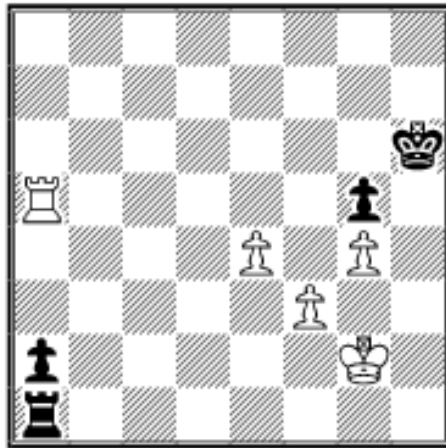
COLUMNISTS

An Arbiter's Notebook

Geurt Gijssen

Moving on to the European Rapid & Blitz I have one main observation to make: Blitz has nothing to do with chess. There were a lot of arbiters there, approximately one for every three boards, yet this didn't stop incidents from occurring. Let me take these one by one.

Question 1 In the game Grivas-Volkov in the Blitz event, the following position arose:



The position looks totally drawn to me, and in fact the players repeated the moves Kh2 Kg6 Kg2 Kh6 about 10 times before GM Grivas decided to claim a draw. The arbiter of that game informed him that such draw claims are not applicable in Blitz games. Mr. de Ridder confirmed this, whereupon Grivas resigned due to his 22 seconds on the clock as opposed to Volkov's 2 minutes. Isn't there anything to be done about such cases? Winning on time in a lost position in a Blitz game is understandable, but what about in a position with a 10-fold repetition and no way to play for a win? It is clearly a shame to have a game, even a Blitz game, decided in this way.

Answer 1 You mentioned that the same position appeared at least ten times on the board before Grivas claimed a draw. You mentioned also that the arbiter saw this. Well, when I look to the Laws of Chess, and especially Article 9, The Drawn Game, then I think there is nothing wrong with the claim. Article 9.2 states:

“The game is drawn, upon a correct claim by the player having the move, when the same position for at least the third time has just appeared and the player claiming the draw has the move.”

And neither in the Rapidplay Rules, nor in the Blitz Rules do I see an article that it is not possible to claim a draw as in this situation.

Probably somebody will say that there is no scoresheet. But in the FIDE Laws of Chess there is no Article that the claimant has to present a (complete) scoresheet. Only claims based on Article 10.2 (Quickplay finish) are not possible in Blitz games. I am afraid that the arbiters in Greece mixed up claims based on Article 9 and claims based on Article 10.

Question 2 Sure enough, the second game between the same players attracted a lot of attention as well. At some point in hectic time scramble Grivas knocked a pawn and didn't correct its placement. Volkov could of course have stopped the clocks and claim extra time, but he didn't. He kept playing, the pawn kept lying there for a few moves, and then Volkov pushed two pawns on the same move (!!!). Grivas stopped the clocks and complained, which in turn led to a prolonged debate between the players, some arbiters and Mr. de Ridder. Eventually the game was awarded to Grivas because his opponent had made an illegal move. The question is: should the arbiter have interfered after a couple of moves had been played and corrected the misplaced pawn? It really sounds silly to allow a game to continue with a pawn or piece knocked off, lying on the board, or misplaced outside the 64 squares even. All is well with the rules for Blitz; a player stops the clocks in such cases and asks for extra time, but what if he doesn't? And, in case the arbiter *should* interfere, what should his actions be? Food for thought.

Answer 2 In the Preface of the Laws of Chess it is noted that the Laws of Chess cannot cover all possible situations. This is such a case. If I had been the arbiter, I would have stopped the clocks and had asked the players what kind of object the lying pawn on the board was. And the problem had been solved immediately.

Question 3 Volkov has actually made quite a name on the international circuit as a fire starter. In fact, his grudge with Grivas had begun in July, in another Blitz tournament! During the Korinthos Open a Blitz tournament was held, with a few rounds per day, spanning several days. At some point Grivas and Volkov played each other. Volkov pushed a pawn all the way to promotion, but seeing no queen handy, he stopped the clocks and went to fetch another one from a nearby board. In fact he had plenty of time and the board was very close to him, so he could have done this without stopping the clocks and with no real damage to him. Is he entitled to do this?

I understand that he can stop the clocks and summon the arbiter to provide him a queen, but can he stop the clocks to fetch the queen himself? Aren't the

clocks supposed to be stopped in Blitz games only to resign or summon the arbiter? Anyway, he placed his queen on the board and restarted the clock, whereupon Grivas got up from his seat to summon the arbiter himself, without stopping the clocks. I haven't seen the position of the game at that time, but I believe Volkov was clearly winning, which probably led him to interpret Grivas' action as resignation. Thus, he started setting the pieces back to their starting position (!!!).

This caused a funny incident; Volkov was claiming Grivas had resigned (although he never actually did anything to indicate that); Grivas was claiming a win because Volkov had destroyed the game position. Obviously Grivas did nothing irregular here, so forfeiting him would be absolutely irrational. After some consultation the arbiters decided to have the game replayed. This wasn't much to Volkov's liking, while Grivas accepted this decision, not without complaints. Eventually an understanding could not be reached with Volkov and after much debate and several sessions of the Appeals' Committee the game was declared won for Grivas. Was this decision correct? I think it was. Was the decision of replaying the game correct or should the arbiters have immediately forfeited Volkov? More food for thought.

Answer 3 In my opinion, Volkov made a mistake when he stopped the clocks to fetch a queen from another board. It can cause misunderstandings and it is not only better, but also necessary to summon the arbiter. In that case the situation is very clear.

Grivas left the board to find an arbiter and to protest. It is clear that he did not resign, but it was probably unclear to Volkov that he had left the board to summon an arbiter. Nevertheless, it was a real mistake for Volkov to return the pieces to the initial position. As a matter of fact, it is not forbidden to leave the board. The decision of the Appeals Committee was correct, therefore the arbiter's decision to replay the game was incorrect.

Question 4 In general it seems to me that one of the main sources of problems for arbiters is that most players don't know the rules well enough - or know them too well. Here is a very frequent method of exploiting a hole in the rules: you play a rapid game; you are winning but have very little time left. You have two queens, other pieces, but enough time for only 4-5 moves or so. You need to mate your opponent very quickly and efficiently, but you haven't yet seen the quickest way.

So what do you do? You make an illegal or incomplete move! Your opponent stops the clocks, calls the arbiter and gets his well-deserved extra time. Meanwhile you gain several seconds, maybe even a minute or more, to consider your mating plans. The game is resumed and now that you have found the way, you make the moves and win the game! Or maybe the opponent doesn't do any of these, and just ignores your incomplete move (a

pawn promoted but not replaced with a piece, a pawn or piece knocked down or misplaced on another square or out of the edge of the board etc), which leads to total mayhem and brings us back to the question expressed in another paragraph: should the arbiter interfere?

Believe me, there are several players of various strengths who use this trick a lot. Something should clearly be done about this rule; it has to be changed, at least for rapid chess. Since I no longer care about Blitz rules at all (Blitz and chess - two different things, I will *never* supervise a Blitz tournament again in my life), I hope that at least for rapid chess this serious issue will be a subject of discussion at the forthcoming FIDE Congress in Bled; clearly the rule is inadequate and a solution must be found.

And to tie up the loose ends, a similar case occurred in the aforementioned Mikhalchishin-Korchnoi game. Korchnoi gave a check with Rd1+ whereupon Kh2 was the only legal move. Instead his opponent, in time pressure, replied Rc1 (!), confronting the invading rook on the first rank. Korchnoi started a fuss, complaining that his opponent did this on purpose to annoy him (which I believe was not the case); he got his two extra minutes from the arbiter, of course, but what if White had *two* moves to choose from in that situation? Then he would clearly benefit from the extra time to think during the debate. Again, something to seriously consider.

I know that the Laws of Chess depend a lot on the players' goodwill and fair play, but as you very well know, this is not always the case. Should we adapt the rules to meet this malice and intent? Best regards, **IA Sotiris Logothetis (Greece)**

Answer 4 I am afraid that it is very difficult to act against tricky players. I agree with you that the Laws of Chess depend on goodwill and fair play of the chessplayers. We have probably to accept the situation that some players are very clever finding loopholes in the Laws of Chess. And we can add a lot of Articles, but I am sure gaps shall always exist and some players shall find and exploit them. The only solution I see is that players who act like this will not be invited to tournaments.

Question 1 I refer to the first question of Mr. Thomas Franzén, (Sweden) pertaining to cases when an illegal move is committed while both players had their flags fallen. The case is always confusing because there are seemingly contradicting articles in the Laws of Chess that requires the arbiter's very good knowledge to realize the differences and so to decide which article he should apply.

I totally agree to the interpretation given in your answer, but I have a little doubt about the following cases: (a) During a game (Normal, Rapid or Blitz) when the flag falls as a result of pressing the clock after an illegal move; (b) During a Rapid game when a player claims an illegal move while it is only his flag that has fallen. Should the arbiter still give him two minutes?

Answer 1a What is the situation? A player makes an illegal move, presses his clock, the opponent's clock starts to run and then his flag falls. For normal and rapid games it is clear that the situation before the illegal should be reinstated on the board. The opponent receives two extra minutes, with the remark that the opponent claims the illegal move before he has touched a piece.

In Blitz games the situation is different. The illegal moves finishes the game immediately, provided the opponent notices it.

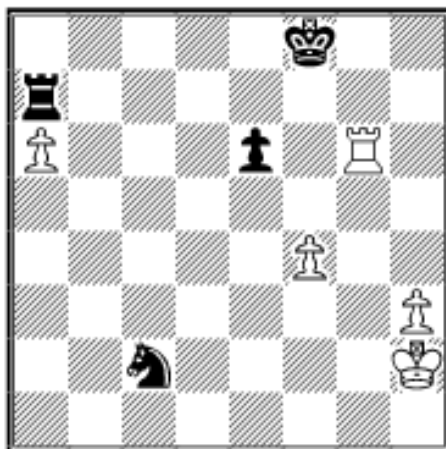
Answer 1b I do not understand the question.

Question 2 In one tournament where I was the arbiter, a player wanted to correct the position of his rook by nudging it forward with the tip of his finger. The opponent claimed a touch move but I refused the claim on the basis that the opponent was not intending to move or play the rook.

In another game, a player was thinking deeply and was "signalling" to the pieces with his finger from a very short distance and then he actually touched the top of a piece by accident. I had the same claim and made the same decision. Was this OK? **IA Naji AlRadhi (United Arab Emirates)**

Answer 2 When it is your understanding that the players had no intention to play the touched piece, your decisions were correct, but you should tell the player that a lot of incidents could be avoided when they say in advance "J'adoube" or "I adjust".

Question Dear Mr Gijssen, in the final minutes of the last game of a 2nd class regional match, the position on the board was as follows.



Black, with about 2 minutes on his clock, took White's pawn on a6. However, he replaced his rook only partly, let's say 10%, on the a6 square, the rest of the rook standing on a7. White, who must have thought Black's rook was on a7, took the pawn on e6. Black picked up the rook on a6/a7, when someone among the bystanders audibly said he could now take White's rook on e6, which Black did. White then stopped the clocks and asked for the arbiter, who after consulting both parties decided that White should play on and started the clocks again. White,

who disagreed, stopped the clocks again, the arbiter started it once more, after which White, who had about 4 minutes left on his clock, let it run out of time. The arbiter then declared the game won for Black.

White's arguments against the arbiter's decision were that Black had made an illegal move, by taking White's rook on e6 from the a7-square, and also claiming that a bystander suggested Black's move. The arbiter's arguments were that White could have known that Black's rook, after taking White's pawn on a6, logically belonged on the a6-square, although it was only partly placed on a6, and therefore Black's move was not illegal. Could you please tell me what your opinion is in this situation? **André Sijpkens (The Netherlands)**

Answer The arbiter acted correctly. Only one remark: If he had noticed the comment of the spectator, that Black could take on e6, he should have expelled this person.

Question Dear Mr. Gijssen, I have a question regarding article 9.2. In a recent team match one of our players claimed a draw pointing to article 9.2. He made his move, claimed the draw, but didn't press the clock. The arbiter dismissed the claim and ruled that the player had made his move (article 4.7) and therefore could not make the claim according to article 9.2a.

I think the arbiter made the right decision but some of the other players thought the ruling to be wrong. The reason for their opinion is that article 6.8a states that a move is not considered to have been completed until the player has stopped the clock. In their opinion the claim was correct according to article 9.2 (possible article 9.2b).

The question is whether article 4.7 and 6.8a contradict each other. Can you consider a move to have been made (article 4.7) even if the move hasn't yet been completed (article 6.8a)? Could our player have claimed the draw according to article 9.2b (the position has just appeared, and the player claiming the draw has the move) as he hasn't completed the move but the position has appeared on the board? **Robert Ericsson (Sweden)**

Answer In my opinion the procedure to claim a draw is set out clearly in Article 9.2:

“The game is drawn, upon a correct claim by the player having the move, when the same position, for at least the third time (not necessarily by repetition of moves)

(a) is about to appear, if he first writes his move on his scoresheet and declares to the arbiter his intention to make this move, or

(b) has just appeared.”

I think that I understand the interpretation of your friends regarding point (b). In their opinion the position has just appeared for the third time after the player who claimed the draw has made his move. But the real intention of (b) is that the opponent has completed a move that produced the same position for the third time, but before making his move, the opponent did not claim a draw. In this situation the player has the right to claim a draw.

I repeat what I have already said: Articles 1 – 5 deal with the general rules. From Article 6 we have Tournament Rules. And essential for Tournament Rules is playing with a clock.

Question Dear Geurt, The following question is based partly on an actual incident and partly on a theoretical one. A couple of years ago I was playing in a team match. We were the home team and all our players were ready in time. The opposition team turned up on time, with the exception of one player, who was to play my teammate on the board to the left of me.

After five or ten minutes, by which time all the games were in progress, the last player from the opposition team arrived but, instead of just sitting down and making his first move, he proceeded to say hello to all his team mates, as well as giving out pamphlets about an upcoming tournament! This was quite a distraction and, amidst the confusion, my gaze returned to my own game and I didn't notice that my opponent had moved. Seeing my clock was running, I assumed I had simply forgotten to press it on my last move, so I pushed the clock. My opponent then protested, pointing out the move he had made, and I apologized and immediately pressed the clock so that my time was running again.

Fortunately, my opponent was satisfied with this, but my theoretical question is, what would have happened if he had taken his protests further? Technically, I was wrong to press the clock before moving, but the distractions were the fault of my opponent's teammate. I would be interested to read your opinion on this. **Matthew Hayes (USA)**

Answer It is impossible to have rules that cover all possible situations. In such cases I like to refer to the Preface of the Laws of Chess. In this Preface it is written that the arbiter is assumed to use sound judgement. I understand that another player disturbed you and that you pressed your clock because you thought that it was your move. The simplest solution is of course to compensate your opponent for the time he lost when his clock was running. And if the arbiter thought that you did so on purpose, he has the option of reducing your time.

Question Dear Geurt, I have a question about a rather unusual situation that arose in a scholastic tournament. At a point in the game when his opponent was momentarily distracted, a player managed to sneak one of his own captured pieces back onto the board. Twelve moves later the victim suddenly noticed he was a piece down, and couldn't understand how that possibly could have happened. He went over his notation and discovered that his opponent had a knight on the board that shouldn't have been there. He called over the tournament director, who, upon questioning both players, managed to find out exactly what had occurred. However, he ruled that illegal moves cannot be corrected if ten or moves had passed. Since this twelve moves later, the extra piece must remain on the board. Can this possibly be the right ruling? **J. Roberts (USA)**

Answer I am afraid that the Tournament Director based his decision on the USCF Rules. I hope that I am wrong. The FIDE rules are very clear: Article 7.4: *"If during the game it is found that an illegal move has been made, the position before the irregularity shall be reinstated."*

Article 7.5: *"If during the game it is found that pieces have been displaced from the squares, the position before the irregularity shall be reinstated."*

But it is my opinion that a more serious thing occurred in this game. The player, who placed his knight back on the board should not been punished according to these Articles, but according to Article 12.1: *"The players shall not take action that will bring the game of chess into disrepute."*

I would have declared the game lost.

Question This happened in a game in a USCF event at the Marshall Chess Club in New York City. I was playing in an open section and was rated 1623 USCF with the black pieces against a 2500 player. A small insect (some sort of fruit fly) was crawling across our board when my opponent took his g-pawn and crushed this insect (I'm not joking) said "excuse me" and moved his *en prise* rook. I felt obliged to insist that he moved the pawn. The TD was called over and ruled that:

(1) Since it was obvious that my opponent did not intend to move the pawn the touch-move rule had not been violated; (2). My opponent had also said, "excuse me" thus indicating it was an adjustment of sorts. I countered that: (1) The "excuse me" came only after he moved the pawn; (2). If there is a disturbance at the board the proper procedure is to call over the TD to rectify the matter.

I was overruled and eventually lost (my only loss in a field of 2200+ USCF players). My question is did I have a legitimate claim or was I being overzealous in trying to use the rules to my advantage to win the game? **Chris**

Maksymowicz (USA)

Answer In the last paragraph you answered your own question: You were overzealous.

Question Dear Mr. Gijssen, In our recent monthly blitz-tournament the following occurred:

White (the much stronger player) had achieved a won position but was short on time and had to allow a perpetual. He saw that and offered a draw before a repetition of moves occurred. Black now looked at the clock and recognized that he could win on time and made just any move that did not repeat the position. With his very next move white overstepped time and black claimed the win.

Now the white player grabbed some of his pieces and recognized with a last look that he actually had mated his opponent with his last move (the one on which he overstepped time). Now he claimed the win citing the relevant rule that the game ends when one side delivers mate. (Now both players got angry and the result was that one player accused the other of cheating).

I had now the very miserable task to decide the matter. Most of the people, including at least two with some experience as arbiter, held that black had won.

First I remembered rule 5.1a that one who mates his opponent has won. But rule 5.1b comes to the very opposite result.

To my mind there was a logical second (a German term in law) between the mate and the resigning of white so he should have won (If he had claimed the mate right away even after his flag fell he would have got the full point, I think). On the other hand if they had both unanimously reported the result 0-1, and subsequently in a later round white found out that it was a mate, it would have been too late. My final decision was to give the point to black as the first "agreed" result (as admitted by white) was 0-1. The final question is simple: Was I right or would you have overruled this decision? **Boris Wolkowski (Germany)**

Answer Well let us try to summarise what happened:

1. White overstepped the time limit at a certain point.
2. Both players agreed that the game was won by black and notified the arbiter.
3. Immediately after this 'agreement', White discovered that he had mated his opponent.

The arbiter has the option to decide that the result stands, but he has the possibility also to decide otherwise. He may also act in the same way as it is stated in Article 8.7 of the Laws of Chess: “At the conclusion of the game both players shall sign the scoresheets, indicating the result of the game. Even incorrect, this result stands, unless the arbiter decides otherwise.”

I agree with everybody who tells me that this rule applies to “normal” games with scoresheets, but it is my opinion that we have here an analogous situation.

One question remains: Suppose that at the same moment White mates his opponent his flag falls. In that case what happens on the board is relevant: the mating move finishes the game. Even when it is not clear what happened first –mate or flag fall- mate is decisive.

Question Dear Mr. Gijssen, In our regional championship of five-member youth teams (U-16) this unusual event happened: In the match between the A and B teams, the A team had only four players. The captain of the B team (and at the same time judge of the match) nominated for the last board his 7-month-old son who won the game as black 0:1.

The competition committee ruled that the result of this game was 0:0 because of the evident inability of a 7-month-old child to play chess. The captain was disciplined with an appeal to the FIDE Ethic Codex. He protested against this decision to the Czech Chess Federation, but it did not answer. Thank you for your opinion concerning this matter. **Jiri Bielavsky, Chairman of the Hradec Kralove Chess Association (Czech Republic)**

Answer Although the person involved, the team captain/arbiter is not a chessplayer, Article 12.1 stating that players shall take no action that will bring the game of chess in disrepute; I would have applied this article in this situation. Moreover, for a certain period, let us say one year, it should be forbidden for him to act as an arbiter and team captain.

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.

Copyright 2002 Geurt Gijssen. All Rights Reserved.

[\[The Chess Cafe Home Page\]](#) [\[Book Reviews\]](#) [\[Bulletin Board\]](#) [\[Columnists\]](#)
[\[Endgame Studies\]](#) [\[The Skittles Room\]](#) [\[Archives\]](#)
[\[Links\]](#) [\[Online Bookstore\]](#) [\[About The Chess Cafe\]](#) [\[Contact Us\]](#)

Copyright 2002 CyberCafes, LLC. All Rights Reserved.
"The Chess Cafe®" is a registered trademark of Russell Enterprises, Inc.