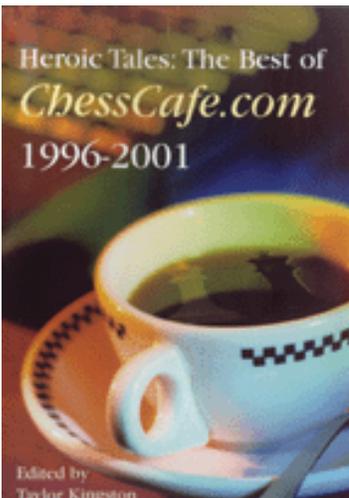




## COLUMNISTS

# An Arbiter's Notebook

Geurt Gijssen



## Are Arbiters Almighty?

**Introduction** I have already received many ideas for revising the Laws of Chess and I am very upbeat because there are numerous excellent proposals. I shall soon send an updated version of the proposed changes to all who requested them.

In addition we are working very hard on a Windows version of Swissmaster 4.8. At the next Aeroflot Festival in Moscow I shall use it for the first time and will inform you about its merits. One big advantage with the Windows version is that all the dates can be copied from the FIDE rating list or from a file offered by the organiser (provided it is an Excel file of the same format as the FIDE rating list). We expect more than 500 players in this festival, so it will save time and reduce mistakes.

I have often contemplated the development of a computer program for the Swiss system format. My first time as an arbiter in an international open tournament was the Dutch Open Championship in 1976; 180 players participated and the pairings were based on Buchholz points. Each night a colleague and I prepared the pairings and had to calculate the Buchholz and Sonneborn-Berger score of each player. We began after the adjourned games had finished, at about midnight, and then made the pairings using player cards. In 1977 the organisers found a sponsor who calculated the standings based on Buchholz. Every morning at 9 o'clock we went to the office of the sponsor, and after about 30 minutes, we received the standings and started to make the pairings manually. In 1993 the first pairing programs became available and I do not have to explain how much time we saved. These first programs only did the pairings; now they can calculate the TPR of each player and also check norms.

There is only one danger, I am afraid that in the future the arbiters will only know how to use the computer, but will not know how the pairing system works. An arbiter must be able to explain to each player why he has to play against a specific opponent. To say that the computer made the pairings is not sufficient. The arbiter has to understand the pairings.

**Question** Dear Mr. Gijssen, My question belongs to both chess history and chess classification. Alas, the importance of your answer has more than just

historical value. Please forgive me, but today I can't give you more details; 39 years ago at the Chess Olympiad in Tel Aviv, Israel, the Polish team did well, making a good score in the preliminary group and Final "A".

IM Bogdan Sliwa played 14 games on board 3; knowing the names and titles of all Sliwa's opponents and applying the FIDE rules of classification used in 1964, would you answer the question:

Could Sliwa, playing his fifteenth game against a Romanian player, obtain a GM norm? Suppose he had played on the highest possible board (=1) against the strongest opponent. Would he have to win this game, or was a loss or draw good enough? **Tomasz Lissowski (Poland)**

**Answer** Mr. Lissowski, let me begin by apologizing for the fact that you had to wait such a long time before I was able to answer your question. Mr. Sliwa made the following results in this Olympiad:

GM Bisguier (USA) 1; Kahyai (Iran) 1; Hoen (Norway) ½; Kulur (Turkey) 1; N. Littlewood (England) ½; IM Hort (Czechoslovakia) ½; Mackasy (Canada) 0; IM Kuijpers (Netherlands) 1; IM Forintos (Hungary) 0; GM Tringov (Bulgaria) 1; Meanville (Spain) 1; GM Botvinnik (USSR) ½; Saily (USA) ½; and Schweber (Argentina) ½

The title of Kuijpers is unclear, because he obtained it during the Congress in Tel Aviv, and even he did not know if he played this Olympiad with a title. Sliwa scored 9 points out of 14 games. He played against 3 GMs, 4 IMs, and 7 non-titled players.

At that time the rule for a GM norm was: The player had to score 50% against GMs, 70% against IMs and 80% against non-titled players. So in this case Sliwa's score, after 14 rounds, had to be  $1.5 + 2.8 + 5.6 = 9.9$ , which can be rounded up to 10 points.

Supposing he had won this last round game, the required score would have had to have been  $2 + 2.8 + 5.6 = 10.4$ , which can be rounded up to 10.5, provided his opponent had been a grandmaster. But his maximum score could only be 10 out of 15. Therefore it was impossible for Mr. Sliwa to make a GM norm in this Olympiad.

I used the following references: A Polish bulletin of the Olympiad 1964 (for the results of Mr. Sliwa); Gaige: Chess Personalia (for the titles of his opponents); and FIDE Revue No.4/1959 (for the regulations of norms):

**Question 1** During a recent Blitz tournament, each player had 5 minutes for the whole game; a player claimed a win because the opponent made an illegal move. To everyone's surprise the arbiter ordered the players to continue the game. The injured party became very upset and lost the game when she

overstepped the time limit.

**Question 2** In a regular game I had a King, Knight, and two pawns. My opponent only had a King. My opponent suddenly resigned as I was moving my King. I accepted his resignation and put the King back on the board, but did not look where I placed it.

A spectator then went to the arbiter and informed him that it was stalemate. My opponent declared that he had resigned, because his position was lost, but during the following discussion he changed his mind and claimed a draw. The arbiter agreed with him. The game was not replayed, because due to the time trouble the score sheets were not up to date. What is your opinion about these two cases? **Harry Cattoir (Belgium)**

**Answer 1** If the arbiter decided that the players had to continue the game without any investigation as to whether there was an illegal move or not, he of course, made a mistake.

**Answer 2** I am quite curious as to what kind of discussion you had with the arbiter, as there was no discussion about the final position, because it was not set on the board. The arbiter only based his decision on the statement of a witness and it is clear that this is not correct. You should ask him why he made such a decision. I am very curious.

**Question** I have a six-year old daughter who wants to compete in the under 10-year-old section in the qualifiers for the 2004 Youth World Championships. However, the local officials tell me that she needs to be at least seven. Is this so? I am sure she will do OK in the competition, why restrict her? **Rolando Carreras (Mexico)**

**Answer** Such a rule does not exist in FIDE competitions. I even have the impression that most organisers and FIDE officials are happy when young players compete in a higher age group as “Wunderkinder” always create publicity.

**Question** Dear Mr. Gijssen, In FIDE Swiss rules there is the following rule:

*F2. Byes, and pairing not actually played, or lost by one of the players due to arriving late or not at all, will not be taken into account with respect to colour. Such a pairing is not considered to be illegal in future rounds.*

As I understand it: If two players were paired against each other and Player A did not arrive, Player B receives a point by forfeit. I assume that these two players can be paired again against each other in a future round because the game was not played. **Varlam Vepkhvishvili, Rating Officer of the**

## Georgian Chess Federation (Georgia)

**Answer** Yes, you are absolutely right. If a player does not show up, his opponent receives 1 point by forfeit and the absent player 0 by forfeit. The pairing and colour of this game are discarded. A computer program does this automatically. If an arbiter makes the pairings manually, with Swiss pairings player cards, he must change it on the cards: he has to remove the number of the opponent and also the colours and the colour balance on both cards.

**Question** Dear Geurt, I am pleased to learn that our local club innovation – that a ringing cell phone loses instantly – has now been adopted at the international level.

When our club (Allentown, PA USA) first adopted this rule nearly three years ago, it generated some controversy. National organizers thought that it might be too harsh, but now even the biggest organizers are imposing penalties for cell phones that ring during games. And even the world champion (Ponomarev) lost a game for such a reason!

You answered a question about a vibrating cell phone and you may be interested in knowing that our local rule has always been about ringing phones and ringing pagers. Our players know that a ringing phone loses instantly; thus they enforce this rule themselves and it helps reduce the burden on the arbiter.

However, we always tell players specifically to put their phones on *vibrate* mode. We would never forfeit a player for a vibrating phone or pager. Some players are doctors or engineers who simply must be on-call. It seems unwise to adopt a no-vibrate rule. Vibrating phones do not disturb anyone.

The player who wanted a forfeit win against the player with the vibrating phone was guilty of extremely bad sportsmanship. We would probably evict such a player after a couple of these "instances." **Eric C. Johnson (USA)**

**Answer** From a historical point of view your remark, that your club was the first one that penalised a player whose phone was ringing during the game, is very interesting. Three years ago I gave an official warning when the phone was ringing for the first time and announced that the game should be declared lost if it happened a second time. However, I never had to institute this final penalty. As you mentioned the main reason for the penalty was that the opponent was terribly disturbed.

But the technology of cell phones has changed very rapidly. Now there are phones that can display an actual chess position and it is very easy to call a player and show what the best move is. For this reason we have to take measures against all players' phones. We should probably make some

exceptions for doctors, as you mentioned, but these exceptions must be announced in advance.

I advise all arbiters to announce before each round that the players have to switch off their cell phones.

**Question** Dear Sir, If an unrated player in a Swiss tournament scored 15 points out of 15 rounds, against rated opponents with an average rating of 2375, and if the average rating of the that tournament is below 2400, what is the rating of the unrated player? I calculated it as 2563. Can this be possible?  
**Pranesh Yadav, National Arbiter (India)**

**Answer** Your calculations are correct. Article 10.2 of the FIDE Rating Regulation says:

*First determine the average rating of his competition `Rc`. In a Swiss or Team tournament: this is simply the average rating of his opponents:*

*10.22 If he scores 50%, then  $Ru = Rc$ . (GA `94)*

*10.23 If he scores more than 50%, then  $Ru = Rc + 12.5$  for each half point scored over 50%.*

The average rating of the opponents is 2375. The player scores 7.5 points over 50%. Therefore his rating will be  $2375 + 15 \times 12.5 = 2562.5$ , which can be rounded up to 2563. I found the aforementioned Article 10.2 of the Rating Regulation in the *FIDE Handbook* published in 2000. After this nothing has been published except on the Internet.

**Question 1** Dear Mr. Gijssen, in the Forum on the FIDE web-site there is a very interesting discussion regarding Article 10.2. Say a player claims a draw and the arbiter decides to postpone his decision. The question is, whether the claimant can win the game after this postponement. The person who asked this question is of the opinion that the claimant does not deserve to win the game. I have my doubts about this judgment. What happens if the non-claimant oversteps his time or has been checkmated? As a matter of fact, a claim for a draw can be considered as a draw offer. So he took the risk to lose the game when he did not react to his opponent's claim of a draw.

**Question 2** As the arbiter in a rapid tournament, I was summoned to a board and the White player announced very loudly, that he was missing a Knight. His opponent told him that he had sacrificed his Knight for two pawns. The White player then told his opponent to prove this.

Of course, there was no scoresheet available, which means there was no

evidence for it. Finally he accused his opponent of removing the White Knight when he went to the bathroom.

I informed the White player that reconstruction of the game was impossible, so he had to withdraw his accusation, and continue the game from the actual position. If he refused to do so, I would declare the game lost for White.

He decided to continue the game and afterwards I was told by another participant that this player is notorious for this kind of practice. **Jos Vlak (Netherlands)**

**Answer 1** I refer to Article 9.1c:

*A claim of a draw under 9.2, 9.3 or 10.2 shall be considered to be an offer of a draw.*

It was with good reason that we added Article 9.1c to the Laws of Chess in 2000. Before this the opponent of the claimant did not play any role. Now he has the option to react immediately after a claim and to accept a draw. If the opponent does not react then he is responsible even for losing the game.

**Answer 2** Mr. Rentero, who organised the famous tournament in Linares for a very long time, had a blacklist of players who did not expect an invitation for this tournament. Especially those who made short draws and did not play fighting chess were on this list. In my meetings with arbiters from Holland, I always hear the names of players who behave improperly. We should probably make a list of these players and send it to the organisers. I am 99% certain that I know the name of the player mentioned in your letter and one thing is sure: they bring themselves and the game itself into disrepute.

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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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