



COLUMNISTS

*An Arbiter's
Notebook*

Geurt Gijssen



Rapid Rule in Dubai

During a seminar in Dubai the Rapid Rules were discussed, particularly Articles B7, B8 and B9:

***B7.** The flag is considered to have fallen when a player has made a valid claim to that effect. The arbiter shall refrain from signalling a flag fall.*

***B8.** To claim a win on time, the claimant must stop both clocks and notify the arbiter. For the claim to be successful the claimant's flag must remain up and his opponent's flag down after the clocks have been stopped.*

***B9.** If both flags have fallen, the game is drawn.*

Everything seemed clear, but upon closer inspection there is a contradiction between Articles B7 and B9.

In Article B7 there is a clear definition of a flag fall in which the arbiter has no role. In Article B8 the arbiter only comes into action after a claim and declares the game lost for the opponent whose flag has fallen while one player's flag is still up. (By the way, when the player cannot checkmate his opponent's king by any series of legal moves, he has to declare the game drawn.) But Article B9 simply states that the game is drawn if both flags have fallen.

Does this mean that the arbiter, noticing that both flags are down, declares the game drawn? If so, this is the antithesis to Article B7, which states that the arbiter shall refrain from signalling a flag fall. Our conclusion was that we have to interpret Article B9 in connection with Article B8; meaning that the arbiter, following a claim from a player, will declare the game drawn if both flags are down and after the clocks have been stopped. An improvement of the text of Article B9 could be:

***B9.** If after a claim, as mentioned in Article B8, the arbiter notices that both flags are down, he shall declare the game drawn.*

Note: The arbiter shall refrain from signalling a flag fall, even if both flags are down, unless there is a claim.

Question I was the arbiter in a game between a GM and an IM during a weekend Congress in October 2005. The IM moved and left her king in check with just 15 seconds remaining. The GM then swept the king off the board with his rook and the players immediately shook hands and signed the scoresheets as a win for the GM. Upon recent reflection, and reading your column, I now feel I should have intervened and awarded the game to the IM. The GM had made an illegal move by taking the king. But, then again, hadn't the IM made an illegal move by failing to prevent the check? What should I have done and what should the result have been? Best regards, **Bob Jones (UK)**

Answer Based on the fact that both players signed the scoresheets, and I assume they showed the same result, the arbiter should not do anything and the result stands. I also assume it was a normal game.

If the players had not signed the scoresheets, then the arbiter should reinstate the position before the illegal move. In this case, the position where the IM left her king in check, then, if possible, she would have to play the piece she touched when she left the king in check.

The only question that remains is: does the arbiter punish one or both players? As you probably know, the penalty is that the offended player receives two extra minutes. Since both players committed an illegal move, I would only adjust the clocks according to the situation in which the illegal moves were played.

- In a rapid game the arbiter must wait for a claim. Then only the player who made the last illegal move would be penalised. So the opponent would receive two extra minutes.
- Following a claim in a Blitz game, the game would be declared lost for the player who completed the last illegal move.

Question Geurt, What would be the ruling if, in a tense time scramble, a player quickly moved his queen so it landed halfway on c7 and half on d7, and punched the clock? For the sake of argument, let's say the c7-square hangs the queen for nothing. Thanks, **Rob MacDonald (USA)**

Answer The opponent can apply Article 7.3, irrespective of the time-control the game was played under:

If a player displaces one or more pieces, he shall re-establish the correct position on his own time. If necessary, either the player or his opponent shall stop the clocks and ask for the arbiter's assistance. The

arbiter may penalise the player who displaced the pieces.

Question I asked the following question in a previous [Notebook](#):

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.

And you answered in part:

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.

But I still have questions about what can and cannot happen after the flag falls. Moreover, Continental President for Americas Jorge Vega has said that the illegal move shouldn't prevail and the game should be declared lost because the player ran out of time. I would like to know what prevails when a flag is down and no one makes a valid claim and the arbiter is not there to make the claim. For instance, if one player gets checkmated by an opponent whose flag is down, does the checkmate prevail? Best Regards, **Edgar Murray Ortiz (Puerto Rico)**

Answer Sorry, but I have to repeat myself. If there is no claim for a flag fall and the arbiter does not notice it, then there is no flag fall. In such a situation, if the opponent claims that the player made an illegal move – this claim prevails. Checkmate also prevails over a flag fall. In general, what happens on the board (checkmate, illegal move) prevails over factors off the board.

Question Dear Mr. Gijssen, there is a player in my club who sometimes plays his move on the demo board, when his game is being displayed there, before playing it on his own chessboard. Of course, he only does this when his opponent is absent from the board. Once, during a regional tournament, he played his move on the demo board, but then changed his mind and played a different move, and only then sat down at his board to play this second choice. I do not think this behavior is correct, but how would you react?
Richard Sauv  (Canada)

Answer Watching one's own game on a demonstration board is permitted, but making a move on it is strictly forbidden. I refer to Article 12.2.a of the Laws of Chess:

During play the players are forbidden to make use of any notes, sources of information, advice, or analyse on another chessboard.

During the 1977 Korchnoi - Spassky candidates match in Beograd, both players would occasionally stand before the demonstration board and think about their next move, but, of course, they did not move the pieces.

Question Hi Geurt, I was involved in a tournament game where I had two connected pawns versus a king. I made a move which I thought stalemated my opponent. I exclaimed "I can't believe I stalemated you," then extended my hand. We shook hands and the clocks were stopped. The opponent then pointed out that it wasn't stalemate. The tournament director ruled that game should remain a draw since we had shaken hands and stopped the clocks. This game occurred 30 years ago and I've always wondered whether the director made the correct decision. A USCF official stated that a director has discretion to make any decision he sees fit in "unclear" situations such as this. Thank you, **Paul Hoffman (USA)**

Answer Let me summarize your situation:

- You announced stalemate
- You and your opponent shook hands
- You stopped the clocks (or your opponent did with your consent)

While you probably did not sign the scoresheets to confirm the result, these are sufficient reasons to agree with the decision of the director.

Question Geurt, there's a problem with only awarding 0.4 points for a draw, even though an organizer is within his rights to do so. Statistically, the players in a drawn position under such a scoring system should not agree to a draw, but should toss a coin to decide who resigns. Players who use this strategy will score, on average, half a point per game. But with 60% of games drawn, people who accept draws will only score 0.44 points per game on average, so they will be less likely to win the tournament. This sort of collusion doesn't seem to me to be any more serious or illegal than agreeing to a short draw in advance. **Dave Richerby (UK)**

Answer Any scoring system different from the one currently in use is artificial. I agree with an article John Nunn wrote at [Chessbase](#) which I would like to quote:

There is a difference between the top grandmasters and those lower down the rating list. Top GMs (say the top ten in the world) make a comfortable living from chess and will normally be paid an appearance fee (or guarantee) to play in a tournament. In this situation it is perfectly reasonable to expect them to display their skill to the best of their ability, which is after all why they are being paid an appearance fee.

The situation is different lower down. In the current austere chess climate, even quite highly-rated GMs struggle to make a living, and if a quick draw guarantees next month's mortgage payment and thereby a roof over their family's head, it is perhaps understandable that they should give way to temptation. Most of those who criticize quick draws have a regular salary and find it hard to appreciate how uncertain the life of a professional player can be. Chess journalists who are lucky enough to receive a regular income from their column(s) are especially prone to this.

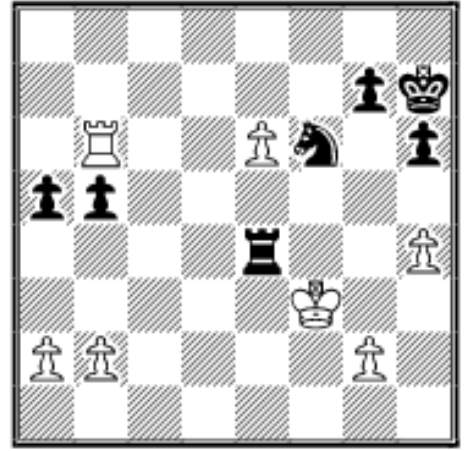
In the case of participants in Open tournaments who have not been paid an appearance fee, I don't think there is any real reason to criticize short draws. If the players think it is in their best interests to agree one then they should just go ahead. These players are taking their chances on an equal basis to everyone else and there is no more reason to complain about two GMs agreeing a quick draw than two 1700 players at the other end of the hall.

Question Mr. Gijssen, Suppose the white player is deciding between using his pawn or his knight to retake the black queen. White removes the black queen from the board, but then continues his decision process for another two minute, then finally retakes with the pawn. Has White acted improperly or illegally by removing the queen before moving his piece onto the queen's old square? If Black complains to the arbiter, should the reply be that this is White's prerogative? Thank you, **Gene Milener (USA)**

Answer Some players are of the opinion that their behavior cannot disturb their opponent, unless the opponent's clock is running. When I inform them of their incorrect behavior, they often exclaim, "But I'm doing this on my own time, while my clock is running." I then try to explain that their "own" time in such situations does not exist.

Your question describes such a situation. Removing Black's queen from the board for such a long time and then playing the capturing piece is clearly a disturbance. One reason is that it deprives the opponent from having a clear view of the position on the board. The discretion rests with the arbiter as to when to intervene and he doesn't need to wait for a protest from the opponent.

Question Dear Mr. Gijssen, I was black in the diagrammed position. I had 6 minutes left and my opponent had one. It was move 37 and my opponent began staring off. I thought he was feeling faint, and I saw that he only had 26 seconds left, so I asked him: "Do you intend to draw?" He then answered, "I accept the draw." I said that I had not proposed a draw and we argued over the matter. The referee came over and, in spite of the fact that I was a full piece up, declared the game a draw based on my having just spoken the word. Next time I will keep my mouth shut, even if my opponent is having a heart attack! What is your opinion? Thanks and best regards, **Jean Claude Duget Long (France)**



Answer Well, let me begin with your final remark. There are situations in which you should speak and others where you should not. In the situation you describe it was inappropriate to disturb your opponent by speaking to him. To be honest, I do not understand your remark, unless your intention was to offer a draw. So your remark can be considered a draw offer and the arbiter made the correct decision.

I believe your intentions were legitimate, but it reminds me of when some players would make a joke by asking their opponent: "Do you want a draw?" And when the opponent answered: "Yes, I do." They would reply: "But, I don't."

Question Dear Mr. Gijssen, during a recent team match, one of my teammates was defending a totally lost position against an opponent very short on time. When this player's flag fell, a teammate of his angrily pointed it out, even before my teammate had noticed it. As far as I know he was not allowed to do that as the game still could have been lost by my teammate. It did not really matter with regards to the match standings, but what should have been done? Thanks in advance, **Matijs Janssen (The Netherlands)**

Answer Spectators interfering in a game is a common problem, whether they advise a good move, or say a flag fell, or comment that the players had made a prescribed number of moves, etc. In such cases the arbiter must act according to Article 13.7a:

Spectators and players in other games are not to speak about or otherwise interfere in a game. If necessary, the arbiter may expel offenders from the playing venue.

Yet, the damage has been done. The player has been made aware of the information and there is nothing the arbiter can really do, except expel the

interfering person from the playing venue. This means that if the offending person is playing a game, he will lose. However, I have never heard of any arbiter penalising a player in this way, even if it is probably warranted.

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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