



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

## An Arbiter's Notebook

Geurt Gijssen



## Breaking the Law

**Question** Hello Mr. Gijssen, I'm the current director of the technical commission of the Luxemburg Chess Federation. I have been a faithful reader for a long time and I save many of your answers in my "referee-binder" for further study. My question concerns electronic clocks. Time controls that make use of electronic clocks are not yet mandatory. But, of course, many clubs want to buy electronic clocks when they have to purchase new ones. So we would like to present the clubs with a regularly updated list of approved clocks. Where can I get a list of the clocks that have been approved by FIDE's Technical Commission? I could not find one on the FIDE website. Thanks in advance. **Claude Birtz (Luxemburg)**

**Answer** Currently there are only two clocks approved by FIDE: DGT2000 and DGT XL. Two other chess clocks were conditionally approved at the meeting of the FIDE Technical Commission in Calvia, but this was overruled and is discussed in the next answer.

**Question** Dear Mr. Gijssen, in your November 2004 column [The 75th FIDE Congress](#), you wrote that the electronic chess clocks Lisa and Silver (version 1.3) were granted conditional approval by the FIDE Technical Commission. However, a small committee of members, Messrs. Markkula, De Ridder and Stubenvoll, unanimously concluded after a testing session in a follow-up meeting that: "the electronic chess clock Silver (version 1.3) still contains some errors and therefore cannot be endorsed by FIDE at this moment." The results on the Lisa clock are not yet available. I thought your readers would appreciate this information. Kind regards, **Albert Vasse (The Netherlands)**

**Answer** The minutes of the meeting confirm Mr. Vasse's letter. The following message was published on the FIDE website on December 21, 2004:

*The FIDE Technical Commission in its meeting during the Congress of Calvia, Mallorca, dealt with three applications for FIDE endorsement of the following electronic chess clocks.*

*For the future FIDE will establish a clear procedure for endorsement of chess clocks, which shall be presented for the final approval at the FIDE Congress 2005. Part of this is already included in the*

*“Standards of chess equipment and tournament venues for FIDE tournaments” approved by the 2004 Congress. For the time being only the chess clocks “DGT 2000” and “DGT XL” are endorsed by FIDE Technical Commission.*

[Please note: Mr. Vasse is a principal in the firm that manufactures DGT clocks and **ChessCafe** is the exclusive distributor of DGT products in North America]

**Question** The newly proposed sentence to Article 8.1 (*It is forbidden to write the moves in advance.*) contradicts Article 9:

*9.2 The game is drawn, upon a correct claim by the player having the move, when the same position, for at least the third time (not necessarily by sequential repetition of moves) is about to appear, if he first writes his move on his scoresheet and declares to the arbiter his intention to make this move, or ....*

*9.4 If the player makes a move without having claimed the draw he loses the right to claim, as in Article 9.2 or 9.3, on that move.*

So perhaps an exception must be mentioned in Article 8. Regards, **Franz di Tolla (Italy)**

**Question** In your December 2004 column [Castling](#), you write a player, “first writes his move on his scoresheet and declares to the arbiter his intention to make this move.” But this is an obvious case in which it is legal to write down a move before making it. **Richard Price (USA)**

**Answer** In the case of a draw claim writing the move means more than simply recording it. First, the move cannot be changed and it must be played if the claim is denied. Writing the move and stopping the clocks means that the move is completed, but not executed on the board. It is comparable to writing the sealed move in an adjourned game. To avoid misunderstandings the final text will be:

*It is forbidden to write the moves in advance, unless the player claims a draw according to Article 9.2 or 9.3.*

**Question** Hello Geurt, I am shocked that I am no longer allowed to write my move down before I play it. Many good chess books have recommended this practice and it has saved me quite a few times! What is the penalty is for disobedience? I’m sure there are many players who will not be inclined to change their habits. Has anyone been inconvenienced by it? Admittedly, the habit of writing and covering the move with a pen is pretty silly, but it never bothered me. I think I’ll just break this law and wait for the chess cops! All the best, **Anthony Mee (Switzerland)**

**Question** What are the consequences if a player writes his moves in advance? How should I or the arbiter react? Thanks in advance. **M. Lamberti (Germany)**

**Answer** When players write their moves in advance they are making notes. I have seen scoresheets with as many as five changes in one game. And, as a matter of fact, there is now no need to cover the intended move with anything.

There is no reason for an arbiter to wait until an opponent complains about the practice. If the arbiter witnesses it he should tell the player to desist. If the player persists, the arbiter should issue a warning or two and if this is ineffectual he should apply Article 12.7:

*Persistent refusal by a player to comply with the Laws of Chess shall be penalized by loss of the game. The arbiter shall decide the score of the opponent.*

**Question** Geurt, I won a game in which both players were in desperate time trouble and my opponent had a winning material advantage. In the chaotic commotion I picked up my rook, but replaced it after noticing a forced mate. I then moved my knight and punched my clock. It is presumably irrelevant, but I had no conscious recognition of my obvious touch-move violation, nor did my opponent; and I checkmated him. A spectator then loudly said, "Hey you touched your rook a move ago!" I realized this was true, but I responded, "You're not the arbiter, so stay out of it." My thinking was that the game might not be fully finished because of a possible challenge by my opponent; and so spectators should not be influencing the game. However, my opponent was very upset with himself because he knew he could have easily prevented the mate and he declined to challenge the outcome of the game. So, did my opponent have a compelling claim? And, did the spectator act improperly?  
**Gene Milener (USA)**

**Answer** Regarding your first question: Article 4.7 of the Laws of Chess states:

*A player forfeits his right to a claim against his opponent's violation of Article 4 once he deliberately touches a piece.*

To answer your second question: it is not forbidden for a spectator to say something after the game has concluded. If your third question had been: whose behavior was more incorrect, the player that took back a move or the spectator who pointed it out? I would answer: the player's.

**Question** Dear Sir, I was recently the arbiter in a tournament in which Black had his knight pinned to his king by White's queen, but moved his knight without realizing this and the resulting position was actually checkmate!

White immediately stopped the clocks and claimed a win.

I told the White player that an illegal move is an illegal move, no matter what the consequence (checkmate or otherwise), based on the following rule:

*If during a game it is found that an illegal move has been made, the position immediately before the irregularity shall be reinstated. If the position immediately before the irregularity cannot be determined the game shall continue from the last identifiable position prior to the irregularity.*

As such I ruled that the game should continue after the knight was replaced. Eventually White won, but I am unsure if my decision was correct. Can you please give me your valuable advice? Thanks and regards. **Suresh C. G. (Bhosari Pune)**

**Answer** I assume that it was a normal or rapid game and not a blitz game. If so, your decision was absolutely correct. In a blitz game the situation is different. An illegal move means that the game is lost for the player who completed it, provided the opponent makes a claim.

**Question** Geurt, my younger brother was a pretty talented player and could have won the only tournament he played in, except for the following incident. In 2000 in a game against a master, he promoted a pawn and pressed the clock before replacing the pawn with a queen. The master refused to acknowledge the new queen because my brother had pressed the clock. The arbiter agreed and the pawn stayed on the eighth rank for the duration of the game. My brother managed to draw, but has since been left with this burden. Was the Arbiter correct? What do the rules say? Note that this was not a blitz event, but I would also like to know the blitz rules. Regards, **Gideon Giwa (Nigeria)**

**Answer** I refer to Article 4.7 of the Laws of Chess:

*When, as a legal move or part of a legal move, a piece has been released on a square, it cannot then be moved to another square. The move is considered to have been made when all the relevant requirements of Article 3 have been fulfilled.*

When a player plays his pawn to the last rank without replacing it with a piece, not all of the move requirements are fulfilled. This means that it was illegal to start the opponent's clock. The opponent's claim was correct, but he and the arbiter were wrong when they did not allow the pawn to be replaced.

As of July 1, 2005, the Laws of Chess will explicitly state:

*When, as a legal move or part of a legal move, a piece has been*

*released on a square, it cannot then be moved to another square. The move is considered to have been made when all the relevant requirements of Article 3 have been fulfilled:*

*in the case of the promotion of a pawn, when the pawn has been removed from the chessboard and the player's hand has released the new piece after placing it on the promotion square. If the player has released from his hand the pawn that has reached the promotion square, the move is not yet made, but the player no longer has the right to play the pawn to another square.*

Furthermore, the new version of Article 7.4 states:

*If during a game it is found that an illegal move, including **failing to meet the requirements of the promotion of a pawn** or capturing the opponent's king, has been completed, the position immediately before the irregularity shall be reinstated*

Apparently not fulfilling all the requirements of the promotion is considered an illegal move. And the consequence of an illegal move in a Blitz game is that the game is lost for the player who makes it, provided that the opponent makes a claim.

**Question** Dear Mr. Gijssen, the following incident has been bothering me for three years. In a game against a very talented 9-year-old boy I found myself in a trivially winning position at move 42. We had both been in serious time pressure and had not been keeping score for the previous twelve moves or so. We didn't realize that the time control had been reached, or remember that a win could not be claimed on time because of our scoresheet deficiencies.

In my haste I placed my queen en prise and suddenly my opponent was winning. However, upon capturing the piece my opponent declared, "I claim a draw," presumably based on "no losing chances." I immediately shook his hand and we proceeded to the analysis room. Did his "claim" constitute a draw offer, which I was legally permitted to accept? P.S. That was almost certainly my last opportunity to beat this young man. Warmest regards,  
**Angelo DePalma (USA)**

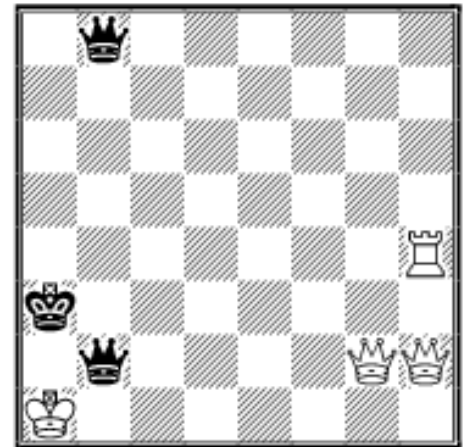
**Answer** Since it was not a claim based on three repetitions of the position, nor based on the 50-move rule, it therefore was based on Article 10.2: Quick play finish. But this claim is only possible in the last period of a game and when the claimant has less than two minutes left on his clock. As this was not the case, the claim was incorrect. Yet, by claiming a draw, even if it was incorrect, it can be considered as a draw offer. If you felt disturbed by this incorrect offer, you could have requested that the arbiter take some measures against your opponent.

**Question** Hi, A friend of mine was playing in a blitz tournament and a few moves into a game he realized that he had reversed the position of his queen and king. He proposed that the situation be corrected, but his opponent refused, insisting that the game continue in this manner. My friend later castled short, on the queenside, and his opponent did not object. Was castling a legal move, and if so, how is it done? **Michel Therrien (Canada)**

**Answer** See the second paragraph of Article B4 of the Rapidplay rules, which also applies to Blitz games:

*In case of reverse king and queen placement castling with this king is not allowed.*

**Question** Dear Mr. Gijssen, I would like to ask you a question with regards to your [Castling](#) article. If White's flag falls in the following position, what would be your decision? Thank you very much for your answer. Best regards. **Jiri Bielavsky (Czech Republic)**



**Answer** Allow me once again to refer to Article 6.10:

*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.*

As White did not complete the prescribed number of moves in the allotted time, the game is lost. But we have to check whether the position is such that Black can checkmate White with any series of legal moves; even with the most unskilled counterplay. Once we determine that Black can never checkmate the white king, the game is drawn.

Some may be of the opinion that White should win the game because there is a forced series of moves: 1.Qxb2+ Qxb2+ 2.Qxb2 and even a checkmate. However, White overstepped the time control and therefore does not deserve to win the game.

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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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