



## COLUMNISTS

## An Arbiter's Notebook

Geurt Gijssen



## 10.2 is Back!

**Question** Respected sir, in a recently held FIDE rated tournament White had a rook versus Black's knight and two pawns and both had only half a minute of time remaining using a manual clock. Black, depending on the position, repeatedly claimed a draw to the arbiter. Apparently, he didn't know the 10.2 rule about draw claims. I was the Chief Arbiter and I refused his claim because of sufficient mating material, but then White's flag fell and I declared Black to be the winner. Was my decision correct? Thank you, **Pranesh Yyadav (India)**

**Answer** A claim based on "nothing" cannot be correct. Therefore your decision was correct. But suppose that Black had known about Article 10.2.

*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.*

- a) If the arbiter agrees the opponent is making no effort to win the game by normal means, or that it is not possible to win by normal means, then he shall declare the game drawn. Otherwise he shall postpone his decision or reject the claim.*
- b) If the arbiter postpones his decision, the opponent may be awarded two extra minutes thinking time and the game shall continue in the presence of an arbiter, if possible. The arbiter shall declare the final result after a flag has fallen.*
- c) If the arbiter has rejected the claim, the opponent shall be awarded two extra minutes thinking time.*
- d) The decision of the arbiter shall be final relating to 10.2 a, b, c.*

Even then you are correct, because an appeal regarding a decision under 10.2 is prohibited; the arbiter is, unfortunately, always right.

**Question** Mr. Gijssen, How can I obtain a copy of the FIDE Handbook? **Jos van Doorn (The Netherlands)**

**Answer** The entire FIDE Handbook is posted on the FIDE [website](#): go to INFO and then to Handbook.

**Question** Dear Sir, one of our players never records the moves correctly and the arbiters always punish him per FIDE Rule 13.4:

*The arbiter can apply one or more of the following penalties: warning, increasing the remaining time of the opponent, reducing the remaining time of the offending player, declaring the game to be lost, reducing the points scored in a game by the offending party, increasing the points scored in a game by the opponent to the maximum available for that game, expulsion from the event.*

If the same player does not write his moves correctly in the next tournament, can the arbiter immediately declare the game lost without giving any penalty or warning? With Regards, **Haroon-or Rashid (Bangladesh)**

**Answer** My advice is to ask the player why he does not write his moves. This should be done privately before the start of the tournament. It is possible that he has a handicap or is even unable to write. Who knows? If his answer truly indicates that he is unable to do this, the Laws of Chess provides measures that can be taken. If his answer is unsatisfactory then the arbiter should inform the player in advance as to what penalty he has in mind. Personally, my decision would be to ban him from playing in the tournament. But the arbiter has to do his utmost to avoid this situation. In my experience, speaking with a “difficult” player to discuss such matters is very helpful and it is possible to find a solution in almost all cases.

**Question** Dear Sir, what is the assumed rating of an unrated player in a round robin tournament, after FIDE has made a starting rating of 1600? **Mahesh Ved (India)**

**Answer** I am glad you asked this question, because it gives me the opportunity to clarify something about the rating system. It is FIDE's intention to lower the rating floor to 1000. But even in this case, a player whose rating is not published in the rating list is still unrated, and the arbiter has to act accordingly in the rating report to FIDE.

Yet Swiss pairings (and only Swiss pairings) allow the arbiter to estimate the rating of a player. For instance, he may use the national rating of a player. In Swissmaster there is an option to indicate whether the rating used is a FIDE rating or not. If the arbiter indicates that it is not a FIDE rating, the program makes the pairings with this rating, but for the FIDE report the player is considered unrated. Also, if one of the players is unrated in around robin tournament, he will receive a temporary rating if another player makes a title norm.

**Question** Hi Mr. Gijssen, in Swiss system pairings, the players must be listed in order of rating before the start of the tournament. But what happens if

Player “X” is listed on the FIDE rating list at Elo 1900, and Player “Y” isn’t on the FIDE list, but has a national rating of Elo 2200?

We need to consider “X” stronger than “Y” if we apply the following rule:

*Before the pairings are made for the first round, the list of participants is prepared and the players given pairing numbers according to their rank in the list. Number 1 is the player with the highest rank and rating. In these rules No. 1 is said to have the highest pairing number. Players with the same rating or without FIDE ratings are ranked in order of FIDE title, perhaps local rating, and then by lot.*

But we need to consider “Y” stronger than “X” if we use the Dutch version of the Swiss pairing system:

*A.1 Rating: It is advisable to check all ratings supplied by players. If no reliable rating is known for a player the arbiters should make an estimation of it as accurately as possible before the start of the tournament (to convert German Ingo or British BCF use rating = 2840 - 8 x INGO = 600 + 8 x BCF).*

Thanks in advance. Best Regards, **Sergio Pagano (Italy)**

**Answer** Your question is more or less the same as the previous one. Nevertheless, I would like to add that you are correct that the player with a local or national rating of 2200 should be considered to be stronger than a player with a FIDE rating of 1900. Of course, it is very difficult to ascertain how reliable a local or national rating is. I encountered this problem several times during the “C” tournament of the Aeroflot festival. Therefore, I will never use the ratings as a criterion for the tiebreak if two players have the same final score. It is better to use Buchholz point as criterion.

**Question** Dear Geurt, my question is about “pawn promotion to an upside-down rook.” The following quote is from an arbiters report from last year’s Munich team blitz championship (a player had just promoted a pawn to an upside-down rook instead of stopping the clock and asking for the desired queen):

“For a long time, rule interpretation has assumed the piece to be a rook, often resulting in a loss a short while later, when the player would move it diagonally. Recently, however, the interpretation has moved towards considering the promotion to this “wrong” rook an illegal move in itself. An upside-down rook simply is not a legal chess piece.”

Unfortunately, the report does not say whose interpretation the author has in mind; it would certainly not be mine. I would recommend saying “j’adoube”

and turning the rook right side up. But the question remains, does the simple act of promoting to an upside-down rook lead to the loss of a blitz game, or does it take an illegal move by this rook to lose? In other words, is an upside-down rook still a rook? Thank you for your wonderful and enlightening column, **Joachim Vaerst (Germany)**

**Answer** I do not understand the problem. Let me refer to Article 6.13:

- a. If the game needs to be interrupted, the arbiter shall stop the clocks.*
- b. A player may stop the clocks only in order to seek the arbiter's assistance, for instance when promotion has taken place and the piece required is not available.*

This article applies to all types of games: "normal" games, rapid games and blitz games. So, the solution is very simple. It is probably advisable, especially in Blitz tournaments, to announce this article before the start of the tournament. By the way, I hope that, with the new Laws of chess coming into force on July 1, it is very clear to all chessplayers that capturing the king is now forbidden.

**Question** The following situation occurred during a last round game at a chess tournament. Player "A" made a move and released his piece onto a square. The rule book states that the move is not completed until the clock is punched, but he forgot to do this and his time continued running. Player "B" did not notice that the clock had not been punched and then touched and released a piece before noticing that his clock was not running. Player "A" claimed the "touch-move" rule, but Player "B" claimed it was of no consequence because Player "A" never completed his move.

As it happened, the situation resolved itself as Player "B" resigned and quickly departed. However, one of the TDs suggested that because Player "A" never finished his move, then the "touch-move" rule cannot be applied since Player "B" was not *on move* in the first place. It is unfortunate that player "B" did not ask for a ruling before departing.

What do you think about the situation? Thanks for your time and attention.

**Robin Grochowski (USA)**

**Answer** First let's see what is written about the completion of moves in Article 6.8a of the FIDE Laws of Chess:

*During the game each player, having made his move on the chessboard, shall stop his own clock and start his opponent's clock. A player must always be allowed to stop his clock. His move is not considered to have been completed until he has done so, unless the move that was made ends the game. (See Articles 5.1, and 5.2)*

In previous practice a player would make a move and before he was able to

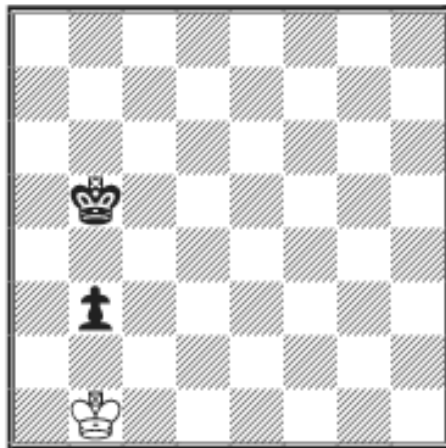
stop his clock, his opponent would make a move. Therefore, the sentence was added that a player must always stop his clock. In the case you describe the player can still stop his clock and start the opponent's.

As your situation is not completely described in the Laws of Chess, we should probably add (in 2008): "When a player touches a piece, before his opponent has stopped the clock, he has to play or capture this piece."

**Question** Mr Gijssen, My question is in regard to the 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.*

What is correct decision in the following position with White to move, with two seconds on the clock, following Black's ...Kb4-b5?



Also, what decision should be made in positions where checkmate is only possible by a help-mate, such as kings and opposite color bishops or K + 2N vs. K.  
**Zeljko Kanostrevac (Australia)**

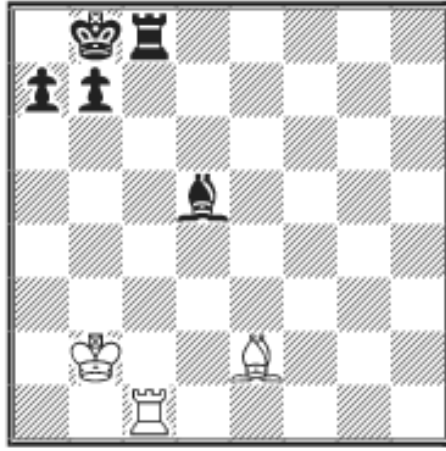
**Answer** There are opposing camps in the arbiters' corps regarding the answer to this question. One group is of the opinion that the arbiter must agree with this claim, because it is a draw according to the theory of pawn endings. After 1.Kb2, Ka4

or Kb4, or Kc4 2.Kb1 it does not matter what Black plays, because White keeps the opposition.

Another group opines that White has to prove he understands how to make a draw, but this is impossible with only two seconds on the clock. I belong to this group. Yet, let's consider what happened before Black's move ...Kb5? I can imagine that White had already shown he understands this ending and that Black tried to arrange a position where White would lose the opposition. The move ...Kb4-b5 is an indication of it and an important clue. Therefore, I am inclined to agree with White's claim.

There is even a third group, who is of the opinion that the decision of the arbiter depends on the strength of the players. If they are experienced players, say international masters or grandmasters, the arbiter should agree; but if it was a youth tournament, the arbiter should postpone his decision.

The following example was shown in a seminar:

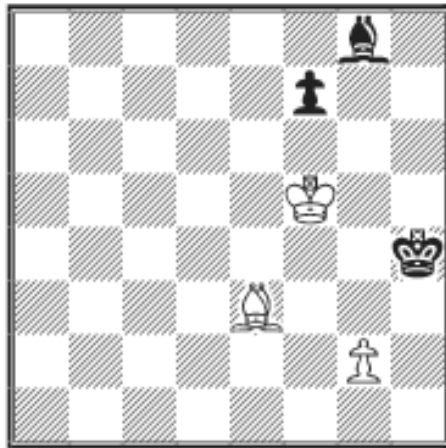
**White to move.**

The continuation was: 1.Rxc8 Kxc8  
2.Ba6! In this position there are two possibilities:

- a) 2...bxa6 and White cannot win this ending because he has the wrong colored bishop, or
- b) Black doesn't capture, but then 3.Bxb7 guarantees a draw for the same reason.

It is clear that White understands how to handle this endgame, but the question is: does each arbiter understand the meaning of White's moves. When White has enough time it is not a problem, because the draw will appear on the chessboard, but what if White has only 2 seconds? Furthermore, it is not advisable to start a discussion with the players about the position, and an appeal against the arbiter's decision is impossible. I am afraid that this allows arbiters to make different decisions regarding the same position.

Regarding your second question, I have to refer to my first answer. Although the question with opposite-color bishops is not so difficult, I discussed the following position in a previous Notebook:

**White to move**

A forced continuation is: 1.Bf2+ Kh5  
2.g4+ Kh6 3.Kf6 Kh7 4.g5 Kh8 5.Bd4  
Kh7 6.Be5 Kh8 7.g6 fxg6 8.Kxg6#

Notice that in the final position only the two kings and two bishops are on the board, but nevertheless it is mate.

Generally, when the two kings are in the center, a draw claim should be immediately accepted with opposite-color bishops.

K + 2 N vs. K endings are a little bit more complicated for the player with the bare king. If there is time let them play, but consider what happened before.

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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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