



C O L U M N I S T S

An Arbiter's Notebook

Geurt Gijssen

Falling Flags

Other countries probably have the same problems, but I assure you that it is very difficult at the moment to find sponsors for chess tournaments. I was really very happy when the Dutch Chess Federation was able to organise the Dutch championships, as a member of the board was able to find the money. But there was more: there was a lot of publicity because one of the young players who was making his debut, started very well, making his second GM-norm and qualified for the next championship. John Van der Wiel also qualified for 2004 and played in his 25th consecutive Dutch championship. The two championships (men and women's) were round robin tournaments and featured fighting chess. There were no short draws.

During my holidays in eastern Europe I visited another national championship. I shall not mention the country. Both championships, men and women's, were Swiss tournaments. In the women's section there was a lot of fight, but in the men's section (I attended round 8) in 10 minutes 3 of the 4 top boards were finished. It is this kind of conduct that causes organizers to have problems finding sponsors.

Dear Geurt, In your February column you raised the issue of legal moves and illegal positions. I have two questions concerning this:

Question 1 Several years ago, in a "normal length" game at a single time control with no add-ons, I had just a black King on g4 and my opponent had just King g6 and Queen e4. I had about three minutes left, my opponent had perhaps twenty seconds, and as there were other time scrambles going on at the same time, the arbiter was not watching or keeping score. (Had the arbiter been present, he would have intervened and prevented what happened). After thinking about which move would keep me alive the longest, I played the illegal Kh4. Before I realised I had played an illegal move, my opponent responded with Qg2, stalemate. We accepted it as a draw, because the game had ended immediately without the illegal move being noticed during the game. Only later did I see the issue it raised: the game ended with a move which was legal according to Article 3, but was played in an "illegal position" (a concept that does not feature in the Laws, which refer only to "illegal moves") in response to an illegal move. If this happened under the current Laws, bearing in mind that the stalemate occurs before the arbiter sees what

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has happened, would you rule it a draw or make Black replay the illegal move with the appropriate penalty under 7.4(b)?

Answer 1 I am afraid I have to disagree a little bit with you. I do not consider the *position* after ...Kh4 as illegal. I agree with you that the move played is illegal, but I consider the position as legal. If you had played ...Kh5, then the position is in my opinion illegal. Two Kings, attacking each other is an illegal position. Do you agree with me? By the way, I checked the Laws of Chess. In the Laws only illegal *moves* are mentioned. If I read the current rules properly, the only correct decision is indeed a draw. See Article 5.2.a of the Laws of Chess:

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

In Istanbul I proposed that not only the last move producing the stalemate position must be legal, but all moves have to be legal. The majority of the Rules Committee was against this, saying that they were very afraid that the arbiter had to replay the whole game before the players would be ready to sign the score sheets for confirmation of the result. By the way, you were very lucky that your opponent did not claim the illegal move, because with two extra minutes he would have been able to checkmate your King easily.

Question 2 In Article C3 of the Blitz rules, dealing with a situation where an illegal move has been made, "If the opponent cannot checkmate the player's King by any possible series of legal moves with the most unskilled counter play, then he is entitled to claim a draw before making his own move." Does this apply to the position before or after the illegal move is made, or both? The illegal move could have removed any possibility of the opponent checkmating by any series of legal moves, for instance where a piece necessary for mate is illegally captured. (I would rule this a loss for the player who has played the illegal move, to discourage cheating.) Alternatively, it could have created that possibility in a position where none previously existed, for instance where the player is legally forced to take the last dangerous opposing piece, but fails to do so. (I am not sure what I would rule here.) **Kevin Bonham (Australia)**

Answer Although it is not well described in the Laws of Chess, the logical answer is that the position *before* the illegal move (capture) should be considered. I share therefore your opinion to declare the game lost for the player who made the illegal move.

Question Dear Mr. Gijssen, I must take issue with your answer of Manuel Lopez's question regarding whether the electronic flag should be used to claim a win. Your statement "And to have different rules for digital and mechanical

clocks is not right. " This answer confuses me, Chess Laws have been changed quite dramatically these past few years since digital clocks have been used. How does the new FIDE time controls work on a mechanical clock? We have now many rules that utilize the features built into only Digital Clocks, why not the digital chess flag? Since there are several types of digital chess clocks each with different features and controls, allowances should be made for players not familiar with a particular clock. As a courtesy I, will explain to my opponent, if necessary, how to pause the clock in the event he wishes to make a claim. This should be required. While there may be other reasons to rule against the electronic flag, consistency with mechanical clocks is not a valid one. **Joseph Hricko (USA)**

Answer I agree with you that we have right now several official FIDE time controls that may be applied with digital clocks only, for instance all time modes with an increment per move.

In normal games it is very rare that both players overstepped the time limit when it is not clear who overstepped first. And it is very important to mention that in the case of a normal game all means may be used to find out whose was first. The arbiter may also call a flag fall, or even *has* to call a flag fall.

In Rapid and Blitz games the situation is different. The arbiter has to be silent. Only the players are responsible. The flag is considered to have fallen, not at the moment the flag actually fell, but at the moment when the opponent made a correct claim of the flag fall. And in fact, it does not matter what kind of clock was being used or whether it is clear which flag was first.

Question Dear Mr. Gijssen, An interesting situation arose recently in a blitz tournament where I was playing. In a crazy finish with both flags falling, White promoted a pawn and grabbed a queen to replace it. Meanwhile, his opponent captured the promoted pawn with a rook. Then, the white player captured the rook with the *queen* that was in his hand! The black player didn't notice it and completed his next move. Only then he realized what happened and demanded a victory. The white player argued that as black had already completed his move he couldn't claim a victory anymore and the actual position - with the queen in play - should be maintained. In the end, nobody could reach an agreement and the game was replayed. What should be the right procedure? **Rodrigo Nascimento (Brazil)**

Answer You have to have seen these situations with your own eyes, otherwise you would not believe it. I am afraid that the Arbiter's Notebook shall be an excellent manual about how to cheat your opponent if I mention all the tricks used in Blitz games. However, I understood from you that this was not a trick, but it happened in the heat of the game. The situation is in my opinion quite easy. After a player has completed his move, he has no possibility of claiming an irregularity of his opponent, committed the previous move. The game should be continued.

Question 1 This is not really a question, but a comment: You mentioned being in doubt about article B8: "If both flags have fallen, the game is drawn." You wrote: "Does it mean that the arbiter, immediately after the second flag fall, declares the draw? I am not sure."

Well - I think not. Remember that according to B6 the flag has not fallen until one of the players makes a claim to that fact, and the game may end in a checkmate before this happens! So by declaring a draw the arbiter is really not being neutral. Besides, B6 states that the arbiter should refrain from calling a flag fall, so there is not really any doubt, is there? What happens if both players continue playing indefinitely ignoring the flag falls because they both want to win, I don't know - an interesting question!

Answer I have had more reactions regarding the answer I gave in a previous column. And I think I have to repeat what I answered in the previous question. In Rapid and in Blitz games the flag is considered to have fallen not at the moment the flag actually falls, but when a player makes a claim to that effect. And as you know, the arbiter may only react after a claim.

Your question, what shall happen if both players continue to play ignoring their opponent's flag fall (I guess that this is what you mean), I do not understand. I do understand that players are so focussed on what happens on the board and do not see the opponent's flag fall, but I do not believe that they would intentionally ignore that fact. Let us finally discuss Article B6: *"If both flag have fallen, the game is drawn."*

In the previous column I was not sure what the arbiter should do. I now agree with everybody who took part in the discussions, that there is not any role for the arbiter. We have to consider several possibilities:

Player A claims that B's flag is down. B looks at the clocks and also notices that A's flag is down. No king is checkmated. The result of the game is a draw. It is not relevant who claimed first.

The King of player A is checkmated. Player B claims the win, but A then noticed that his King was checkmated that B's flag was down. In this case B wins the game, because the flag fall was noticed after the mating move and as we have seen before, the flag is considered to have fallen in Rapid and Blitz games at the moment the opponent notices it.

Question 2 Another matter: Let us imagine that in a serious game I have less than five minutes left on my clock and therefore have stopped writing the moves. In such a situation I always put my pen back in my pocket and move the score sheet to the side - which I must say greatly helps my concentration! Several moves later my opponent who has only about ten seconds left on his clock makes an illegal move. Now the arbiter rewards me with two extra

minutes as compensation. This means that now I suddenly have more than five minutes and therefore - according to you - should start writing again. In my opinion this is not in any way to my advantage! I may not remember how many moves I have not written, so I would be in doubt where to begin writing, and my concentration would certainly be disturbed! Besides the time it takes me to write each move will give my opponent extra time to think. Of course I might just wait and postpone my next move till I had again less than five minutes, but this would give my opponent a lot of extra thinking time. In fact it seems to me that my opponent has nothing but advantages from his illegal move! I know players who might indeed deliberately make an illegal move just to gain time!

In an answer to a previous question you mentioned something about football (soccer) and that the arbiter in some situations might not punish a violation if he thinks it will be better not to. Could this be such a situation? If the offended player has only disadvantages from his extra time, then it might be better not to reward it - but of course this will create another problem: If the offended player does not understand these subtleties, he will naturally be annoyed not to have his extra time. So in my opinion there is only one good decision to make for the arbiter: To reward the two minutes but *not* to force the offended player to begin writing again! And it seems to me that the preface of the laws does give the arbiter the freedom to do this. However I think that the rules should state that once a player has had less than five minutes, he cannot again be forced to write until the next period (unless of course an earlier illegal move is found, and the game has to restart from a point before he first had less than five minutes.) **Lau Bjerno (Denmark)**

Answer Although Article 8.4 states that a player who has less than five minutes on his clock, has no obligation to record the moves, your statement is very reasonable. Especially your remark that a player should not have a disadvantage after an illegal or incorrect action of his opponent makes your statement very strong. I therefore agree completely with you, but I think also that we have to clarify this in Article 8.4. We have to change the Article (in 2004) as follows:

If a player in a period has less than five minutes left on his clock and does not have additional time of 30 seconds or more added with each move, then he is not obliged to meet the requirements of Article 8.1. Immediately after one flag has fallen the player must update his scoresheet completely before moving a piece on the chessboard.

Question Dear Geurt, Here is a question raised by a member of my chess club: what happens if an electronic clock falls out ? For example, it's running as usual, but suddenly, without any notice of a low battery, it stops. Nobody has written the time used. What has to be done in this situation ? **Kris Van Quickenborne (Belgium)**

Answer In tournaments with less than 20 boards I have the habit of recording the number of moves and the used times of all players every half hour. And as a matter of fact, it is also quite interesting to see how players spend their time.

If something happens as you mentioned, then I have some data to re-set the clocks. There are also chess players who write the times on the clock after each move. When I see a chess player who does this, I check from time to time whether the recorded times are correct.

But what to do if what I described before cannot be applied? The only Article that mentions something about this is Article 6.11:

“Every indication given by the clocks is considered to be conclusive in the absence of any evident defect. A chess clock with an evident defect shall be replaced. The arbiter shall use his best judgement when determining the times to be shown on the replacement chess clock.”

I understand that this Article is not very useful, but there is no better one. The only solution if it is impossible to find out the times used by each player is to split the total time used by both players. If for instance after 1 hour and 20 minutes the clocks stopped and nothing is shown in the display, the arbiter has to install a new clock with 40 minutes used by each player.

Mr. Gijssen, A game between players A and B ends in a draw. As the players begin analysing, a player at the next board, still involved in his game, asks them to be quiet. Player A leaves and player C, an observer, sits down and begins analysing quietly with player B. It's not important, but I was player C.

Questions 1. Is completely quiet analysis permitted in the playing hall after a game? 2. Does it matter if those analysing are not participants in the game being analysed? 3. What recourse does a player at an adjoining table have when completely quiet analysis "bothers" him, and what is an appropriate penalty, if any? **Angelo DePalma (Spain)**

Answer Let me first refer to Article 12.3:

“Players who have finished their games shall be considered to be spectators.”

This means that players who have finished their games have to leave the playing venue, because the playing venue is the exclusive place for chess players. I have to add that it is for an arbiter almost impossible to remove the players from this area, but my experience is, - and I have to admit that I am talking about professional chess players - that players stop analysing

immediately when I tell them to do so. They understand perfectly that analysing in the playing area is disturbing. That is why before the tournament I always ask the organisers where the analysing room is located. For other reasons I ask the organiser also to show me the bathrooms and smoking area. It has happened several times that organisers are shocked when I asked them about these locations. My final answer to your question is: stop analysing in the playing area immediately!

Dear Mr. Gijssen, Consider the following situation: It is White's turn to move. He/she has only *one* legal move, and this move checkmates Black's King. That means that the game will be finished once White makes his move. Now, let us assume that White is very generous, and wishes to give half a point (or a full point) to Black. My questions:

Question 1 Is White allowed to propose a draw?

Question 2 Is he allowed to resign?

Question 3 Let me add that we are not talking about rapid chess.

White has a lot of time on his clock. Black (who *must* be mated if the next move is made) has nothing but his King. That means that, even theoretically, Black can never win. It is clear that White (a strong player) knows that he is winning. **Uri Adelman (Israel)**

I do not think it is relevant what kind of game it is, normal, Rapid or Blitz

Answer 1 Yes, a draw may be offered. Theoretically it is possible that White does not see that the next move checkmates the opponent's King.

Answer 2 In principle I have to answer in the same way as in Answer 1.

Answer 3 I guess that you have the same questions as in 1 and 2, but the new element is that Black has a lone King. To offer a draw is again possible. To resign is in my opinion impossible, or better to say, Black can never win, because he has no material to checkmate the opponent's King.

But my opinion is that, if something, as you mentioned, happens in a tournament and you are the arbiter, you probably have to apply Article 12.1 of the Laws of Chess: "The players shall take no action that will bring the game of chess into disrepute." And the consequence of this is also that Article 12.6 should be applied: "Infraction of any part of the Articles 12.1 to 12.5 shall lead to penalties in accordance with Article 13.4."

Question The software we use in Indian tournaments pair the same players again if one of them had given a walkover in the earlier rounds. Is this correct?. **Raghunandan Gokhale (India)**

Answer I guess the following happened: Player A and player B were paired in a certain round. For some reason the game was not played. For instance one of the players, let us say player A, did not show up.

What should the arbiter do in this situation? He has to "unpair" the game between these two players, He has to give 1 point to B, 0 to A and also to discard the colours with which they were assumed to have played. It means nothing can be found in the files about a game between these two players. And this is correct. And in this (correct) situation it is possible that the same players may be paired again against each other.

Question Geurt, I have a comment on your reply to Question 1 asked by Geert van der Wulp in your June column (use of the term "piece" in the main body of the FIDE Laws and in App. E).

I agree that there is no doubt that "piece" in the main body of the Laws includes a pawn. This is specific in Articles 2.2 and 2.3. It is equally clear that a distinction is made between pieces other than pawns and pawns in App. E. That Appendix is a description of Algebraic notation and such a distinction must be made for the description to make sense.

As a retired lawyer, my view is that no one could sensibly argue that the distinction made in App. E somehow flows back into Article 5.2 (c) – the 50-move rule. But, if you want to put the matter beyond doubt and deter the bush lawyers, the change to App. E will need to be wider than your suggestion. The distinction between "piece" and "pawn" occurs not only in E1 and E3 but throughout App.E, see for example, E7 and E8; see also E9 and E10 where pieces other than pawns and pawns need different treatment.

Perhaps the best solution would be to insert an introductory sentence under the heading "Description of the Algebraic System" and above E1 as follows: "In this description, "piece" means a piece other than a pawn." As far as I can see that adequately applies to all the provisions of App. E. (including E11.). Kind regards, **Denis Jessop (Australia)**

Answer I agree with you.

Question Dear Geurt, A friend of mine played in a Swiss open at last weekend's Championnat de Paris. He arrived in time, paid his entry fee and was paired with an adversary who never showed up and subsequently withdrew from the tournament. The organiser explained to me that where there are an odd number of players in a Swiss, each player who cannot be paired is given one point as "Exempt" for that round, which seems fair enough.

But what happened to my friend was that he was given a 0 for the first round, because his adversary had withdrawn and so all his potential games were

annulled. This makes sense in a round robin but not in a Swiss. The result was that my friend had a score out of 8, whereas all the prize winners had a score out of 9. Is the arbiter's decision correct? If so, where is the justice in it?

Chris Holmes (France)

Answer There is no justice at all in this case. If the facts, as you described, are correct, the arbiter made a mistake. Your friend should receive a bye, meaning a full point. No doubt about it.

Question Dear Mr. Gijssen, I'm writing you from a regional Chess Federation, asking for the legality of giving "byes" with a half-point for the players that ask for them before the tournament. It's a very usual situation in Spain, but we are not sure about the correction in order to getting title norms or evaluating FIDE rating.

We don't find anything about this in FIDE Handbook (neither allowing nor forbidding), so we have a problem, however the system is applied in a lot of tournaments. Some tournaments here would like to apply that system if it doesn't avoid the obtaining of norms. Of course we are asking if a player who hasn't asked for any bye can get a norm in a tournament where other players have asked for them.

So we ask for your help. Can we give a half-point to the players who have asked for a bye? Or must we give them 0 points (not pairing them)? **Alberto Muñiz Pardiño (Spain)**

Answer I know about these cases. Provided it is announced before the start of the tournament, there is nothing wrong with it. I have one remark to make: These half-points may not be counted for ratings. Only games actually played will be considered for rating calculations.

Question I do not understand this answer: A draw was offered. The draw was accepted. The game is over. The flag falling subsequently is of no consequence. If answering 'yes' is not sufficient to accept a draw offer (at which point the game is over), then what is sufficient? Or, is your point that prior to the 'yes' the flag had fallen so that the game was over before the 'yes' was uttered? Or, is there some other formal draw acceptance ritual that one must complete before your flag falls? Thanks for the great column, In a previous Arbiter's Notebook you wrote:

“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."***Glenn Wilson (USA)**

Answer Let me explain the whole procedure.

1. White makes a move and offers a draw to Black
2. White stops his clock and starts Black's clock
3. Black starts to think about his move and probably about White's offer of a draw.

Now there are two possibilities:

4a. Black's flag falls and White claims the flag fall or the arbiter (in a normal game) observes it. White wins the game provided he has mating material.

4b. There is no flag fall, Black accepts the draw or not.

There is another possibility I would like to mention: Before White has stopped his clock, White's flag falls. In that case of course Black may claim or the arbiter interferes.

Final remark: All these points are also valid in Rapid and Blitz games with the exception that the arbiter may not say anything even in the event that both flags have fallen.

Have a question for Geurt Gijssen? Perhaps he will respond to it in a future column. Send it to geurtgijssen@chesscafe.com. Please include your name and country of residence.

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