



## C O L U M N I S T S

# An Arbiter's Notebook

Geurt Gijssen

## I would like to propose a draw, but where is my opponent?

A few days ago I met Mr. Albert Vasse from the DGT company. He demonstrated to me the new DGT clock, called DGT XL. All the options the clock had before are also available on the new clock. But there is more. In this clock, combining different time controls is possible. In addition, at any moment it is possible to check how many times the players have pressed the clocks. Also, corrections are easier to make than before. I received one of the prototypes. I will keep you informed after I have received one of the regular clocks.

**Question** Dear Mr. Gijssen, I think you've made an error in one of your previous columns:

The question was: *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 Najj AlRadhi (United Arab Emirates)*

You answered: *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'. This is wrong, the new rules say:*

4.2 Provided that he first expresses his intention (e.g., by saying "J'adoube" or "I adjust"), the player having the move may adjust one or more pieces on their squares.

4.3 Except as provided in Article 4.2, if the player having the move deliberately touches on the chessboard [...]

In the previous version of this rule (before 1998), it said something like "touches with the intention of moving". But now, you must explicitly express your intent. If you deliberately touch a piece, for whatever reason, without expressing your intention, you must move it/capture it. In the first case, the piece was touched deliberately, and must be moved. In the second case, you can argue that the piece was not touched deliberately, and another piece can be moved. **Martin Norbäck (Sweden)**

**Answer** Occasionally, the spirit of the rules prevail over the letter of the rules. In the cases mentioned by our colleague it is very clear what the intentions are. I agree with you that the task of an arbiter is much easier when he follows the rules very strictly.

**Question** My question for consideration is with regard to the positions sent by Mr. Vereshagin. It appears, but is not stated directly, that these positions are possible checkmates, thus the inferior material side can claim a win – or is it that these positions should be considered as wins because the only move for White is checkmate, thus White should not have to even complete the move on the board. I would have to disagree with both. For starters, whether by rule or not, a player should not be able to claim a win unless he can set a position on the board that is forced mate, the defence having the move to show that said checkmate can be avoided or not. As for the only legal move being checkmate, the move still has to be executed; why should that be different from any other move made in the course of the game that contributed to said checkmate position - those moves also had to be executed on the board!  
**Andrew Rea (USA)**

**Answer** As arbiter, I would like to see the move checkmating the opponent's King on the board.

**Question** Is the game not finished in this example from your latest column? B accepted the draw offer and then A claimed win because of the dropped flag. In my opinion the game is already settled when B accepted the draw. ½-½

*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.*

Now to my question. A 30-minute game. White's flag had fallen two minutes ago, but black did not notice this. Then black made an illegal move. White pointed this out, and claimed 1 minute. (Rules decided before tournament started.) Black claimed that white lost on time (-2 min + 1 min=-1). I decided to give white 1 minute to play with. One minute before the flag would have fallen. If following the rules strictly by giving white just 1 minute, black would still have won this game by making an illegal move. This cannot be according to the rules. My argument was that it does not matter if one player has overstepped his time with 1 sec or 30 minutes. It is 0. The flag has fallen. The rule giving a player 1 minute must mean that he has 1 minute to actually use to play. **Lars Dock (Sweden)**

**Answer** I think that you acted correctly. As you probably know, there are some digital clocks that lock as soon as a player oversteps the time limit. This means even when the game continues, the clock still shows -0.00. As a general rule, I am of the opinion that the time used by a player who has overstepped should not be registered.

Dear Mr. Gijssen, I have some questions for you. **Frits Fritschy (The Netherlands)**

**Question 1** First of all, thank you for your very useful column. A direct link to a site where you can find the current version of the Fide Laws of Chess might make it even better.

**Answer 1** The only sites that publish the Laws of Chess, as far as I know are the following:

The site of the Dutch Chess Federation: [www.schaakbond.nl](http://www.schaakbond.nl) →

Info/download → Reglementen → FIDE Laws of Chess. By the way, if you print the Laws from this website, your print is a booklet in A5 format. The only thing you have to do after printing, is to staple it.

The FIDE website: [www.fide.com](http://www.fide.com) → Info Handbook → E1. Laws of Chess

**Question 2** As far as I understand from the rules as published on the site of the Dutch Chess Federation, you don't have to press the clock after making a move that immediately ends the game (6.10). So, if you have king and bishop against king and pawn and you take the last pawn, there is no more mating potential; according to 5.2b; this ends the game immediately; consequently you don't have to press the clock and the game is drawn. Your answer to

Günther van den Bergh in the last issue ("Completing a move means making the move on the board *and pressing the clock*") suggests otherwise. Am I correct?

According to 5.2c, a game also ends immediately when a draw offer is accepted. Article 6.10 also refers to 5.2c: you don't have to stop the clocks after accepting a draw offer. In a blitz game, overstepping the time limit doesn't automatically end the game. So, if your flag has fallen prior to you accepting a draw offer and your opponent notices the flag fall after your accepting of the draw, the draw should stand, in my opinion, contrary to what I understand from your answer to Carl Tillotson in the last issue. Am I wrong?

**Answer 2** I would like to discuss several possibilities:

1. If for instance White has King, Queen and Rook and Black has only a King, and White oversteps the time limit, then Black will not win the game, but the game is only a draw. The reason is very simple: with this material Black is never able to checkmate the opponent's King. I agree with you, that White has not to press his clock to make a draw, better to say only a draw.

2. In your example the endgame King + Bishop against King produces immediately a draw pursuant 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."*

I agree with you that neither player has to press his clock.

3. If a player offers a draw and the opponent did answer after his flag has fallen, the flag fall counts. I base this on Article 9.1 (a):

*"A player wishing to offer a draw shall do so after having made a move on the chessboard and before stopping his clock and starting the opponent's clock. An offer at any other time during play is still valid, but Article 12.5 must be considered. No conditions can be attached to the offer. In both cases the offer cannot be withdrawn and remains valid until the opponent accepts it, rejects it orally, rejects it by touching a piece with the intention of moving or capturing it, or the game is concluded in some other way."*

The last part of the last sentence is very important. The offer of a draw is valid until the game is concluded in some other way. Therefore, in case of a flag fall the flag fall is decisive in the event the draw offer was not yet accepted.

4. In Rapid and Blitz games the situation is different. The reason is that a flag

fall is not a flag fall, but a flag fall is a flag fall when the opponent has claimed it. This means that for instance a draw offer followed by an acceptance is a draw in the event the opponent has not claimed a flag fall.

**Question 3** I always wonder how I must propose a draw when my opponent is taking a stroll. I don't mind that (I like it myself), but I don't see why I should go looking for him. On the other hand, according to the rules, I must first offer the draw and only then press the clock. Doesn't look right either. What then, leave a note?

**Answer 3** I agree that it is a little problem, but it can be a bigger one when the player has not too much time left. I think there are two possible solutions:

I like your last suggestion: to leave a note. Mark on your scoresheet (=), the way to record a draw offer and press the clock. Wait until your opponent returns to the board, offer him the draw and show him that you recorded the draw offer.

Make the move, record the draw offer on the scoresheet, stop the clocks, summon the arbiter, inform him regarding the draw offer and the arbiter should restart the clocks. The arbiter informs the opponent about the draw offer.

**Question 1** Some players have the habit of writing their move on the scoresheet, and hiding it with their pen, and , after checking it, scratch it, and record another move (not played also). I noticed that even a lot of GMs do it. Could I , as arbiter, give the player a warning about this on his time? (and suppose if this was done by a star GM, just to make it more complicated).

**Answer 1** I discussed this matter very extensively in a previous Notebook. It is in my column The 35<sup>th</sup> Chess Olympiad in Bled and may be found in the ChessCafe archives

**Question 2** Some players also record the time of each move (their own time and/or their opponent's). Is this allowed? If not, how should the arbiter act ?  
**Charles Kayle (Lebanon)**

**Answer 2** I refer to Article 12.2 second sentence:

*“The scoresheet shall be used only for recording the moves, the times of the clocks, the offer of a draw, and matters relating to a claim.”*

**Question** You wrote in a previous Notebook the following:

*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 counter play.*

*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?*

In my copy of the *FIDE Official Rules of Chess*, Article 7 ("The completion of the move") states (in pertinent part) that a move is completed "in the case of the transfer of a piece to a vacant square, when the player's hand has released the piece." Article 7 goes on to define move-completion in the cases of a capture, castling, and pawn-promotion. But the point in each case is the same: the completion of the move has NOTHING to do with pressing the clock.

In fact, there is no requirement in the rules of chess that a player EVER presses his clock. Of course, it would not be very productive to adopt this as a practice. One would always lose on time! But correct would be for you to state that "completing a move means making the move on the board." Your addition of "...and pressing the clock" is incorrect. Pressing the clock has nothing to do with completing a move.

Once my opponent has completed his move on the board, I am free to make my own move, and I do not have to wait around for him to press his clock. At least, that's what the rules of chess say. True? **David Stoughton (USA)**

**Answer** I am afraid that your copy of the FIDE Laws of Chess is an old one. In the most recent edition of the Laws of Chess, Article 7 is titled "Irregularities" and not "The completion of the moves". In the current version of the Laws of Chess this chapter (Article 4) is called "The act of moving the pieces".

**Question** Dear Mr. Gijssen, In a blitz game, player A makes a move but before he touches the clock player B starts with making his move. Player A

argues that player B must not touch his piece before the completion of Player A's move. Player B argues that after a legal move is made, he does not have to wait for the completion of his opponents move, and can make and completes his move even if the opponent did not complete his own move (by pressing the clock). Who is right here? Thank you. **Zivomir Masic (Canada)**

**Answer** Article 6.8 says:

*“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, unless the move that was made ends the game. (See Articles 5.1, and 5.2)*

Important is the sentence that a player must always be allowed to stop his clock. This means, that a player, even after the opponent has made or even completed his following move, the player has still the right to press his clock.

Personally I would give an opponent a warning in case he makes a move, before the player even could press his clock and he is doing this frequently.

**Question 1** The following example is very usual in blitz tournaments. In blitz game, there is a situation that A plays with B and the position is K+R vs. K+R (similar cases K+N, K+Q, K+B (different colours) vs. same material). So this is not a draw by rule. Both players are rated about 2200 and both players have *more* than one minute (same question about 30 seconds or more). A offers a draw because he thinks that its very childish to play on. B doesn't want the draw, he wants to play on and in this case I think he hopes that the opponent will make an illegal move. Can the arbiter do something or can player A claim a draw some way (there is the 50-move rule, but what is the procedure? Usually in local tournaments there are only 1-2 arbiters and they cannot watch every game. A player must play without counting the moves loudly (in my opinion) because, if he counts the moves, he can't play with the same strength as his opponent). And of course, it is very annoying and unpleasant to play with such opponent who always wants to win such positions. Should the arbiter give a warning when he sees that one player often acts like this. In my opinion it is not nice (as it is not nice to kick your opponent under the table) to try to win these positions. I agree that things are different when one player has only few seconds left, then of course to play on is reasonable.

And what should be done when this happens in normal game? (Assume both players have more than a couple of minutes) and one player wants to play on (in my opinion this act is annoying your opponent or you want to crush your opponent's psychic health) because he knows that he has rights and he will not lose the game (in fact he must know as well that he is not winning the game).

**Answer 1** In normal and also in Rapid games a player has several options. One of the possibilities is Article 10.2. I am always surprised that many players and even arbiters do not know that in Rapid games this Article can be applied. In Blitz games we have a different situation. Article C4 of the Blitz rules says explicitly: "*Article 10.2 does not apply.*"

To be honest I do not see too many possibilities for a player or arbiter to act in situations in which an ending like the one you describe is on the board. Theoretically the 50-move rule or triple-repetition can be applied. But how to prove it? The player has to show a scoresheet and in a Blitz game this is almost impossible. I am afraid we have to live (and play) with players, who demonstrate this unfair behaviour.

**Question 2** Article 10.2 again. The position for A (white) and B (black) is K+R+2 pawns vs. K+R+3 pawns (all pawns on one side). So A has 15 minutes and B less than 2 minutes. B claims the draw and the arbiter says that they should continue to play. He told the players that he wanted to see how they would play. So far so good because it is B's fault that he has so little time. They play on and B plays very well but his flag falls in a position with K+R vs. K+R+2 pawns h- and g-pawns on the third and fourth rank). I know you think that the arbiter should not consider whether it is a drawn, winning or losing position. If the arbiter really saw that B played an excellent game and is stronger and B himself didn't take any risks to win the game, he should agree with a draw. Should the arbiter give a draw or declare the game lost for B?

**Answer 2** The question is: did player A make any effort to win the game by normal means? From your question, I gather that he did not. If so, then it is very clear. He should agree that the game is a draw.

**Question 3** Fair play again. There is a normal game between A and B. A has about an hour and B has about a minute left. The position was almost a forced draw (very few pieces). A saw that it was not possible to win the position. A has to move but he is rising up and starts walking in the playing hall and talking with people and other players. He used about 55 minutes doing this. Occasionally he walked to his table and was ready to move but then smiling at his opponent, he walked away again. What should an arbiter do in this case? I am sure that this kind of habit is not very unusual in local tournaments.

**Answer 3** We have to consider two different situations:

1. When this happens at the end of the first time control. Then there is nothing that can be done. The arbiter is also unable to do anything except to forbid player B to have conversations with other players.

## 2. If it is the final time control session, player A may claim a draw pursuant Article 10.2.

**Question** According to Article 7.4(b) (for normal and rapid games), a player is awarded 2 extra minutes for each of the first two illegal moves made by his opponent. The opponent loses the game once he has made his third illegal move.

Consider the following. Player A has mating material on the board. Player B only has a king on the board. Player A makes an illegal move. This is his third illegal move. Now, according to 7.4(b) player B is awarded the game. This sounds silly because how can Player B receive a full point if he has no mating material on the board? This is similar to the "old" blitz rule that stated that a player with a bare king can win the game on time. In such a case (as given above), is it not better for an Arbiter to rather award Player B half a point and zero points for Player A?

A suggestion. What about the following change to the Laws:

7.4(b) " ... for a third illegal move by the same player, the arbiter shall declared the game lost by this player. The opponent shall be awarded a full point if he has mating material on the board otherwise he shall be awarded half a point only." OR " ... The arbiter shall decide the result of the opponent."  
**Günther van den Bergh (South Africa)**

**Answer** In my opinion you have found a loophole in the Laws of Chess. Without any doubt we shall accept your proposal. I prefer the proposal in the following way, which is in line with other Articles:

For a third illegal move by the same player, the arbiter shall declare the game lost by this player. If the opponent cannot checkmate the player by any possible series of legal moves even with the most unskilled counterplay, the arbiter shall declare the game a draw.

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*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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