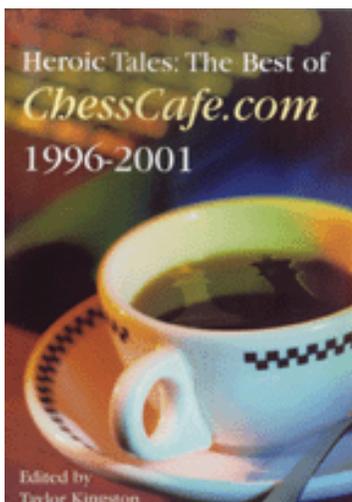




C O L U M N I S T S

An Arbiter's Notebook

Geurt Gijssen



New Rules

I recently had a meeting with Turkish arbiters in Ankara where we discussed the new rules to the Laws of Chess instituted on July 1, 2005. They were very well-prepared for this meeting, with many salient questions, and we spent about 12 hours in two days discussing these changes. There are only a few federations who are able to compete with Turkey from an organizational aspect and in regard to communication and training of players and arbiters. All the sessions were recorded via Power Point and the interpreter, FM Özgür Solakoglu, did a wonderful job. My Turkish colleagues and I discovered several items to be added or changed in 2008, when we again have the opportunity to revise the Laws of Chess.

Question Dear Sir, I would like some clarification regarding the application of the new law to only write the move after it has been played:

- 1:** In one tournament the arbiters were instructed to give a warning before the game. Then during a game, the board arbiter twice verbally warned a player, and upon a third violation there was a dispute amongst the arbiters of whether the previous verbal warnings should be counted or not. We know that it is better to put warnings in writing, but what should be done when it isn't?
- 2:** Should the arbiter wait for the opponent to complain, or should he immediately interfere by warning/ penalizing the violator?
- 3:** What if a player doesn't object to such violations by his opponent and indicates that the arbiter's interference is more of a disturbance, especially when the game is so sharp and tense that a high level of concentration is needed by both players. Thank you for your continuous support. Yours, **Naji Alradhi (UAE)**

Answer The arbiters should be flexible whenever a new rule is instituted. Most arbiters more or less follow what is going on regarding the Laws of Chess, but a smaller percentage of the players are less well-informed about these new Articles.

It is clear that international arbiters have differing opinions about how to act in certain situations. Some will only interfere after it is requested by one of the players, while others think that they should act the moment they see any transgression. Those in the latter group often refer to Article 13.1:

The arbiter shall see that the Laws of Chess are strictly observed.

I belong to this second group. There are many situations in which an arbiter should be flexible, especially in youth tournaments in which many inexperienced players participate and in those tournaments that are organized immediately following the date when new rules come into force.

Now let me try to answer to your questions:

1: If the arbiters were instructed to announce the new rule before the start of the round or tournament – then well done! As I mentioned, it is important to be flexible. Therefore written warnings would be inappropriate, especially in the first round of the tournament. The tone of some warnings is also very important, but a discussion as to whether the two previous warnings should be counted is not an option to me.

2: I wouldn't wait until there was a complaint from the opponent. I would inform the player, in a very friendly manner, about the new rule and I would act likewise even after a second or third warning. We have to consider that many players have made this a habit from the very beginning of their chess career and it is perfectly understandable that they will encounter difficulties adapting to the new rule.

3: Frankly speaking, the opinion of the opponent in this matter is immaterial to me. But it is important not to disturb any player, the opponent included.

I'm an avid supporter of this new rule, but everybody should have the opportunity to adapt to it. Exaggerated actions are counter-productive.

Question Dear Geurt, I have a question about the tiebreak procedure used in the upcoming FIDE World Championship in Argentina. I am trying to calculate the likelihood of the tournament requiring rapid games to be played, versus being resolved just by the classical games and the tiebreak procedure. It seems to me that the [regulations](#) are ambiguous on a key point.

They state the tiebreak will consider head-to-head results among all tied players and then, if there is still a tie, it will consider the number of wins in the tournament. If a tie remains then it will proceed to rapid games. I am curious about the following scenario:

- Players A, B, and C tie for first place with a +3 score
- Players A and B each have six wins total, and Player C has five wins total.
- In the head-to-head results, Player A won both games against Player B, and Player B won both games against Player C, and Player C won both games against Player A.

Clearly, the head-to-head results show a score of 2/4 for each of the three players. So then we would proceed to the number of wins, and presumably Player C (with fewer total wins) would then be eliminated from consideration. This leaves Player A and Player B. Since they are still tied in the second tiebreak consideration (total games won), would we then proceed to rapid games? Or could it return to the first consideration (head-to-head results), in which case Player A (who scored 2/2 against Player B) would be automatically declared the winner? It's unclear to me. Here are the relevant paragraphs from the regulations:

When the top two or more players score the same number of points, the title of the World Champion will be decided by the following criteria:

- 1. The results of the games between the players involved in the tie. If they are still tied:*
- 2. The total number of wins in the tournament of every player involved in the tie.*

If there is no clear winner with the above 2 criteria, there will be a special competition between the players. Each player will play two games with the other opponents (one or more) with a time control of 25 minutes and an increment of 10 seconds per move from move one for each player. The winner shall be declared the World Champion.

Another question is about whether to apply the head-to-head tiebreaker multiple times. For instance, if there is a five-way tie and the head-to-head results (among the five players) show three players at +2 and two at -3, do you eliminate the two and then reconsider the three players and their head-to-head results among each other, or do we consider them to be "tied" and then move on to the number of wins? This is also unclear. Thanks! **Jeff Sonas (USA)**

Answer Dear Jeff, the three tiebreak criteria will be applied in descending order. This means that criterion 1 will be applied first. If it fails, criterion 2 will be applied and if this also fails, then criterion 3 will be applied. The three criteria in the World Championship Tournament are:

- the results of the games between the players, who share the first place.
- the total number of wins of all players, who share the first place
- the results of the rapid games between the players, who still share the first place.

And when applying the tiebreak rules: do not return to a previous criterion. This means that in the first case you described above, Player A and B will play rapid games.

The same procedure should be applied in case 2. Three players with +3 "go"

to the second criterion: the number of wins.

The consequences of matches finishing 1-1 are clearly described in the regulations, as well as what should happen if 3-5 players share first place. I refer interested readers to the aforementioned [website](#).

Question Dear Sir, according to Article 10.2, if the arbiter postpones his decision, he may award two extra minutes to the player who asks for a draw. Suppose the player then wins the game because of these two extra minutes! What is the final result? Does he really get a win or is it a draw? It looks like the arbiter is helping him. Thank you. **Pranesh Yadav (India)**

Answer In the [previous](#) Notebook I answered two questions from India regarding Article 10.2. One in which it was declared that the claimant received two extra minutes upon claiming a draw, and another that made the same mistake, but which I changed prior to publication as I didn't realize this article was being misinterpreted. Article 10.2 states:

*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.*

*If the arbiter postpones his decision, the **opponent** may be awarded two extra minutes and the game shall continue in the presence of an arbiter, if possible.*

I hope that this clarifies the issue. It is the *opponent* who receives two extra minutes. So, as you can see, the arbiter is not helping the claimant.

Question Dear Geurt, during the 2005 Open Dutch Championship one of the players completed an illegal move in time trouble, which went unnoticed by both players. The games in the main group were played on electronic boards and the computer in the press room indicated that something was wrong when it stopped recording the moves after move 36, although the players had already played 42 moves. The arbiter was informed by the operator and the error was soon discovered. The arbiter then reinstated the position to the one prior to the illegal move and the players continued the game from this position. Is it permissible to use information produced by the electronic board and the computer?

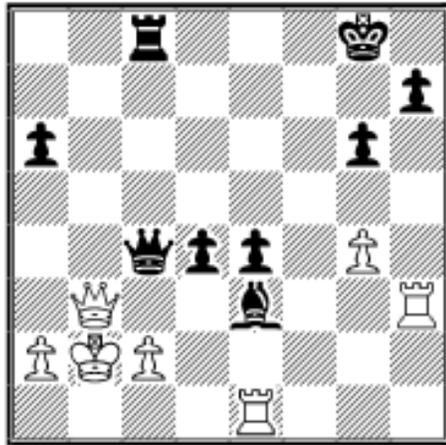
Something similar recently happened in the game Rogers – Afek in Vlissingen. In time trouble neither the players nor the arbiter recorded the moves. At one point Rogers claimed a draw to Afek because of repetition of position. Afek disagreed and continued playing. Would it have been possible to use the information from the electronic board and the computer to verify the claim? Could Rogers declare to the arbiter that he wanted to claim a

draw? The next day the bulletin showed that the position had only been repeated twice. Best regards, **Huub Blom (The Netherlands)**

Answer I investigated and found the following:

Hoeksema,E (2406) - Savchenko,S (2506)

Dutch Championship, 2005

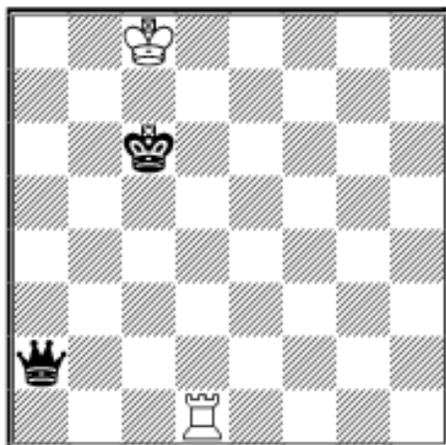


This was the position after **37.Kxb2**. The real game continued with **37...Qxb3+ 38.axb3 a5 39.Rhxe3 dxe3 40.Rxe3 Re8 41.Kc3 Kf7 42.Kd4 Kf6 43.Rxe4 1/2-1/2**, but originally **37...Qc3+** was played and after some further moves the computer operator discovered that something was wrong. He correctly informed the arbiter who checked the scoresheets and found the illegal move. The arbiter then acted in accordance with Article 7 of the Laws of Chess.

Regarding the second case, if your account is accurate then GM Rogers did not act according to the Laws of Chess. He shouldn't address his claim to the opponent, but to the arbiter, as it is described in Article 9 of the Laws of Chess. It's also possible that GM Rogers only offered a draw. Furthermore, provided the moves were correctly published in the bulletin, instead of **83...Qa6+**, **83...Qa8** is mate. But this is only a detail.

Rogers,I (2569) - Afek,Y (2389)

Vlissingen Open, 2005



80.Rc1+ Kd6 81.Rd1+ Ke5 82.Rd7 Ke6 83.Rc7 Qa6+ 84.Kb8 Kd6 85.Rb7 Kc6 86.Rc7+ Kd6 87.Rb7 Qe2 88.Ka8 Kc6 89.Kb8 Qe8+ 90.Ka7 Qe3+ 91.Ka8 Qe4 92.Ka7 Qd4+ 93.Ka8 Qa4+ 94.Kb8 Kd6 95.Rb6+ Kc5 96.Rb7 Kc6 97.Rc7+ Kd6 98.Rb7 Qe8+ 99.Ka7 Kc6 100.Rb6+ Kc5 101.Rb7 Qe2 102.Kb8 Kc6 103.Ka7 Qe4 104.Ka8 Qa4+ 105.Kb8 1/2-1/2

Now I will try to answer to your very interesting question. The first Article of the Laws of Chess that came to mind is Article 6.15:

Screens, monitors, or demonstration boards showing the current

position on the chessboard, the moves and the number of moves made, and clocks which also show the number of moves, are allowed in the playing hall. However, the player may not make a claim relying solely on information shown in this manner.

Although there wasn't a claim from a player, I refer to this Article because the situation is similar. I like to interpret the last sentence as follows:

However, the arbiter may not decide relying solely on information shown in this manner.

The game Hoeksema – Savchenko was an easy case because the scoresheets were available. Therefore, it was easy to check and the players didn't dispute that an illegal move was made.

The situation with Rogers – Afek is slightly more complicated because it appears that the only information available was what was shown on the screen. If Rogers had claimed a draw to the arbiter relying **solely** on this information, I would be inclined to say: No. However, if the game was played using a digital chess clock with a move counter, then the arbiter could refer to the number of moves shown by the chess clock as something more on which to rely. Yet, the Laws of Chess don't mention the correct procedure during a draw claim. Does the claimant have to prove the claim is correct or does the arbiter have to investigate the correctness of the claim? It is common for the arbiter, together with the players, to verify the claim. The USCF rules require a player to have a complete scoresheet when making a claim and it would be preferable to add this requirement to the FIDE Laws of Chess.

Question Suppose there is a flag fall during a tournament game and no one notices it. A few minutes later the player, whose flag is down, claims that his opponent completed an illegal move. Does the player lose the game or does he receive two extra minutes because of the illegal move. Thank you for your attention to this matter. **Edgar A. Murray (Puerto Rico)**

Answer Several details have to be clarified before I answer your question. Let me start with the flag fall. For this I refer to 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.

As you can see, if no one notices the flag fall, then there is no flag fall. So the problem is easily solved. Article 7 states in part:

If during a game it is found that an illegal move (...) has been completed, the position immediately before the irregularity shall be reinstated.

Still, the point of your question is: if the opponent of a player makes an illegal move and it is observed that the claimant's flag has fallen, which takes preference – the illegal move or the flag fall?

We have to consider different cases.

Case 1: The time control is, say, 40 moves in 2 hours. At move 37 White's flag falls, but he claims that Black's 32nd move was illegal. In that case the position before Black's 32nd move should be reinstated and the clocks should be adjusted with White receiving two extra minutes.

Case 2: The time control is 40 moves in 2 hours. At move 32 White's flag falls, but it goes unnoticed. Black then completes an illegal move and presses his clock. White immediately stops the clocks and claims that Black completed an illegal move. Only now is it observed that White's flag has fallen. Let us again consider the definition of a flag fall:

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.

Because the flag fall was observed after the illegal move was completed White receives two extra minutes and the game continues.

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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