



## More King Capturing

**Question** Dear Sir, In February you wrote "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". But this does not appear in the minutes. The French Federation has decided the opposite, but we can change if it happens to be official. **Stephane Escafre (France)**

**Answer** Let me first of all quote the minutes of the Rules Committee during the FIDE Congress in Bled:

*"Discussions took place about the situation in Blitz chess where a player makes a move, which leaves his king in check. There was no consensus. Some arbiters believed that, if the player captured his opponent's king, then the player should lose. Others believed that the player should win. It was decided not to disturb the current rules in place. Thus, if a player effectively claims a win by capturing the king, he runs the risk of the arbiter declaring otherwise."*

These minutes were discussed in the Executive Committee and I remember that one delegate asked me what actually happens now when a King is captured. I am still of the opinion that in that meeting it was decided that taking the King means loss of the game. In the meeting of the General Assembly I mentioned that I am sure that everybody had read the minutes and if somebody had a question he was invited to ask. Nobody reacted and that meant that the minutes of the Rules Committee were accepted. You see them above. As a result, each arbiter in a Blitz tournament has to announce in advance what will happen if the King is captured. The drawback is, of course, that the discussions in the meetings of the Executive Committee and General Assembly are not available.

**Question** Dear Mr. Gijssen, The issue of capturing the King in blitz chess has been discussed at length in your columns. I know that you think that a player who captures the opponent's King should lose. I disagree. Article 2.2 clearly states that the King is a piece. Article 3.3 says: "If a piece moves to a square occupied by an opponent's piece the latter is captured and removed from the

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## *An Arbiter's Notebook*

Geurt Gijssen

chessboard as part of the same move." So, the rules explicitly allow capturing the King.

The "by the letter" solution to the problem is to let the game continue, without the King. The player, who has lost the King, has at least a draw, since there is no possibility for the other player to checkmate this King. Common sense rules this out, but then again, it rules out many of the positions that can occur in a blitz game with illegal moves, yet these positions are allowed.

Personally, I always inform all players of the correct procedure to claim a win at the start of a blitz tournament, and I've never had to make this ruling after that. **Martin Norbäck (Sweden)**

**Answer** I think this interpretation is wrong. I refer to Article 1.2:

*“The objective of each player is to place the opponent's king 'under attack' in such a way that the opponent has no legal move which would avoid the 'capture' of the king on the following move. The player who achieves this goal is said to have 'checkmated' the opponent's king and to have won the game. The opponent whose king has been checkmated has lost the game.”*

Very important is in my opinion the word “following” in this Article. The aim of the game is not simply to take the King, but to put the King in such a position that it cannot avoid being taken on the next move.

**Question** This actually happened in a Blitz game. Both players basically had no time left on their clocks. White had a Rook on f6 and King on e6. Black had a King on e2 and pawn on f2. It is White to move. White picked up his Rook and captured the pawn (he was holding *both* the pawn and Rook in the same hand with both pieces touching the square f2). As this happened, his flag fell and Black now said: "Your time is up". A heated argument arose. I declared the game drawn on the grounds that it was White's intention to capture the pawn. In doing so, Black can't checkmate White anymore. The position (although the pawn was not removed from the board) is effectively drawn. Was my decision correct?

Furthermore, what should be the ruling (in the same game) if the following would have happened: "White first touches the black pawn". Does that mean that White loses the game because he has not made a move or can one argue that, because he touched the pawn, he must capture it with a legal move (in this case the only legal move is Rxf2) and therefore the game is drawn (Black can't win anymore)? **Günther van den Bergh (South Africa)**

**Answer** Article 6.2 says: “When using a chess clock, each player must make a

*minimum number of moves or all moves in an allotted period of time.”*

In addition, Article 6.10 says: *“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 by any possible series of legal moves, even with the most unskilled counterplay”*

Completing a move means making the move on the board and pressing the clock. When I consider these two Articles together, only one conclusion is in my opinion possible: the player who overstepped the time limit, loses the game. I understand that you had a different opinion, but the question is if the arbiter has to take into account how the situation on the board would be if a player had the possibility to complete his move. Or, must the arbiter generally take into account a forced sequence of moves? I think that this is not the case.

**Question** Hello Geurt! I was reading Bronstein's excellent *Zurich International Chess Tournament 1953* book and came across an anecdote in the 8th round game between Reshevsky and Kotov. After Kotov's 34th move Bronstein comments: "Reshevsky seized his head in his hands, glanced nervously at the flag (ready to fall at any moment) and the position, and - took the Bishop with check. Then Reshevsky asked how many moves had been made (which is not acceptable grandmaster practice), and received an answer from one of the spectators (which is really illegal)." No mention was made of any punishment to Reshevsky; do you know if there was one? And if this occurred at a tournament like Linares today what would be the appropriate punishment? **Craig Saddler (Canada)**

**Answer** I never heard or read that GM Reshevsky was punished for this violation of the rules. I have the feeling that arbiters in the past were more flexible and not so strict. One of the reasons is probably that in the past the arbiters in top events were (still active) grandmasters and had some problems penalising their colleagues. This is at least my guess.

Let us go to your second question: How should an arbiter act in the event a player asks a spectator how many moves he still has to make and the spectator answers this question? Regarding the spectator, it is very clear. See Article 13.7 of the Laws of Chess:

*“Spectators and players in other games are not to speak about or otherwise interfere in a game. If necessary, the arbiter may expel offenders from the playing venue.*

To expel a “normal” spectator, one who is not a player in another game, is, and I have some experience, not so easy. If there are security officers, the

arbiter has a chance of removing a spectator. To remove a player who interferes in another game is almost impossible. An arbiter should keep in mind that expelling the interfering player has consequences for another game.

And what to do with a player who acted like Reshevsky? How should the arbiter punish him? Should the arbiter declare the game lost? Should he give time compensation to the opponent? Or should he give the player only a warning? All these options are possible. Really, it is impossible to give a general guideline how to handle in such cases. My experience is that in many cases the arbiter should follow his intuition. I like to refer to one sentence of the Preface of the Laws of Chess:

*“Too detailed a rule might deprive the arbiter of his freedom of judgment and thus prevent him from finding the solution to a problem dictated by fairness, logic and special factors.”*

**Question** Hello, I couldn't find an answer to this in previous columns. Although I did see some questions that were similar, none were precisely this: What happens if both players have more than 5 minutes on their clocks and it is obvious to one of the players that his opponent must have missed recording moves at some point, either because they are writing on the wrong move number on the scoresheet, or in the wrong color column? Can the player request that his opponent bring his scoresheet up to date on his own (the opponent's) time before moving again? Would the player get extra time (even though the opponent will spend the gained time bringing his scoresheet up to date, perhaps the player has lost time making the request)?

I checked the laws of chess at fide.com and the tournament regulations and couldn't find anything explicit on this. Article 8.1 may imply it, depending on interpretation, and 8.5(b) hints at a possible way to deal with it, but there are no references to the handling of incorrect scoresheets during the game. **Luis F. Gonzalez-Silen (Spain)**

**Answer** If a player discovers that his opponent has not recorded all moves on his scoresheet, he may ask the arbiter that his opponent record the missing moves. He should never address this request to his opponent personally. The normal procedure then is that the arbiter waits until the offending player has the move. Then he tells him that he has to complete his scoresheet. The arbiter may, if necessary, offer the other player's scoresheet. It is up to the arbiter to give a penalty. He has several options:

- He gives time to the other player
- He deducts some time from the offending player
- A combination of 1 and 2
- He gives the offending player a warning.
- The penalty depends of how serious the offence was.

**Question 1** Dear Geurt Gijssen, in a 60-minute rapid chess tournament (30 minutes playing time for each player) the scores for two players A and B are as follows:

Round	Player A	Total Score A	Player B	Total Score B
1	1(Bye)	1	1	1
2	1	2	1	2
3	$\frac{1}{2}$	$2\frac{1}{2}$	$\frac{1}{2}$	$2\frac{1}{2}$
4	1	$3\frac{1}{2}$	1	$3\frac{1}{2}$
5	1	$4\frac{1}{2}$	1	$4\frac{1}{2}$
6	1	$5\frac{1}{2}$	$\frac{1}{2}$	5
7	$\frac{1}{2}$	6	1	6

In the above scores scored by A and B you will note that A has scored 1 point in the first round from a bye whereas B has played with another player and scored 1 point. In the third round player A met player B and drew the game. If we take into account the progressive score of both the players then player A gets first place and title. Now in this case player B has played with opponents in all rounds. Please let me know who gets the first place among the two, even though player A has obtained one free point in the first round from a bye.

**Answer 1** First of all I should explain how to calculate the progressive scores of both players. The progressive score is the sum of the scores after each round. This means

Player	Progressive Score
A	$1 + 2 + 2\frac{1}{2} + 3\frac{1}{2} + 4\frac{1}{2} + 5\frac{1}{2} + 6 = 25$
B	$1 + 2 + 2\frac{1}{2} + 3\frac{1}{2} + 4\frac{1}{2} + 5 + 6 = 24\frac{1}{2}$

The progressive score of A is higher than B's; therefore he is the winner of the tiebreak. I understand your point. In your opinion it is unfair that A wins the tiebreak, although he played only 6 games with a bye in round 1. But it is

not A's fault that he had a bye in the first round. That is why it is not unreasonable that he is the winner of the tiebreak.

**Question 2** In the above example if the progressive score is equal for both players with a total score of both the players as 6 points (scores of player A and B are identical in all rounds) and have not met each other, then who is the winner?

**Answer 2** A normal procedure in case of equal progressive scores is to discard the result of round 1. The new progressive score is then the sum of the scores of round 2 – 7. Player A's score is then  $1 + 1\frac{1}{2} + 2\frac{1}{2} + 3\frac{1}{2} + 4\frac{1}{2} + 5 = 18$ . If two players in this situation still tie, then the sum of the scores of rounds 3 – 7 shall break the tie, and so on. If two players scored in each round exactly the same, then another method has to be used.

**Question 3** If in the above case for both players the progressive score is equal with a total score of both the players as 6 points (scores of player A and B are identical in all rounds) and have met each other, then who is the winner? **S. K Talwar (India)**

**Answer 3** The same answer as to question 2.

**Question** Dear Mr. Gijssen, My question concerns tie-breaks. 3 players scored  $4\frac{1}{2}$  points in a seven-round Swiss system conducted with a SwissPerfect98 program (with Buchholz the only given criteria for tie-break). Player A has Buchholz  $21\frac{1}{2}$  not counting the last round in which he got "+" because of odd number of participants. Player B has Buchholz 22, and Player C has Buchholz 18. Players B and C didn't get "+" during the tournament. What should the total Buchholz for Player A be and the final distribution of places between A, B and C? **Svetlana Zainetdinova (Estonia)**

**Answer** First, it seems very strange that a player with a score of  $3\frac{1}{2}$  out of 6 received a bye because the number of participants was odd. Anyway, as everybody probably knows, the Buchholz score of a player is the sum of the scores of all his opponents.

At the end of a tournament the scores of the opponents of Player B are for instance: 3, 4, 2,  $4\frac{1}{2}$ , 4,  $4\frac{1}{2}$ . The Buchholz score of player A is in this case:  $3 + 4 + 2\frac{1}{2} + 4 + 4 + 4\frac{1}{2} = 22$ .

Let us now go to player A: the scores of his 6 opponents in the rounds 1 – 6 are for instance: 4,  $3\frac{1}{2}$ ,  $3\frac{1}{2}$ , 4, 3,  $3\frac{1}{2}$ . But he played only 6 games. It is not Player A's fault that he received a bye in the last round. In Holland we have the following solution: we consider a bye, *only* for calculations of Buchholz and Sonneborn-Berger, as a draw against the player himself. What does this mean? In the cross table Player A has  $4\frac{1}{2}$ , but for Buchholz we calculate 4

points. Therefore the Buchholz score of Player A is  $4 + 3\frac{1}{2} + 3\frac{1}{2} + 4 + 3 + 3\frac{1}{2} + 4 = 25\frac{1}{2}$ .

**Question** Hello, A few months ago during a blitz-tournament at our club there was one curious incident. The black player made a move where he mated himself (so this move is illegal). The white player saw this and stopped the clock, but unfortunately his flag had fallen. The mate is illegal, so the rule that mate should end the game immediately is not applicable. But there is no scoresheet so from arbiter's point of view you can't check this. On the other hand the claim was too late (flag). What should the result be? **Paul Peters (Netherlands)**

**Answer** One thing is clear: Black made an illegal move. The fact that White stopped the clocks probably meant that Black had even completed the illegal move. Furthermore it was a Blitz game. Article C3 of the Blitz rules states, that in this case *White is entitled to claim a win before making his own move.*

Another relevant Article is Article B6 of the Rapid rules, but also applicable for Blitz games:

*“The flag is considered to have fallen when a player has made a valid claim to that effect.”*

Here there were two claims, one from each player. And the question is which one should have priority. It is my opinion that the first claim is valid. This means that Black lost the game.

**Question** Hi Geurt, Player A offers Player B a draw, Player B ponders for a while and then says 'yes' and is about to shake hands to confirm when Player A says: “Your flag has dropped I claim a win.”

My initial response is that the game has ended because the flag had fallen before both players had agreed to the draw. My sensible head says, that in the 'spirit' of chess, the draw was offered and accepted and should remain. How would you call it? **Carl Tillotson (United Kingdom)**

**Answer** I assume that this happened in a normal game. At the moment a flag falls, the game is over. The consequence is that your initial response, that Player A won the game, is correct. In Rapid and Blitz games there must be a claim. And in your case the claim was made. Therefore, the same result as in a normal game.

**Question** Dear Mr. Gijssen, I have two similar questions on applying the touch-move rule in castling situations.

(1) In novice games, a player often attempts to castle queenside by bringing the King to b1/b8 and the Rook to c1/c8. In this case, what penalties can the opponent impose? In particular, can the opponent compel ordinary queenside castling (if legal)?

(2) If a player touches King and Rook simultaneously, can the opponent compel castling (if legal)? **Paul Epstein (U.S.A.)**

**Answer 1** Well, the made move is in fact illegal. And for illegal moves we have penalties described in Article 7.4 of the Laws of Chess: for the first and second illegal move in a game the penalty is that two minutes are added to the opponent's time; the third illegal move means that the game will be declared lost. But you mentioned that this often happens in novice games. As I mentioned already many times before, an arbiter should be more flexible in games between players who are just starting to play chess.

**Answer 2** This case is thoroughly described in Article 4.4 of the Laws of Chess:

*“a. If a player deliberately touches his king and rook he must castle on that side if it is legal to do so.*

*b. If a player deliberately touches a rook and then his king he is not allowed to castle on that side on that move and the situation shall be governed by Article 4.3(a).*

*c. If a player, intending to castle, touches the king or king and rook at the same time, but castling on that side is illegal, the player must make another legal move with his king which may include castling on the other side. If the king has no legal move, the player is free to make any legal move.”*

**Question** Dear Geurt, I had a position with my K+R+N against my opponent's K+R in an unrated game in my club's Cup championship. My opponent claimed that this is a draw both theoretically and according to the chess rules. Despite the fact that he was running out of time, I told him not to worry about time, and I even offered some of my time just to play a little bit more. My opponent protested, claimed it is a draw by rule, and did not continue the game. We did not have an official arbiter. I told my opponent that this position may indeed be drawn theoretically, but it can still be played since there is enough material to win on both sides. I also said that it is not a draw by rule, but it may end up in a draw by the 50-move rule if played correctly by both sides.

**Question 1** Is this material balance a draw by rule? I am asking this because you wrote in your column (regarding a position with K+R against K+R+B)



that "an arbiter does not know what a theoretical draw is."

**Answer 1** The material balance is *not* a draw by rule.

**Question 2** Am I right in my argument(s)?

**Answer 2** You are completely right. Either player can blunder and lose a piece. The game is only a draw by rule, taking into consideration the material, when a position is reached from which a checkmate cannot occur by any possible series of legal moves, even with the most unskilled play (Article 9.6 of the Laws of Chess).

**Question 3** Can a player offer some of his/her time to the opponent during the game (just to show that one is not trying to win on time or just as a courtesy to keep the game going)? **Erdal Atukeren (Switzerland)**

**Answer 3** I mentioned already once before that it is not usual and in principle I do not like this procedure.

**Question** Dear Mr. Gijssen: I have two questions. They are about the 50-move rule.

**Question 1** My brother maintains that the 50-move count begins anew not only when a pawn has been moved or a capture has been made, but also when castling has occurred. When I showed him the Laws of Chess (which make no mention of castling in the 50-move rule) he said he was still right - those who wrote the Laws of Chess simply forgot to mention castling! Would you agree, and if so, how would you decide the matter if it arose in a competitive game?

**Answer 1** Your brother is wrong.

**Question 2** The purpose of the 50-move rule is to avoid endless games. Now in my opinion, when any time control is applied that requires all remaining moves to be made within a limited time (without increment), the 50-move rule serves no useful purpose and is redundant. Therefore, an arbiter would be justified in denying draw claims based on the 50-move rule in such situations. Do you agree? **Gawril Markov (Switzerland)**

**Answer 2** No, I do not agree. In my opinion, the 50-move rule also makes sense in the last period of a game in which all moves must be made in a specified time. If a player claims a draw based on this rule, then the arbiter has to check it and if the claim is correct, the draw stands. In case of a claim based on Article 10.2, the player depends completely on the subjective decision of the arbiter, and even worse, an appeal of the arbiter's decision is impossible.

*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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