



C O L U M N I S T S

## *An Arbiter's Notebook*

Geurt Gijssen

## Can I Win after Overstepping the Time Limit?

The Japanese Chess Association has informed the chess world about the untimely death of FIDE Honorary Member **Yasuji Matsumoto**. I knew Mr. Matsumoto for a very long time. I worked with him in many events and several commissions. Especially in several Pairings Committees of the Olympiads it was very nice to work with him. He had an excellent knowledge of the pairing rules and contributed a lot to them. As Chairman of the Technical Commission he always created a very friendly atmosphere in the commission meetings. The chess world has lost a very honest man, one who had only friends.

I have received another sad message. On December 12, 2002 the International Arbiter **Frankie Torregrosa** from Puerto Rico passed away. He had made many contributions to *The Arbiter's Notebook*. We had many pleasant email exchanges. I was very happy when I met him in person during the Olympiad in Bled 2002. In the meetings of the Rules and Tournament Regulations Committee he was very active.

May they both rest in peace.

Readers who thought that the questions regarding Article 10.2 had ended were wrong. Article 10.2 still exists and is still creating questions. In this Notebook we have two more.

Dear Mr. Gijssen:

**Question 1** Is mandatory to play any moves before agreeing to a draw?

**Answer 1** I refer to Article 5.2 (c) and Article 9.1 (a) of the Laws of Chess:

*“ The game is drawn upon agreement between the players during the game. This immediately ends the game.”*

*“ A player wishing to offer a draw shall do so after having made a move on the chessboard and before stopping his clock*

*the opponent's clock."*

What do we learn from these two Articles? Very simple: The offer must be made during the game; and the offer must be made after a player has made a move on the board. Therefore, at least one move must be made before a draw may be agreed. I know one case in which this really happened: Karpov offered a draw after playing 1. e2-e4 to his opponent Peter Leko in a tournament in Groningen. Leko accepted this offer and many people were quite unhappy with the way the game finished. From a legal point of view there is nothing wrong, but I understand also that sponsors and spectators are not very excited with this type of result.

**Question 2** Is it correct to give two minutes for a player who claims a draw under the famous (infamous?) 10.2 in a position that is not so clear?

**Answer 2** I think I have to modify your question. The opponent of the claimant receives two extra minutes in some cases. And these cases are described in Article 10.2:

- a. If the arbiter postpones his decision, he **MAY** award two extra minutes to the opponent.
- b. If the arbiter has rejected the claim, he **SHALL** award two extra minutes to the opponent.

In my opinion this is very logical. In the first case the arbiter is not sure about the correctness of the claim. He has his doubts. If he considers the claim disturbing he awards two extra minutes to the opponent. In the second case he is sure that the claim is wrong. He is of the opinion that the opponent was disturbed by an incorrect claim. Therefore he gives compensation of two minutes to the opponent. I agree with you that the application of Article 10.2 is quite difficult and causes problems, but to call it infamous is going too far.

**Question 3** Is it correct (Laws), in Rapidplay, to attack the opponent's queen when he is not responding to a previous check (illegal move) and say him check and capture the queen, other possibilities are crossing a protected seventh rank with a pawn when my opponent is forced to correct a previous inadvertent check and go for the eighth rank and the promotion? Or give a re-check in a rank where there was the same inadvertent check and convert it to a double check? Or give a second check in another line and direction that with the first check complete the checkmate and so on. **Lucas Mendoza Contreras (Canary Islands)**

**Answer 3** To be honest, I had to make some effort to understand your question and I think that I succeeded to understand.

What you state is, if I am right, the following:

1. White plays an illegal move, leaving in his King in check
2. Black does not claim that the move is illegal, but attacks White's Queen. Whether he did not claim on purpose or simply overlooked that White had made an illegal move is irrelevant
3. White wants to move his King, but at that moment Black says: "Sorry, I checked your King one move before, you have to move your King out of check.
4. White does so and then Black takes White's Queen, provided White could not make a Queen move to remove his King from check.

Well, here we have the problem I have already anticipated: After an unnoticed illegal move, there is an illegal position on the board. And what to do in such a situation is not (clearly) covered in the Laws of Chess. I think that the procedure as I described above, is correct. I have also the opinion that it is possible that some tricky players shall use the opportunity to (ab)use this hole in the Laws of Chess. I am curious how readers shall react about this problem.

**Question** Dear Geurt: Player 'A' and 'B' are playing. Player 'A' has K+R and player 'B' K+R+B. Player 'A' having less than 2 minutes on his clock claims a draw saying that this is a theoretical draw. I have following questions:

- a. Whether the arbiter should declare a draw or postpone his decision and player 'B' should be awarded 2 extra minutes?
- b. If he postpones his decision, how many moves must player 'A' defend the position?
- c. Suppose player 'A' makes only 2 or 3 moves and his flag falls what result should occur?
- d. Suppose player 'B' makes a blunder and loses what will be the result whether player 'B' will be declared lost or the draw claim of player 'A' will stand?
- e. If the arbiter postpones his decision and the flag of player 'B' falls what will be the result? **N. Radheshyam (India)**

**Answer** Let me start by informing you, that an arbiter "does not know" what a theoretical draw is. The reasons to claim a draw are:

1. "*The opponent is making no effort to win by normal means.*" He uses the fact that his opponent is short of time.
2. "*It is not possible to win by normal means.*" The only way to win is again the fact that the player is short of time. Otherwise he cannot win the game.

Let me try to answer your questions:

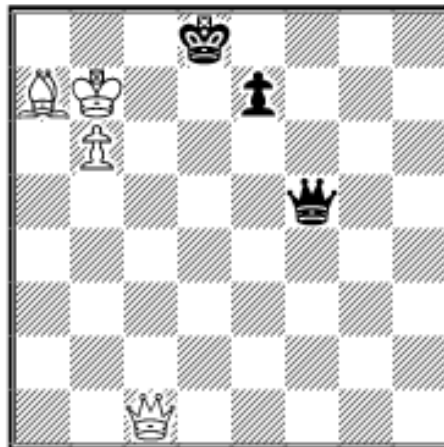
- a. It is very difficult whether the arbiter should declare a

draw or postpone his decision. In the event the arbiter had followed the game for many moves and he believes that the only goal of the non-claimant is to win on time, he may declare a draw. But when he is unaware of what happened in the game so far, he should postpone his decision and he may award to extra minutes to the non-claimant.

- b. If the arbiter postpones the decision, he has to wait for a flag fall. Immediately after the flag fall he decides the result of the game. There is in many cases a possibility to claim a draw (three times same position or 50 moves rule).
- c. The arbiter should have the option of making a decision after seeing what is going on in the game. When the claimant plays only a few moves, the arbiter has no possibility to decide whether the opponent did make efforts to win or not. Flag fall means that the game is lost.
- d. If player B, who did not claim for a draw, blundered, then it is possible that he might even lose the game. At the moment A claimed a draw, B had the possibility to agree. By not doing so, he took the risk that he might even lose the game.
- e. Article 10.2 says that the arbiter makes his decision after a flag has fallen. It is not important which flag fell.

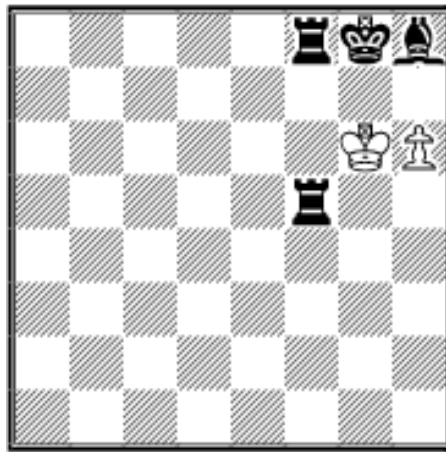
**Question** I was very glad when I read the question from Mr. Andrew Buchanan (USA) about mating positions.

There is a special term in chess composition: “anticipation”. This has happened in our case. In *64-Chess Review* #4 p.18 I wrote: “The principle of forced draws positions should be expanded to positions where checkmate is given automatically For example in these positions:

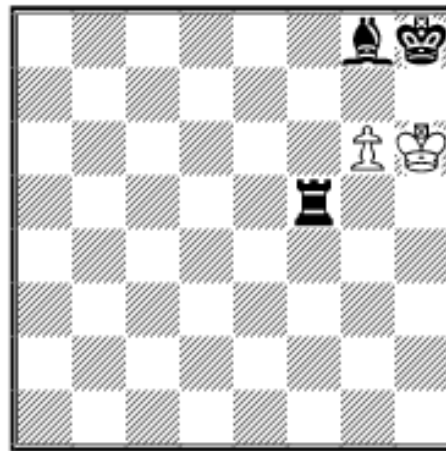


White plays Qc8+, stops his clock, starts the clock of Black, and Black's flag falls. It would be logical if we add in this Article: “The game is won by one of the players if the position occurs where he is forced to give a mate automatically”

During my lectures in Africa I usually put another example:



or even



Anyone can find thousands of such positions in composition. They occur in every self-mate problem before the last move of Black. Once I told you about this problem, saying that nowadays Laws of Chess covers about 99,9% of logical results of the game, or perhaps, even more, but not 100%. Now the question is why I didn't pose this problem in an official way before. Now there is no any surprise that there is no any principle difference between

“forced checkmate positions” and “forced draw positions”. The latter really happen during the game. But I am afraid how chessplayers may react. **Igor Vereshagin (Russia)**

**Answer** It is a very dangerous to make new rules for all situations which may occur in a game of chess. And I really wonder, do we need an article in the Laws of Chess for such cases. I never met in my practice as an arbiter a case like you described in your question. Before I shall make a proposal for the Rules Committee to add something or to change an article for purposes as you described, I would like to see some instances where it has happened in actual games. Consider my answer as a challenge to send me such games. Good luck.

**Question** Dear Mr. Gijssen, I've been reading through the archives of your excellent column. I found an interesting question. In the column "Losing a Game **after** Mating the Opponent", a question is whether white loses on time in the position given (white is forced to mate his opponent in the next move). Let's check the rules:

6.10 Except where Articles 5.1 or one of the Articles 5.2 (a), (b) and (c) apply, if a player does not complete the prescribed number of moves in the

allotted time, the game is lost by the player. However, the game is drawn, if the position is such that the opponent cannot checkmate the player's king by any possible series of legal moves, even with the most unskilled counterplay. The opponent cannot checkmate, since he will be mated the next move. Therefore, the game is a draw. **Martin Norbäck (Sweden)**

**Answer** I cannot deny that there is certain logic in your remarks. However, the question is, should we consider these cases. See my answer to the previous question.

**Question** Dear Mr. Gijssen, I am a government official moonlighting as an occasional arbiter in Iloilo City, some 500 nautical miles south of the Philippine capital of Manila. The way I understand the blitz rules is that a player who leaves his king en prise commits an illegal move and the opposing player can claim a win because of that. Are you saying that the recent FIDE Congress has approved a new rule stating that a player who declares a win based on his opponent's illegal move or captures an opponent's king in the same situation LOSES that game? **Boy Espejo, Jr. (Philippines)**

**Answer** If a player leaves his king in check and the opponent takes this king the arbiter has to declare the game lost for the opponent who took the king. By the way, the FIDE General Assembly officially decided it.

**Question** Dear Sir, What is the ruling when a player hits the clock with such force it goes flying off the table? I assume the clock is to be replaced as rapidly as possible but what about the elapsed time of the opponent? What if the force of the impact caused a flag to drop? The (old flag analogue) clocks come to mind. I am certain this very thing happened in a Korchnoi game many years ago but I cannot recall his opponent or the event. In present times, are the clocks now fixed to the table to prevent this sort of incident to happen? Also, in tournament play, what is the rule regarding covering up a written move to prevent your opponent from seeing it? I recently played someone who was doing this very thing. I didn't object because it's immaterial to me, but what is the rule and what is the penalty? I am also one of those players that like to record his moves before making them (Seems to help stop outright blunders) and as a matter of etiquette I would say the majority of players do not look, although I sometimes throw in a false one or two (Correcting it of course when I execute the move) to throw the ones that blatantly do it for a loop or two. **John J. London, Toronto (Canada)**

**Answer** It was a Kasparov – Korchnoi Blitz game in one of the Immopar tournaments in Paris that we had the “flying” clock. I was the arbiter and placed the clock immediately back on the table. I did not give a penalty or any other compensation. It was my opinion that there was no need for it, because it took only a few seconds to take the clock and to put it on the table. For the next round and in the subsequent Immopar tournaments the clocks were fixed on the tables.

The clocks are at present not fixed on the tables. It is in my opinion unnecessary to do so, because, except in the Kasparov – Korchnoi game, I have not seen or heard about such an incident again.

The only thing mentioned in the Laws of Chess is that the scoresheet must be visible at all times to the arbiter, and not to the opponent. This means it is permitted to cover the scoresheet so that an opponent cannot see it. The late GM Tony Miles always covered his intended move with his watch, but at the moment the arbiter passed his board, he removed his watch from the scoresheet and covered it again when the arbiter went to another board.

To write some fake moves, is in my opinion unacceptable. If I as an arbiter should see it, I would give the player involved an official warning.

**Question 1** In the directory of Danish arbiter's association we are presently discussing a question from a member arbiter about illegal moves: When should the arbiter interfere and give the opponent 2 extra minutes? When a player touches a piece that has no legal move? (We think no, but it seems that several arbiters think yes!) When a player has made an illegal move but not yet stopped his clock? (Three out of four of us say no, but one says yes!) When a player has made an illegal move and stopped his clock? (Everybody agrees to yes!)

In blitz chess C3 states, "An illegal move is completed once the opponent's clock has been started" (I should like to add "and no sooner!"). I think it would be a lot easier if this rule applied for all chess, because the rules seem a bit unclear on this point.

**Answer 1** Let us consider the three cases:

a. In a **normal game** we have to apply Article 7.4(a):

*"If during a game it is found that an illegal move has been made, the position immediately before the irregularity shall be reinstated. If the position immediately before the irregularity cannot be determined the game shall continue from the last identifiable position prior to the irregularity. The clocks shall be adjusted according to Article 6.14. Article 4.3 applies to the move replacing the illegal move. The game shall then continue from this reinstated position."*

The Article says: *If it is found that an illegal move has been made...* In my opinion it is clear that the arbiter has to interfere at the moment the illegal move has been made on the board.

When a player touches a piece, which cannot be moved Article 4.5 will apply:

“If none of the pieces touched can be moved or captured, the player may make any legal move. “

- b. In a **Rapid game** we have to apply Article B5 and the amendment of the FIDE Congress 2001: The player loses the right to claim an illegal move, once he has touched a piece. What does this mean? The consequences of an illegal move in Rapid games are the same as in normal chess, but the player has to claim. The arbiter will not interfere
- c. In **Blitz games** we apply Article C3, already quoted in your question I do not see any problem, except in Rapid games. See the previous question of Mr. Contreras.

**Question 2** I have another question about C3. C3 states that if a player makes an illegal move, "the opponent is entitled to claim a win before making his own move" - what happens if the opponent has touched a piece, but not actually moved it - can he still claim a win? And what if he has moved the piece, but not let go of it - can he put it back and claim a win? I think he should forfeit the right to claim a win as soon as he touches a piece, but I don't really know if the rules agree - at least they seem unclear about this. **Lau Bjerno (Denmark)**

**Answer 2** I think that the rules are clear. “Making a move” means to move a piece from one square to another one and to have released it on that square. As long as a piece is still in the hand of a player, the move has not been made.

**Question** Dear Mr. Gijssen, I have read your answer about castling, in your December's column. The question was sent by Henrik Karlzin (Sweden). But what happens if White tries to castle, and touches the king (K) and rook (R) at the same time, but he sets his king on f1 and rook on e1; in that way he made an irregular move. If the opponent, Black, claims to the arbiter what will happen? Will White have to: 1. Leave its king on f1, but take back its rook on h1; 2. To make a castle, 0-0 or 0-0-0 according to Article 7.4 (a.b), if there are no other restrains to castle (by legal move).

I have one more question. What happens if White can't castle by a legal move, in former example, must his king stay on f1, or he can move his king on the other square (with a legal move)? **Goran Tomic, Zelenika (Yugoslavia)**

**Answer** In the first case you mentioned it is clear that White had the intention to castle, i.e., a King move. It is also clear that he did it in a wrong way. For sure if it is possible he has to make a King-move. In my opinion it should be very childish to force the player to play Kf1. I should give him the chance to castle correctly. Regarding your second question, I would like to say that he has to play Kf1 only in the event that it is the only King-move in the actual position.

**Question** Dear Sir, With regard to your comment about players writing down their intended move first before playing it over the board (and possibly changing their mind on a specific move, etc.), I can only advise you that this



is standard practice in the USA. In fact, players are often advised that this is as a *preferred* method of score-keeping, inasmuch as it gives one last chance to avoid obvious errors. In your defense, I recall that Bobby Fischer once objected to players who wrote down their moves first. But, my understanding is that under both USCF and FIDE rules...players are doing nothing wrong if they keep score in this fashion.

To me (as a local TD) a player is "making notes" only if he writes down more than one half-move in advance (with exceptions for forced moves in time pressure, etc.). He is not "making notes" if he is writing down his own half-move.

And again, this is common practice in many local amateur events here. I gather from the context of your remarks that the other players and arbiters at the Olympiad did agree that the player's method of scorekeeping was fully acceptable? **Eric C. Johnson (USA)**

**Answer** Thank you for your comments, but I maintain my original opinion. By the way, I am in good company. I did not know that Bobby Fischer had the same opinion. I mentioned in previous columns that in almost all cases in which Fischer claimed something, he was completely right.

**Question** Dear Geurt, in your column on the Bled Olympiad you talk about an incident in which a player wrote down his move before making it. At this point you said 'so far, so good'. You seemed to think this was acceptable, and only stepped in when he frequently changed his mind and made a different move. You said you considered this note taking. You also said 'to record something means in my opinion to write down something that happens or happened and not what a player has in mind to play'. I believe you were quite correct to warn this player, but surely he should have been warned straightaway for writing down his moves before making them.

In my opinion this practice is in breach of the rules. Article 8.1 of the laws of chess states: In the course of play each player is required to record his own moves and those of his opponent in the correct manner, move after move, as clearly and legibly as possible, in the algebraic notation (Appendix E), on the 'scoresheet' prescribed for the competition. A player may reply to his opponent's move before recording it, if he so wishes. He must record his previous move before making another. Both players must record the offer of a draw on the scoresheet. (Appendix E.12).

Therefore, writing down your moves before making them cannot be classed as 'recording the moves'. It is a note of what the player might play, and also an aid to memory, e.g. a player can analyse a move, record it on his scoresheet, and then start analysing other moves safe in the knowledge that he has a record of the first move he analysed. If the player then starts crossing out moves and writing down new ones, this is obviously a huge aid to memory. In

order for something to be a record it must be noted after the event. In my opinion noting moves on your scoresheet before they are made is simply cheating, and the laws of chess should state this more clearly. **Paul Taaffe (Ireland)**

**Answer** You will understand that I agree with you, although I think the word 'cheating' is too strong. Thank you for your support.

**Question** I have a question about a player's apparently uncontrollable but very distracting disability. It has occurred in 2 tournaments that I played in that this person also played in. A player sitting at an adjacent board apparently has Touret's syndrome, which causes him to uncontrollably grab at his face spastically and puff his cheeks loudly. It is not constant but frequently and sporadically. (Most often when it is his opponents turn to move, apparently stress exasperates his condition) As you can see this is very distracting to his opponents. It actually has been distracting to me as well and I have been fortunate enough not to have to face him. One opponent asked him to stop but he said in a disturbed tone that he can't help it and this seems true. No one else has of yet had the nerve to go any further than that. I have considered complaining to the tournament director but haven't for several reasons. 1. My opponents have had to play under same condition as me so I do not feel they received an unfair advantage. 2. I am not sure if it was my place to complain about someone else's opponent 3. I am not sure that anything could be done about it, as it is an apparent medical condition.

My question is do players have any recourse under the rules in this situation or must we simply accept these conditions. If I am someday paired with this opponent can I make any protest if I am distracted by his condition?

I understand the Americans with Disabilities Act and it basically states that reasonable accommodations must be made to attempt to allow disabled to participate. I don't think it is reasonable to expect me to accept these severely distracting playing conditions. How do the rules of chess deal with such situations? I am not unsympathetic to this player's condition but expect fair playing conditions and don't feel that the conditions one must play under when facing this opponent are fair. What if any courses of action can someone take in this circumstance? **Joshua Franz (USA)**

**Answer** This is really a very difficult question. The problem is that it is impossible to give general guidelines for cases like this. It is clear that players, and not only the opponent, are terribly disturbed. However, the player involved has no intention at all to disturb his opponent. The best thing to do is probably that the player who is afflicted with this syndrome speak with the arbiter before the start of the tournament and makes arrangements in case something happens.

*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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