



C O L U M N I S T S

*An Arbiter's
Notebook*

Geurt Gijssen



The New Rules Revisited

Question Dear Mr. Gijssen, from recent discussions among arbiters in Sweden, we would like to ask you the following with regards to the new FIDE-rules:

Article 8.4b: It seems as if the new rule is made to protect players in time-trouble from being “blitzed” by their opponents. (The rule is not applicable if neither of the players is short of time). This means that if one of the players enters into time-trouble, the opponent must be careful not to make this situation more awkward, by not recording his moves – something that he is allowed to do in all other situations (article 8.1)! It seems as if it would have been more natural to change the rule entirely, i.e. to make it applicable from the first move. What is your opinion?

Article 12.2b: The basic problem with the rules related to mobile phones (and other communication tools) is that it is not entirely clear what FIDE wants to punish. Is it attempts to cheat or is it the fact that a ringing mobile phone is disturbing; or both? If one merely wants to punish a player for a ringing mobile in his pocket, thus irritating the other players, it is obvious that the immediate loss of the game is far too drastic. Conversely, if FIDE wants to nip all cheating attempts in the bud by adopting this draconic rule it may lead to absurd consequences in tournaments or team competitions at a lower level, where it is very unlikely that anyone is trying to cheat by using a mobile.

Even in top tournaments, a congratulatory mobile call on someone’s birthday will now result in an immediate loss; whereas players may still get away with talking to each other about variations and opening moves during play without being more than warned the first time this is discovered. This gives cause to some serious concern as to the wording of the new rule.

You mention that it is not necessary to include pocket computers in this article as they are already covered in article 12.2a. It is reasonable that the use of a pocket computer, or similar aid, should lead to the immediate loss of the game in progress. But this is not yet clearly stated in the rules. Why not? Another thing that we fail to understand is why the loss of the game is dependant on the ringing of the mobile phone. If cheating is the big problem, the *use* of the phone is the relevant thing. A mobile may be set on silent mode (as a cheater

no doubt would do) and the information could be received via text messaging, which is also silent. The focus on “ringing” makes the reader think that it is the annoying sound that is the real problem. But disturbing the opponent should not lead to the immediate loss of the game. By focusing on the ringing sound as the relevant fact, the rule may be counter-productive.

The new rule says that it is “strictly forbidden to bring...etc.” What is the implication of the word “strictly” here? Does this mean that a player should be punished more severely for bringing his mobile phone than for other breaches of the rules, for example, deliberately annoying his opponent?

One other practical aspect connected to the ban on mobiles in the playing area is that it may lead to problems for players who then must dispose of their phones; and the subsequent responsibility on the organizers to safeguard the phones. Conversely, the players are not forbidden to bring their pocket computers into the playing hall. Why?

Therefore, it would have been better to make a more flexible rule stating that the use of such devices (mobile phones, computers, etc.) is regarded as a severe breach of the rules of chess and may be punished with the immediate loss of the game – if the arbiter so decides. What is your opinion on this?

Article 13.7b: This rule forbids the “use” of a mobile phone. We assume that the word “use” was chosen in order to distinguish between the player-rule in article 12.2b (a mobile must not even be physically brought to the playing venue) and the spectator-rule. But what is “use?” Having the phone switched on? Allowing it to ring? What is the rationale of this rule, to avoid cheating or to avoid disturbing the players?

Furthermore, spectators are allowed to use pocket computers to analyze ongoing games, thus making it more interesting to watch the games. But such devices may, of course, also easily be used to help the players. For instance, a spectator and a player could conspire to cheat by way of some sort of signal. Yet a spectator is not allowed to “use” a mobile. What is the difference, apart from the fact that a ringing mobile may be disturbing? Finally, despite the somewhat critical nature of this letter, we would like to thank you for your excellent work!

Johan Sigeman, (Sweden)

Answer Article 8.4b: Others have proposed that a player may only make his move after he has recorded the move made by his opponent, and that this should be applicable throughout the game. Yet, I am unsure of its merits because in games without additional time per move and in games with an increment, we now have the same rule until one of the players has less than five minutes, and only then is there an exception. Although I personally do not like this new way of recording the moves, it is simpler than what you suggest.

Article 12.2b and 13.7b: Your remarks sound very reasonable, but what

caused this rule to be formulated? It was the ever increasing amount of players (as well as relatives, journalists, organizers, etc) who brought their mobile phones into the playing hall and the large number of ringing phones. It is clearly disturbing to both players when one of their mobiles begins to ring, but the article is written to protect the opponent from being disturbed.

I remember when Kasparov's phone rang in an exhibition game in Rotterdam between him and Timman in September 1999. Of course, Kasparov apologized for the disturbance, although he seemed more perturbed than Timman. During the 2001 World Championship KO Tournaments in Moscow, players were checked by metal detectors upon entering or re-entering the playing hall, even if he was only returning from the bathroom. Apparently the organizers were afraid of micro-computers as well as mobiles. Furthermore, there have been other incidents when a player has won games, and I believe even a tournament, because of collaboration between another party utilizing a computer and a phone. Hence, some measures were necessary to stop the use of mobiles. The proper action has been taken and we should learn from experience once the rule comes into effect on July 1, 2005.

You make a very interesting point with regards to the equipment brought into the spectators' area. Obviously, the potential for cheating arises. I allow spectators to use their own equipment, but only when it is not visible to the players. I found the following articles in the Recommendations for Organization of Top-level Tournaments:

4.2 Spectators must be seated, and at a fair distance from the playing area and not be permitted to enter it. They must be able to follow all games on demonstration boards while play is in progress. No spectator shall be allowed to smoke.

4.4 It should be ensured that players' concentration is in no way disturbed by noise from the audience or from outside.

Question Dear Mr. Gijssen, I can't believe what FIDE is planning to do with regards to cell phones in Article 12.2b. This is against every common law that I know and FIDE's aims are unclear; do they want to prevent a disturbance or illegal use as source of information or both?

If the rule is trying to prevent a disturbance, then why forbid cell phones which are silent or just vibrating? The whispering of spectators in the playing hall is much more disturbing.

Of course, any attempt to gain illegal information should result in a forfeit, including "Pocket Fritz" in the bathroom, reading chess books, or asking third-party opinions, etc. The latter is a much greater threat than receiving information via a mobile phone from an outside source. Moreover, one could leave the playing hall to contact such a source and this is not prevented by

Article 12.2b. So how can Article 12.2b avert any illegal behavior?

So this article does nothing but punish players whose phones are ringing (even if they just forgot to turn them off.) Is this worth being forfeited? The solution is to judge the use of cell phones under Article 12.2(a) and administer a warning or time penalty. Sincerely,

Christian Kinkelin, (Germany)

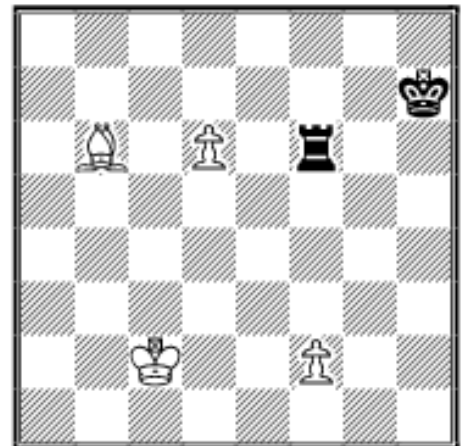
Answer Your questions have more or less already been answered in the previous item. Still, whenever something changes, there are people who complain and criticize, which is OK with me; but there is one thing I do not understand. Why do such people begin to complain after the decisions are taken?

The Rules and Tournament Regulations Committee first collected proposals about one year prior to the Congress. From these proposals a draft was made and sent to the Committee members. They gave their input and a “final” draft was made. This final draft was sent to all federations, who then perhaps made some amendments. If the Committee agreed with these amendments the draft was changed and a new draft was delivered to the members of the Executive Board of FIDE, the delegates of the federations, and the members of the Rules and Tournament Regulations Committee. The final discussion took place in the Rules Committee during the Congress. The results of these final discussions were then sent to the Executive Board, which accepted the proposal. The draft is then forwarded to the General Assembly where the delegates discuss it further before the final draft is accepted into the proposed Laws of Chess.

In principle this system is very democratic. Each federation receives the proposals and has the opportunity to offer their input. It is the federation that decides how to handle such matters, for instance, the Board of the Dutch federation entrusts it to the Arbiters' Committee.

Question Dear Sir, in an earlier column you answered a question about when a move is complete. I would like to add a pawn on f2 to your diagram and ask if Black could still play Rxd6 even after touching the f2-pawn, but not releasing the rook. That was essentially the situation during a junior tournament where I took the view of “touch-take” – was I in error? Thank you,

Keith Farrell, (Australia)



Answer The moment an opponent's piece has been touched, if it is possible to capture it, then it must be taken. Therefore your decision was absolutely

correct.

Question Geurt, Suppose White accidentally makes an illegal move of Be2-d2 and that neither player notices it until many moves later when White is in a winning position. Can Black then make a compelling claim for a win or to invalidate the game to save himself from defeat? Thank you.

Gene Milener (USA)

Answer If it is a rapid or blitz game, the game shall be continued because an illegal move must be claimed immediately after it is completed. It is also possible that something was wrong in the initial position. In which case we would apply Article B4 of the Rapid rules, which is also applicable to Blitz games:

Once each player has completed three moves, no claim can be made regarding incorrect piece placement, orientation of the chessboard or clock setting.

But if it occurs in a normal game then the position immediately before the irregularity is reinstated. If the position immediately before the irregularity cannot be determined the game continues from the last identifiable position prior to the irregularity.

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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