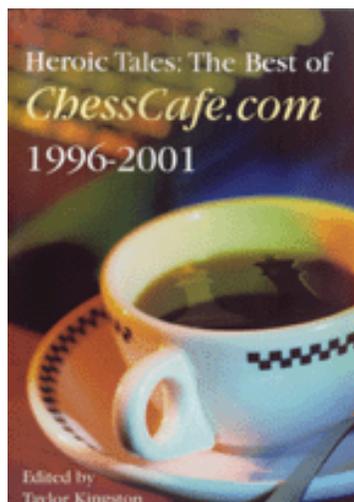




## C O L U M N I S T S

# An Arbiter's Notebook

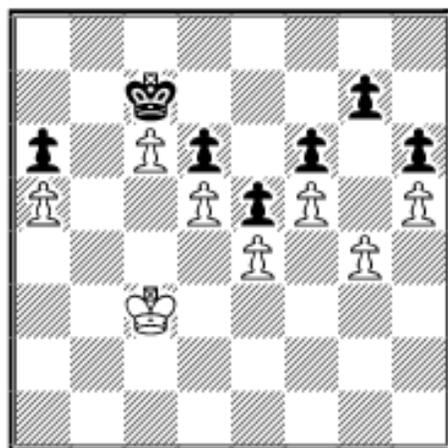
Geurt Gijssen



## What Shall We Do with a Coughing Player?

**Question 1** I recently worked with juniors at the 4<sup>th</sup> Dubai Open and a couple of incidents occurred that I would like your input on. During one game a coach informed me that two of his players were playing each other, but one of them was crying. I discovered that the player had a headache and felt a little bit warm. The coach brought pills to reduce his temperature, but the sick player kept crying while trying to concentrate at the board. The clock was running and I thought it would be wise to suspend the game for 10 minutes to allow him some rest to recover. However, this is not in the chess rules and the opponent was away from the board so I could not consult him. Can the arbiter impose such a decision?

**Question 2** In another game, a position similar to the following was reached:



After few useless king moves by both players, White offered a draw, but Black refused, and the arbiter was called. Although the game was played in Fischer mode (90min+30sec) the arbiter enforced the draw. His point was that this was a “dead position.” I agreed with his decision, but was it legal? Yours, **Naji Alradhi (UAE)**

**Answer 1** It is not explicitly written in the Laws of Chess, but it is implied. Here are some examples.

In the Preface:

*The Laws assume that arbiters have the necessary competence, sound judgment and absolute objectivity. Too detailed a rule might deprive the arbiter of his freedom of judgment and thus prevent him from finding the solution to a problem dictated by fairness, logic and special factors.*

The arbiter should be flexible, especially with young players, and the youth of

a player may be considered a special factor.

Article 13.2:

*The arbiter shall act in the best interest of the competition. He should ensure that a good playing environment is maintained and that the players are not disturbed. He shall supervise the progress of the competition.*

The first sentence of this article is important and I am always inclined to add: *and the players.*

**Answer 2** I do not blame the arbiter for his decision, but I would have waited before doing likewise. It is clear that White, who had the better position, cannot lose. He could have easily made 50 king moves and then claimed a draw. Moreover, the clock time wasn't a problem, because they were using Fischer mode.

**Question** Mr. Gijssen, The following episode occurred in an English club match and has caused much controversy in our small league. As is usual, the match was being played without an arbiter. The rate of play was 35 moves in 75 minutes, then an extra 15 minutes for each player, quick play finish. Manual (analogue) clocks were being used, so it would be necessary for the clocks to be stopped and reset after the first time control.

In one game, after Black's 35th move, Black noticed that his flag was down when he went to reset the clock. Black then told his opponent: "My flag has fallen, but I have made 35 moves – that's OK, isn't it?" White's captain was standing nearby, and commented: "No, I believe you have lost on time." Then pandemonium ensued. The position of the Black club is that the game is entirely between the players, and that the White captain was interfering without any authority. The position of the White Club is that the game was lost on time, as Black himself indicated, and that the captain has the authority to act in this situation.

Was the action of the White captain appropriate? What are the implications if the players had continued the game – could the flag fall have been discussed later? **Paul Buswell (UK)**

**Answer** First of all, the game is lost for Black because of Article 6.10:

*If a player does not complete the prescribed number of moves in the allotted time, the game is lost by the player.*

And completing a move means that the move has to be made and the clock has to be stopped. Yet there is also Article 6.9:

*A flag is considered to have fallen when the arbiter observes the fact*

*or when either player has made a valid claim to that effect.*

Since there was no claim from the opponent and no observation from an arbiter, then the flag was not considered to have fallen and game should be continued. As to the role of the captain, I refer you to the following Articles:

*A captain is entitled to advise the players of his team to make or accept an offer of a draw or to resign a game. He must confine himself to give only brief information, based only on any number of circumstances pertaining to the match.*

*The captain should abstain, however, from any intervention during play. He should not give information to a player concerning the position on the chess board, nor consult any other person as to the state of the game, just as players are subject to the same prohibitions.*

It is clear that the captain of the White player erred in some way. The most remarkable sentence is:

*The captain should abstain, however, from any intervention during play.*

When he saw what happened, the captain should have immediately informed the arbiter, who can then take action according to Article 6.9. In the situation that you describe, the captain is only a spectator, and a spectator who acted as the captain did, should be expelled from the playing hall. Moreover, it is quite risky for the players themselves to adjust the clocks. It is preferable for the arbiter to adjust the clocks.

But, unfortunately, there was no arbiter appointed in this match, which means that many of the Articles of the Laws of Chess could not be properly applied. I hope that incidents such as this underscore the necessity of appointing an arbiter. Regarding the result of the game; the game was lost the moment the White player claimed that the opponent had overstepped the time, even after the illegal interference of White's captain.

**Question** Dear Mr. Gijssen, There is a need for someone to act as arbiter during local league matches because only the players are present. I understand your concerns about the conflict of interests, but we have found that chess players are usually honorable people. Is this within the scope of a captain's duties within the limitations we have placed on them? Regards, **Cyril Johnson (UK)**

**Answer** Regarding the role of the captain see my previous answer. Problems can arise, even when players have the most honorable intentions, as is illustrated in the above question. Therefore, in team matches an independent arbiter should be appointed, not a captain or one of the players. It shouldn't be

difficult to find someone to accept this job.

**Question** Dear Mr. Gijssen, My 12-year-old son has dual citizenship in the United States and Italy, and we have recently moved to Spain. He last represented the US in an official FIDE competition in November of 2004. Based on his Italian citizenship, can he change his FIDE federation affiliation from the United States to Italy even though he resides in Spain? And, if so, when would he be eligible to represent Italy in an official FIDE competition? Thank you. Best regards, **Louis Caruana (Spain)**

**Answer** I found the following Articles in the FIDE Handbook in the chapter, Participation in FIDE Individual and Team Competitions:

*2.3.2 Players who are up to and under the age of 14 years prior to the day of notification shall have their period of residence reduced to 12 months or 1 year in his new Federation before he can play for this Federation (EB '99).*

*4.1.1 A player with dual citizenship may only represent one Federation and is eligible by citizenship to participate in a FIDE team or individual competition on condition that he or she has not represented any other Federation in any FIDE team or individual competition at any time in the preceding year.*

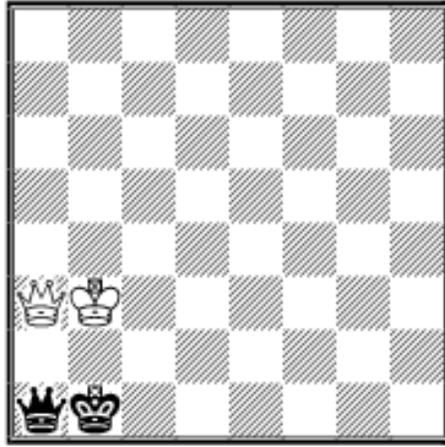
*5.1.1 A player may at any time transfer from one Federation to another Federation with the consent of the Federation to which he or she wishes to transfer.*

*5.1.2 FIDE shall record the change with effect from the date stipulated by the Federation to which the player has transferred and shall notify the player's former Federation of such change.*

I advise you to contact the USCF and the Italian chess federation to arrange matters.

**Question** Dear Mr. Gijssen, We had a difficult problem at a blitz tournament. White had a king, queen, rook, bishop, and some pawns; while Black had a king and bishop. White's flag fell at the exact moment that he captured Black's bishop. Black claimed the win on time just as the white player was holding both bishops in his hand, without having completed his move. But the game was declared a draw because Black cannot checkmate his opponent by any series of legal moves once White completes his move. Was this decision correct or should Black have won because White hadn't completed his move? **Joerg Hanisch (Germany)**

**Answer** The situation is comparable with the position I discussed in a previous Arbiter's Notebook:



In this simple position, White plays 1.Qxa1+, presses his clock, and Black's flag falls. The question is: Did White win the game or is it a draw? The answer is simple: it is a draw, because the only move Black can play is 1...Kxa1. The decision to declare the game drawn is based on 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.*

Therefore, the correct decision is to declare the game a draw.

**Question** Please let me know which tie -break system should be used during Team Swiss events. Thank you. Yours Sincerely, **K. Muralimohan (India)**

**Answer** It matters how the final standings will be decided: game points or match points. If the final standings are based on game points (the sum of the scores of individual games), then a good first criterion could be match points (the sum of the scores of won matches (2 points for a won match, 1 point for a drawn match) and vice versa.

In both cases the second criterion could be Sonneborn-Berger system for teams which is the sum of the scores of the opponents' team, each multiplied by the scores achieved against this opponent team. Here is an example where each team plays on four boards:

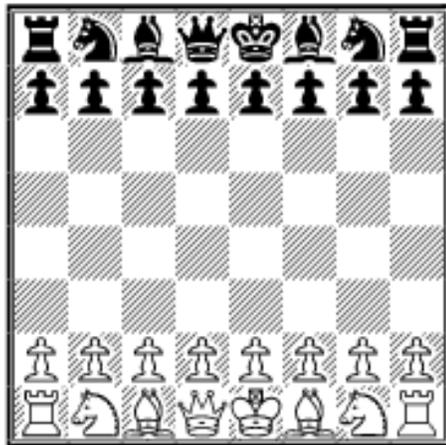
# opponents	12	23	11	43	1
score team #5 against opponents	2	2½	½	4	0
total scores opponents	12½	10	17	8	19

The Sonneborn-Berger Score of team #5 is:  $2 \times 12\frac{1}{2} + 2\frac{1}{2} \times 10 + \frac{1}{2} \times 17 + 0 \times 19 = 33\frac{1}{2}$ .

**Question** Dear Geurt, Occasionally "theme" tournaments are held in which the first few moves are pre-announced in the tournament description, for example: 1.e4 c5 2.c3, with Black to then make the first move of the game. Are these games eligible to be rated? The consensus seems to be that the USCF accepts results from such games, but what about under FIDE? **Gene**

## Milener (USA)

**Answer** I cannot find anything in the FIDE regulations that prohibits such tournaments from being rated, although it's possible to apply Article 2.3 which states that the initial position of the pieces on the chessboard is as follows:



I was the arbiter for the 1994 Sicilian Tournament in Buenos Aires to honor Lev Polugaevsky and I suggested it not be rated. The organizer agreed and it was announced before the players signed their contracts; they also supported the idea.

**Question** At a recent tournament my scoresheet occasionally and accidentally rested on the top right hand corner of the board (to a maximum distance of one centimeter and certainly not on the

playing surface). Whenever that happened, my opponent reached over and moved it without asking. Also, as the game progressed, I noticed that he had a cough (quiet and nervous) which afflicted him whenever it was my move. I took no action, but being new to tournament chess, I am now wondering if I should have done something more than simply refusing to let it upset me. I hope you can advise me. **J. Adams (UK)**

**Answer** It is somewhat annoying when a scoresheet covers even the edge of the chessboard. It's possible that a player is so focused on this scoresheet that he has problems concentrating on the game. I remember an incident in one of the Interpolis tournaments. There was a very tiny spot on the h3-square and Karpov requested to exchange this board, because he kept focusing on this spot.

It is understandable that your opponent was disturbed, but he could simply ask you to properly place the scoresheet on your side of the table. With regards to your opponent's coughing, you should inform the arbiter about it. I recently had such a complaint, and when I observed the game from a distance, I noticed that the aggrieved player was correct. Yet, I didn't think it was being done deliberately. I brought the offending player a glass of water and he understood the implication, so the coughing stopped.

**Question** Dear Geurt, Suppose in a team competition, the two top boards of a weaker team try to mirror each others games; meaning that the player with White waits for his opponent's adversary, who also has White, to make his first move and then pays the same move. The weaker player with Black waits for the other teams Black player to move and then makes the same move on his board; thereby, effectively pitting the two stronger players against each other. After about ten moves, the stronger team issues a formal complaint.

What rule would you use to stop this fraud, and what would be the sanction?  
Best regards, **Wijnand Engelkes (Netherlands)**

**Answer** As you mentioned: it is fraud. The arbiter has the authority to act according to Article 12.1:

*The players shall take no action that will bring the game of chess into disrepute.*

As well as Article 13.2:

*The arbiter shall act in the best interest of the competition.*

I would move one of the boards to another location in the playing hall or to a separate room close to the playing hall. Furthermore, I would forbid the players from watching their teammate's 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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