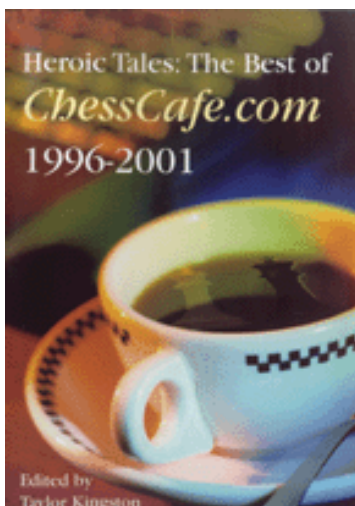




## C O L U M N I S T S

*An Arbiter's  
Notebook*

Geurt Gijssen



## Istanbul

I recently returned to Istanbul, where the 2000 Chess Olympiad was organized, and I must say that I had a much easier job than five years ago. This time I was the Chairman of the Appeals Committee in the World Junior Championship. Since there were no appeals whatsoever, I almost felt like a tourist, and I had some time to observe several things related to chess.

First, let me discuss the new electronic scoresheet produced by the Canadian company Monroi. It works as follows: both players “write” their moves on this electronic, wireless scoresheet which then transmits them to a computer. An operator monitors the game and when a player writes an illegal move, or if the two scoresheets differ, he immediately notifies the arbiter. After the game both players receive a printout of the gamescore and, more importantly, the games are in digital form for the tournament bulletin.

The chief arbiter was quite skeptical about the organizers offer to use them in this tournament, but he was finally convinced that it would only be used on a voluntary basis. It was decided that the lower boards in the Girls section would record the moves with the help of Monroi and there was just enough volunteers to apply the system. In fact, once the system was implemented more players were ready to make use of it and even some of the boys used it as well. However, they also recorded the moves on a normal paper scoresheet, as they apparently had misgivings about the electronic device.

My preliminary impression is that the Monroi system is OK, but the device used in Istanbul is not the final version. The company intends to add more features such as a database and pairing functions. Incidentally, I was assured that the players would not have access to the database.

The Turkish Chess federation has become one of the most active chess federations and one of its most important programs is for chess in the schools. I had the opportunity to attend some lessons and it is quite remarkable that the schools had a room fully dedicated to chess. I observed lessons with children of all ages and the knowledge of some of the pupils was excellent.

Further evidence of a Turkish chess boom could be seen at the closing ceremony of a youth tournament which was attended by a greater number of parents than I have ever seen. Finally, I would like to mention the wedding ceremony of grandmasters Suat Atalik and Ekaterina Polovnilova. This must

be the first time that a chess federation organized a wedding ceremony, but in Turkey it is possible.

**Question** Dear Geurt, I was recently on the stronger side of a rook + knight endgame and had managed to corner the enemy king to such a degree that my opponent – before moving – exclaimed “stalemate” and reached out his hand. With minimal time on the clock we were both overly excited and I slapped his hand, only to notice seconds later that the position wasn't stalemate at all. We finished the game and I won three moves later, but what about the result? My question is: what defines the acceptance of a draw offer? Surely it cannot be shaking hands only, nor could it be a verbal acceptance given the language barriers that might arise.

In this case we agreed to a draw since the outcome of the game was of no consequence, but it was not a stalemate position, and the claim was made not according to article 9.1, so the claim was unjust. However, does the fact that I slapped his hand (at the time it seemed the only choice) mean that I accepted a draw? Thanks for your time. **Peter Verschueren (Netherlands)**

**Answer** The situation of one player incorrectly declaring a stalemate, and his surprised opponent agreeing has happened several times. In fact, the player declaring the stalemate could be penalized for disturbing his opponent. Furthermore, a player doesn't have to claim stalemate, because the game is simply over. Article 9.1 has nothing to do with stalemate. It describes draw offers.

The most important aspect of your letter is how a player should accept a draw (or resign a game). For which the following articles are essential:

*8.7 At the conclusion of the game both players shall sign both scoresheets, indicating the result of the game. Even if incorrect, this result shall stand, unless the arbiter decides otherwise.*

*9.1.a. A player wishing to offer a draw shall do so after having made a move on the chessboard and before stopping his clock and starting the opponent's clock. An offer at any other time during play is still valid, but Article 12.6 must be considered. No conditions can be attached to the offer. In both cases the offer cannot be withdrawn and remains valid until the opponent accepts it, rejects it orally, rejects it by touching a piece with the intention of moving or capturing it, or the game is concluded in some other way.*

As far as I can see, Article 8.7 describes the only way to indicate the correct result of a game. By the way, a long time ago it was stated that shaking hands does not mean a player resigns the game.

**Question** Dear Mr. Gijssen, I recently worked out a formula to reduce the number of draws in competitive chess. My idea is to change the point scoring

system so that 1 point is awarded for win, .4 points for a draw (for each player), and 0 for a loss. For example, in the San Luis tournament if you total all the games with .4 and divide them by 10 you would come up with the following:

I	II	III	IV
1	Topalov	10	9.2
2	Anand	8½	7.8
3	Svidler	8½	7.6
4	Morozevich	7	7.0
5	Leko	6½	5.8
6	Kasimdzhanov	5½	4.8
7	Adams	5½	4.4
8	Polgar	4	3.8

Column I: Final standing, Column II: Players, Column III: Scores according to the classical scoring system. Column IV: Scores according to my proposed scoring system. As you can see, there would be no ties in the new point system. You can never take draws out of chess or you will compromise the game. Thank you. **Jack Brissette (USA)**

**Answer** Dear Mr. Brisserre, your system is a reasonable alternative, but Article 11 already gives organizers the possibility of using alternate scoring systems:

*Unless announced otherwise in advance, a player who wins his game, or wins by forfeit, scores one point (1), a player who loses his game, or forfeits scores no points (0) and a player who draws his game scores a half point (½).*

Incidentally, in soccer the actual system is: 3 for a won match, 1 for a draw, 0 for a lost match.

**Question** Dear Mr. Gijssen, I earned the Canadian National Arbiter title in 2004, and am working towards the International Arbiter title. When I was running tournaments at the Kingston Chess Club I encountered a player who simply refused to record his moves as required by the Chess Federation of Canada's Handbook. The time controls were 30 moves in 90 minutes, followed by completion in a further 60 moves, which should allow plenty of time to keep score. As the tournament director in charge, I observed that he was not recording, and then politely asked him to comply with the rules. He refused to follow my instructions and this was repeated in many further games over a period of years. His reasoning was that recording the moves threw him off his game. This man was rated about 1500, and while he was fairly elderly, he had no physical disability which would prevent him from recording the moves. He eventually went to the Kingston Chess Club

Executive board, which gave him permission to *not* record his moves!

So, I am asking for your advice and opinion here. Does this sort of board have the authority to suspend the rules for *one* player only? When you have one set of rules for one player and one for everyone else, you are asking for problems. Then, what should be the penalty for failing to record the moves, when instructed to do so by the arbiter? Could the player potentially be disqualified or forfeited? Thank you for your assistance! **Frank Dixon (Canada)**

**Answer** I understand that you acted as the arbiter (or tournament director) of the Kingston Chess Club, which I assume is autonomous. This means that the club's executive board has the right to make its own rules, which are not otherwise applicable outside the club. I personally don't like it, because it creates misunderstandings when a player of this club plays in another competition. And I agree with you that the consequences could lead to misunderstandings in the event that the board creates too many exceptions. Furthermore, the exceptions should be clearly posted in the tournament hall.

**Question** Dear Geurt, Many US players will be confused by the new FIDE rule that forbids players from writing down the move prior to making it on the board. Because as you noted [last month](#), the rules of the United States Chess Federation state:

*The player may first make the move, and then write it on the scoresheet, or vice versa.*

Thus, for most US events ... there is no change at all. Players also may not realize that even "FIDE rated" events that are held in the U.S., under USCF rules, are unaffected. **Eric C. Johnson (USA)**

**Answer** I will never understand why FIDE rates tournaments that are played under rules different from the FIDE Laws of Chess. It is very confusing for Americans who play in tournaments outside of the United States, and it is also very confusing for non-Americans who participate in tournaments within the U.S. I know of several players who lost games because the USCF rules were applied, while the result would have been different under the FIDE Laws of Chess. It is a very strange situation. Each autonomous club or federation has the right to have their own rules, but they should be limited to conform to what is written in the Preface of the Laws of Chess:

*A member federation is free to introduce more detailed rules provided they:*

- a. do not conflict in any way with the official FIDE Laws of Chess*
- b. are limited to the territory of the federation in question; and*
- c. are not valid for any FIDE match, championship or qualifying event, or for a FIDE title or rating tournament.*

**Question** Dear Mr. Gijssen, during a Rapid Championship in November, Player A announced checkmate against Player B, while Player B claimed a win on time. The referee was called and he said that according to Article 5.1a, player A wins. While he's away recording the result, Player B notices that it was not checkmate (but it probably was a mate in 2 or 3). So, after some arguments and analysis, the referees decide to declare it a draw.

I ask for your opinion on this very complicated situation. The following ideas were discussed:

- If it was a checkmate, then even if Player A's time expires, he still wins.
- If it was not a checkmate, and Player A's time didn't expire, but Player B thought it was a checkmate, then Player B is considered to have resigned.

In a previous column you wrote:

*The game is won by the player who has checkmated his opponent's king. This immediately ends the game, provided that the move producing the checkmate position was a legal move.*

You also mentioned that it is the obligation of the referee to check if it was a "legal checkmate." If that's the case, then shouldn't the referee have noticed that Player A did not really checkmate Player B, and in that case shouldn't Player B win? Additionally, what if the referee mistakenly declares it was a checkmate for Player A and it is later found that it was not, how could this be resolved? Sincere Regards, **Abdallah Chahine (Lebanon)**

**Answer** You have many questions and I will try to answer all of them: If a player checkmates the opponent's king and the last move is legal, the game is won for this player, even when the opponent (or the arbiter in normal games) notices after the checkmate move the player's flag has fallen.

If a player resigns, and it is very clear that he resigned (see the first question of this Notebook), the game is over and lost for the player.

If the arbiter simply accepts the checkmate and confirms the result without checking it and without the resignation of the player, then it is very clear the arbiter made a mistake.

Finally, in all the situations you described, the arbiter must only act after one of the players has requested it, because it's a rapid game.

**Question** According to Article 10.2, if the arbiter postpones his decision or rejects the claim, he may add 2 minutes time to the opponent's clock. My thinking is that he may also add 1 or 2 minutes to the *claimant's* clock (especially if he has only seconds left); because it's the claimant that has to

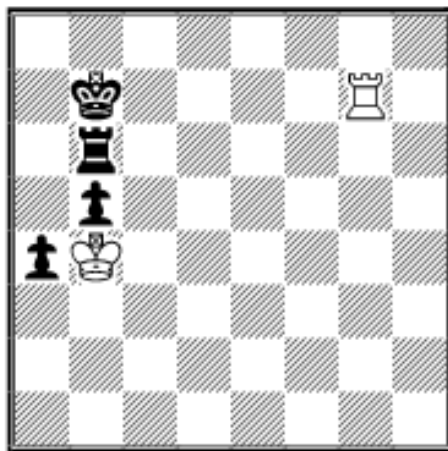


prove that the opponent is playing for time! I also think that at least 5 or 6 moves are necessary to decide whether the opponent is playing for time or not. Thank you. **K. Pranesh Yadav (India)**

**Answer** I understand your point and it has some merit. Nevertheless, I have to disagree. The rule states that a claim based on Article 10.2 is only possible from the moment a claimant has less than 2 minutes left. The reason for this was to avoid a player making such a claim during a lengthy phase of the endgame. In fact, I have often thought that it would be reasonable to change the rule so that the claimant has only 1 minute left on his clock. The arbiter would still have the opportunity to observe the game and decide whether the claim is correct or not, provided he had not seen what happened prior to the claim.

The claimant has to give the arbiter the opportunity to make the correct decision and therefore a player must make his claim with enough time on the clock for a reasonable continuation of the game. I would reject a claim if I did not see a reasonable number of moves.

**Question** Dear Mister Gijssen, during a recent game my opponent claimed a draw under the 2-minute rule. He said the position had become a theoretical draw and that I couldn't win since he knew the best defense. I had a rook + a- and b-pawns versus his rook, but his king had blockaded the pawns. I had 14-15 minutes remaining, while he had 1-2 minutes in a quick play finish. I had declined two draw offers earlier in the game and wanted to play on, but he refused to and stopped both clocks in the following position.



There was no arbiter present, but the highest rated observer (ELO 2120) said I had made progress in the last few moves so the game should have continued. Since the game had been stopped, he then proceeded to show my opponent how I could have played on to make it as difficult as possible for him to defend.

So the question is, if I had mating material and had made “progress” in a theoretically drawn endgame, should the draw-claim be

upheld. Thank you for your help. **Jon Crowe (UK)**

**Answer** As an arbiter I do not know what a “theoretically drawn” position is, but I do as a player. One player simply announcing that “the position is a theoretical draw” is not a reason to agree to a claim. Of course, dead drawn positions are a different matter.

In my opinion the game should have been continued. It is very strange that the other player showed your opponent how you could win in the actual position. Although the clocks were stopped, the game was still in progress and so analyzing it was forbidden.

For such cases there is a special Article – Appendix D:

*Where games are played as in Article 10, a player may claim a draw when he has less than two minutes left on his clock and before his flag falls. This concludes the game.*

*He may claim on the basis*

*a. that his opponent cannot win by normal means, and/or*

*b. that his opponent has been making no effort to win by normal means.*

*In (a) the player must write down the final position and his opponent verify it.*

*In (b) the player must write down the final position and submit an up-to-date scoresheet. The opponent shall verify both the scoresheet and the final position.*

*The claim shall be referred to an arbiter whose decision shall be the final one.*

A well-known English arbiter told me that this is a normal procedure in England and that there is an arbiter appointed for such problems. By the way, I tested the final position with several programs and all of them gave a huge plus for Black, but according to the [online endgame database](#) the position is drawn.

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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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