



## "My Cell Phone *Vibrates!*"

**Question** Dear Mr. Gijssen, in your November column you say that a player should never suffer when his captain makes a mistake. This means the game should not be declared lost for the player whose captain made a mistake. This is not the way most team sports work. Yet chess is a very individualistic game and I'm sure that many players would agree with you.

### COLUMNISTS

## *An Arbiter's Notebook*

Geurt Gijssen



I know I would feel very bad about a player losing through no fault of his own. I propose a rule change to give the arbiter another option when a captain or team mate has committed an offence that warrants declaring the game lost. Declare that the game is lost for purposes of scoring the team contest, but allow the game to continue for individual purposes, including ratings, norms, best game prizes, individual score prizes, and prestige.

This approach protects the individual player but also deters bad behaviour, ensuring that the offending team does not benefit from its own wrongdoing.  
**Thomas Peters, Maryland (USA)**

**Answer** Your idea is not bad at all. Once I was member of an Appeals Committee. The case was that a captain made a really big mistake. The arbiter decided to declare the game lost for the captain's team mate. Later the arbiter explained to us that his only intention was to deduct one point from the total final score of the team of the offending captain. The Appeals Committee changed the punishment and decided that the captain involved may not act as a captain for some years. In fact this arbiter had the same intention as what you proposed. I would like to discuss this case in the Rules and Tournament regulations Committee. I think it should be a part of the Tournament Regulations.

**Question** Dear Geurt, In tournaments in England, where I play, it is often stated that after the prescribed number of moves a set time will be added to each player's clock. My question arises as I deliberately misinterpret this rule and wonder whether my behaviour is erroneous. I normally do not hide my scoresheet from my opponent, except in the case of nearing time control when either I have noticed that my scoresheet displays a different number of moves played than my opponent's or my opponent has stopped recording moves because he/she is in time-trouble.

Occasionally, my opponent will ask me to confirm that we have reached the time control and makes as if to adjust the clocks. I always, without fail (regardless of whether we have or have not reached the time control) reply in a stern voice that brooks no argument that I am unsure whether the time control has been reached, and that we should wait until a flag falls and sort it out then. So far this has always been agreed to. If my opponent stops the clocks and calls the arbiter (not yet happened - but I imagine it will one day) I would quite happily show the arbiter my scoresheet, but ask him not to indicate to my opponent whether the time control has been reached. Occasionally my opponent may relax too early and go over time by accident, other times he may make a blunder thinking he is in time trouble when in fact the time control has been reached. Am I playing gamesmanship or are my actions justified? **Peter McFarlane (UK)**

**Answer** Your actions are absolutely correct. It is even forbidden for your opponent to talk to you. Only in case of a draw offer, accepting or refusing it, or if he wants to resign may he talk to you.

In the Dutch league the time control is 40 moves in 2 hours, then 20 moves in 1 hour and finally 15 minutes for the remaining moves. Playing with mechanical clocks, it is clear that at the start of the third period, the clocks must be adjusted. And there is always a lot of discussion: should the arbiter adjust the clocks at the moment black has completed his 60th move or after the first flag fall, provided both players have completed more than 60 moves. If I remember well, it was decided that it should be done after a flag fall, but recently I saw an arbiter adjusting the clocks when both players had completed the 60th move. Even if both scoresheets show 60 moves, it is my opinion that the arbiter should not indicate that 60 moves are completed.

**Question** Dear Geurt, I am very puzzled by your remark that there is no reason for a player to hide his scoresheet from his opponent! It sounds somewhat naïve to me, for there is indeed one very good reason: If a player has less than five minutes and has stopped recording the moves, he might not know how many moves have been played and the only way for him to get this information is to look at his opponent's scoresheet.

One of countless examples: In Esbjerg 1988 IM Erling Mortensen was short of time against GM Rafael Vaganian and had probably lost count of the moves. He then tried to get a look at his opponent's scoresheet, but Vaganian very quickly set up some tall chess pieces in front of his scoresheet to bar Mortensen's view! And there is still no law against that since it was still possible for the arbiter (and the spectators) to see Vaganian's scoresheet because they could see it from a different angle. Mortensen survived the time trouble and the game was adjourned, but Vaganian won both the game and the tournament. **Lau Bjerno, Danmark**

**Answer** Yes, you are right. It can be even very dangerous to look to your opponent's scoresheet. It is possible –and I know such a case- that a player has written the same moves twice on his scoresheet. The opponent seeing it, does the same. It means both players have written too many moves. At the end of the period player A has less than 5 minutes and stops writing moves. Player B, still writing moves, and at a certain moment he has written 40 moves, but as a matter of fact only 39 moves have been completed. Player A feels relaxed and waits for the fall of the flag of his clock. Immediately after the flag fall player B claims a win saying that A completed only 39 moves, pointing out that he wrote the same moves twice. The arbiter had no choice and declared the game lost. Player A appealed, but the Appeals Committee confirmed the arbiter's decision. Player B got a warning because of the unsportsmanlike behaviour.

**Question** Dear Mr. Gijssen, I read your column and I would like to receive the Laws of Chess, including the proposals you distributed at the meeting of Rules and Regulations Committee at FIDE Congress in Greece, if is possible. Also I'd like to know whether the regulation that says "6.1 If an unrated player scores zero or half in an event, his score and that of his opponents against him are disregarded" is a decision taken this year in Greece and it's applicable from 1/7/2004 or was taken before. I read two articles in French and Portuguese Federation's website and it seems it's in force since last year, but in FIDE Website (Handbook section) says it was approved at GA 2003. **Mikel Larreategi (Spain)**

**Answer** I am sure it is a typographical error. First of all, in 2003 there was no General Assembly of FIDE. In Kallithea 2003 it was a meeting of the Executive Board. In 2002 there was a General Assembly. I checked the minutes of the General Assembly Bled 2002 and I found a recommendation as it states in 6.1 of the Rating Regulations.

**Question** Dear Geurt, this happened to me in a recent league match in England. We were in a quickplay finish. I had Knight v Rook and there were no other pieces apart from Kings. This match was in Division 1 and both players are very experienced in league chess. I had less than 2 minutes left on my clock. I wanted to claim a draw but was uncertain about the rules, so I turned to ask my team captain. He said nothing to me. And I asked him the question several times. Therefore I didn't know I had to stop the clock. Eventually my flag fell and after some discussion I agreed I had lost and shook hands.

My captain then explained to me that he couldn't say anything to me in case the other team thought he was interfering.

So I have a number of questions: (1) Am I entitled to such help from my captain? (I have been a team captain myself and I would certainly have helped a member of my team); (2) My opponent told me to shut up - was his rudeness justified and should I have incurred a penalty for disturbing him? (3) A qualified arbiter later told me that Knight v Rook is declared drawn in such

circumstances - is this correct? **Phil Neatherway (UK)**

**Answer** (1) Let me quote again Article 10.2: "If the player, having the move, has less than two minutes left on his clock, he may claim a draw before his flag falls. He shall stop the clocks and summon the arbiter" I think that the procedure is very well described in this Article. If a player has a question regarding the Laws of Chess, the best and I think even the only way is to ask the arbiter, not the captain. (2) As I have already stated in this column, the only conversation between players has to do with draw offers, not claims and the resignation of the game. (3) I do not know what the qualified arbiter means when he refers to "such circumstances", but an arbiter is entitled to decide to continue the game. By the way, if your opponent's flag had fallen, it is even possible that the player with the Knight wins the game.

**Question** Please, where can I go to download: (1) Laws of chess and other time controls; (2) Knowledge of Swiss Pairing without programs; and (3) Everything regarding rating calculations. **Marcelo Velasquez (Bolivia)**

**Answer** All these items you can find on the FIDE website: [www.fide.com](http://www.fide.com). Go to INFO, then to HANDBOOK. Chapter B01 describes the Title regulations, B02 Rating regulations, C04 = Swiss systems and E1 the Laws of Chess.

**Question** Dear Mr. Gijssen, The issue of drug testing is being hotly debated here in the USA. Have you addressed this in your column? Have you had drug testing in any of your tournaments and what were the players reactions? Do you have a stand on this issue? **Duncan Oxley (USA)**

**Answer** We have doping controls in the Dutch Championships. Before the start of the event the players have to sign a declaration that they agree to be tested. Grandmaster Timman declared that he is against these tests and therefore he refused to play in the Dutch championship. Furthermore I can inform you that there were no problems in the Dutch Championships.

Also in the Olympiad in Bled there were doping tests. In a captains' meeting before the start of the Olympiad I was instructed to inform the captains that there were doping controls, but also there were no sanctions. As far as I know, two players refused to go along with the doping control.

The problem is that doping controls are apparently necessary to be recognised as an Olympic sport. And recognised sports are financially supported by the National Olympic Committees. My personal opinion is that I do not see at the moment any need for these controls.

**Question** I would like to comment on the problem raised by Ms. Anastasia Golubenko (Estonia) in November's Column. I shall not comment on the

knowledge or abilities of the chief arbiter in charge – I don't know him to judge him. But for the sake of chess I would assume he is very knowledgeable.

As I noticed in both instances, black was claiming a draw after making his move. As per article 10.2, once the player makes his move on the board he has no right to claim a draw. Thus the arbiter should not discuss the offer – it is as if the claim never occurred. It means that the result (1-0) is correct.

It is upsetting, nevertheless, to see the chief arbiter, after fixing the result (1-0), calling someone else to back up his decision. This can only lead to doubts and questions. If he thinks his decision is correct, he must stick to it.

On the other hand, let's go back to the last position when black's time expired. Taking into consideration that: (1) Black twice claimed a draw, despite doing it after making his move (they are only juniors); (2) Players, coaches and spectators were all waiting for the final decision of the arbiter; and (3) White can do absolutely nothing but to play for time, then I would agree a draw. I'm sure no one can "blame" me for that. This is the spirit of chess. Due to such controversies in making decisions, the law was changed to protect the arbiters and their decisions by disallowing the appeal to Article 10.2.

Finally, in my opinion, the arbiter could have avoided all of these troubles if he had stopped the clocks and explained to the players (they were only juniors) that they must make the claim before making their move. He could have also commented without stopping the clocks by stating "claim before making your move". It is such a simple action, but would prevent further problems during the game. It is so vital that players must not be left confused wondering whether the claim is right or wrong, or whether the arbiter rejected or postponed his decision. **IA Naji al Radhi (United Arab Emirates)**

**Answer** I am not sure that the arbiter rejected the claim, because it was done after a player had made his move. I agree completely with you that, if this was the reason not to accept the claim, he should have informed the player how to claim correctly.

I agree with all your remarks, except with your statement that to protect the arbiter, appeals are not possible. It is my opinion that the Laws of Chess should protect the players and not the arbiters. I remember quite well the reasoning of the proposal that appeals against the decisions of the arbiters are not possible. Mr. Krause from Germany, who proposed this article, was of the opinion that it is very difficult, even almost impossible, to reconstruct the circumstances of the last phase of a game. Moves are, in his opinion, not sufficient to get a real picture of what happened. And the majority of the Rules Committee, the Executive Board and the General Assembly agreed with him.

**Question** Dear Geurt, I have three points arising from your interesting November column: (1) As you know, the Scottish arbiters usually send a number of comments on the Laws revision. Could you please send me a copy of the proposals? (2) Quick play finish decision. I was astonished at the arbiter's decision of 1-0 (it seemed based entirely on considering 'not trying to win by normal means to the exclusion of not possible to win...'). Of course, you are right that it could not be subsequently changed. I realise that you also hint that there is more behind this than you can tell us; and (3) Re-pairing. I think it is understandable that players will object to re-pairing at master level. However, I think it is important that rules are not written in such a way as to prevent this being done in tournaments for less strong players. As arbiters at the Glasgow Congress, for example, we usually re-pair after 30 minutes to maximise the number of players actually playing a game, which is what the majority wish.

Another issue here is a team match in which an absent player might be replaced before one hour has elapsed. **Ken Stewart (Scotland)**

**Answer** I hope you received the proposals. I repeat: if somebody wants to receive the proposals, send an e-mail and you will receive them. In the meantime I have received more proposals. In about one month from now I will send an update to everybody who has already asked for the revised proposals.

Regarding point 2, see my comment in the previous letter. It is almost impossible to find a compromise between professional chess and amateur chess. I think that everybody agrees with me that what happened in the tournament of the Isle of Man (re-pairing after one hour) is not possible. But even re-pairing after 5 minutes can be a disaster. Pairings are published, the players prepared an opening for a specific opponent and then, suddenly there is another opponent. It is still my opinion that published pairings should not be changed. On the other hand I can also understand that many players, probably even the majority, like to play. There can be even a very good reason for it. For instance, there is a nine-round tournament. For a title norm a player has to play a minimum of 9 games. With a forfeit in round 1, it is impossible to make a norm, because the player played only 8 games. I re-pair only in cases in which both players agree.

**Question** While I was considering my ninth move one hour and twenty minutes into the game my cell mobile started to vibrate. It was deep in my bag some two or three meters away from my board (Bundesliga players are used to bring their luggage into the playing hall on Sundays because of check-out times). It did not ring. Only my opponent, myself and my team captain noticed. The arbiter was not present in the playing hall. According to my team captain nobody else turned around to our table. I had used the cell phone as an alarm clock and thought I had turned it off when putting it in my bag the same morning. When I realized that the vibrating was caused by my cell phone I

told my opponent in a low voice that it was my cell phone, that I was not to take the call and that I was sorry. My opponent announced immediately that I had lost the game. Even though only eight moves were played his position was seriously worse (1.Nf3 d5 2.d4 Nc6 3.g3 Bg4 4.Bg2 e6 5.c4 Nf6 6.Ne5 Bb4+ 7.Nc3 0-0 8.Nxg4 Nxg4).

We discussed the situation with the arbiter in an adjacent room. As he was about to declare the game lost for me I suggested that the game should be continued under protest from my opponent's team because a higher instance may well decide that a lower sanction can suffice in a situation when nobody is disturbed (the disturbance of players analysing their finished games in an adjacent room was much more serious as the leather sole shoes of some players were clacking on the playing hall floor). The arbiter went to make a call to the general arbiter who confirmed the decision. So the game was not continued.

It seems that our arbiter who had not been present when my cell phone vibrated had not understood the situation, nor did the main arbiter. Our arbiter wrote in the match report that my game was declared lost because my mobile rang, which was not the case as pointed out in a postscript by my team captain. I want to mention that it was not announced before the game that cell phones were not allowed or a ringing cell phone would lead to immediate loss of the game. Nor was there any note in or outside the playing hall. I may well have checked once again before the start of the game. True, the day before the arbiter had announced that Bundesliga has adopted the FIDE rule about cell phones between the first and the actual second week-end (I was a few minutes too late to hear that but that was, of course, my fault). Actually nobody was bothered to check if it really was my cell phone or that it would be turned off or taken out of the playing hall immediately. I did so myself after some twenty minutes of discussions.

I estimate that another fifteen cell phones were present in the hall during the round probably all in off mode. I also want to mention that it is quite possible that my opponent may not have understood that my cell phone was on had I not told him so. Fortunately my honesty did not backfire: my team scored 5:2 on the other seven boards.

My question is: was the arbiter right to declare the game lost for me? Was the main arbiter right to confirm the decision from a distance without talking to any witness (there were only my opponent, myself and my team captain)? If not, how should the situation have been handled and what can be done now? My hunch is that ambitious seconds and team captains will now start to collect mobile numbers of opposite players in order to call them when they face their own players. **Stefan Loeffler (Germany)**

**Answer** Each new rule causes in the beginning some problems. For instance, is a vibrating phone the same as a ringing phone? Discussions about cell

phones started when phones were ringing in the playing hall and disturbed the players. And I am not only talking about players' cell phones, but also spectators' phones.

First of all, is a vibrating phone the same as a ringing phone? Is a vibrating phone disturbing the players and especially the opponent? There are no clear rules on this matter for the moment. It means it is up to the arbiter to decide. Therefore I cannot blame the arbiter who decided to declare the game lost for you.

I am not sure I would have taken the same decision, because we are now in a transition period regarding cell phones in the playing hall. One thing is clear at the moment: a ringing cell phone means that the game is lost for the owner of this cell phone.

One final remark: I do not like the behaviour of your opponent, if it is true what you wrote. It is not the opponent who declares a game lost. He may summon the arbiter and explain to him what was going on. And it is the arbiter who takes the decision.

**Question** Dear Mr. Geurt Gijssen, Being a rather inexperienced arbiter, I read your column with great interest every month. I would appreciate your opinion on the following incident which occurred in an amateur tournament I held last summer.

Among the participants were a deaf player (A), and in one of the late rounds, after several hours of play, he approached me in a rather upset state of mind, complaining that his opponent first had touched one piece and then moved another. He could not accept this behaviour, and claimed to win the game by forfeit.

His opponent (B) confirmed that he had corrected one of his pieces before he decided to move another, but he also added that he had stated "J'adoube" before he touched it. At this point B had completely forgotten about A's handicap, so he had not made sure that A understood his intention.

I explained to A that according to the Laws of Chess, he could not claim to win the game due to a violation of Article 4, only that B would have to move the piece he had touched first.

A quick assessment of the position on the board showed that B had the upper hand, and requiring him to move the piece he had adjusted, would not be decisive for the outcome of the game. None of the players were short of time either.



I decided to give A two minutes extra time and forced B to play the piece he first had touched. I based this decision upon the fact that B, knowing he was playing against a deaf opponent, should be responsible for making sure his opponent would understand his intention if he wanted to adjust a piece. Besides, no players sitting next to them had taken any notice of the incident, nor heard B actually say "j'adoube." But I must also admit that this decision was coloured by the fact that B's game would not be ruined if he was required to move the touched piece.

This was not enough to calm A down, and now B, feeling guilty for disrupting A's game, offered a draw, which A accepted promptly and left the venue in a hurry. However, before the next round the following day, A apologized to B and me for letting himself get carried away, and we all were happy to leave the incident behind us, so it all ended well.

Being aware of the fact that I found a somewhat convenient solution, the question is if the matter should have been dealt with otherwise. I can't help thinking that the player's state of mind also could have an influence on my decision; A being rather upset, while B felt sorry for causing the incident. Since B was not likely to protest to any sanction whatsoever, it is easy to judge too far in favour of the offended. Still I hope this wasn't the case here.

**Tom Eriksen, Bergen (Norway)**

**Answer** Let us assume that in this game player A was not deaf and exactly the same thing had happened. Player A summons the arbiter and informs him about what happened and player B tells the arbiter that he had said: "J'adoube". What shall you decide? In my opinion you have to accept B's remark that he had said: "J'adoube". It means, no punishment.

**Question** What is the purpose of the rule that allows a player to claim a draw when both players' flags have fallen? I cannot see what purpose this serves. It merely punishes the player who was last to run out of time. He could have claimed a win when his opponent ran out of time but, instead of claiming the win, he chose to be sporting and to continue the game and to win the game on the board and not on time. Later, when he subsequently runs out of time, his opponent can take advantage of this courtesy and claim a draw. **Dan Raymond (USA)**

**Answer** First of all, I have to mention that it is forbidden for the arbiter or anybody else to inform a player that his opponent's flag has fallen. To notice and to claim it is the responsibility of the player himself. Secondly, it is, in my opinion, not a matter of being. He may have simply not seen it. Playing with mechanical clocks, it is in many cases unclear which flag fell first. Therefore we have the Law that a game is drawn when both flags are down, provided the game has not been decided otherwise.

*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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