



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

# An Arbiter's Notebook

Geurt Gijssen



## Writing Moves in Advance

**Question** I would like to know if you agree with my interpretation of Section 9.3 part b of the Laws of Chess.

*9.3 The game is drawn, upon a correct claim by the player having the move, if*

*a. he writes his move on his scoresheet, and declares to the arbiter his intention to make this move which shall result in the last 50 moves having been made by each player without the movement of any pawn and without any capture, or*

*b. the last 50 consecutive moves have been made by each player without the movement of any pawn and without any capture.*

I believe it is possible for a checkmate position to be declared a draw. The fifty-move rule is worded so that the 100th consecutive move without a capture or pawn move causes a draw. This final action could produce a checkmate, but the Law still defines the result as a draw. Thank you.  
Sincerely, **Joseph Godino (USA)**

**Answer** This is an excellent question. It appears that Articles 9.3 and Article 5.1a are in conflict with each other. Article 5.1a states:

*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.*

I would also like to mention another Article from the Appendix of Adjudged Games:

*A6. If prior to the resumption the game is agreed drawn, or if one of the players notifies the arbiter that he resigns, the game is concluded.*

Suppose that the sealed move has checkmated the opponent's king, the result is still a draw. Although adjudged games are no longer a part of tournament chess, this Article is still valid.

We can compare your case with the checkmated king in an adjudged game.

Let me refer to the Preface of the Laws of Chess:

*The Laws of Chess cannot cover all possible situations that may arise during a game, nor can they regulate all administrative questions. Where cases are not precisely regulated by an Article of the Laws, it should be possible to reach a correct decision by studying analogous situations, which are discussed in the Laws.*

Furthermore, I would like to refer to Article 9.1.c:

*A claim of a draw under 9.2, 9.3 or 10.2 shall be considered to be an offer of a draw.*

It can be argued that if the intended move that fulfills the requirements of Article 9.3 produces a checkmate – then the checkmate stands. But in my opinion the arguments to declare the game drawn are much stronger. Therefore, the game must be declared a draw. I await readers' reactions.

**Question** Dear Geurt, at a recent tournament in India one of the arbiters issued a warning to a player for writing his move first and then making it. He said that according to Article 8.1 it is forbidden to write the move in advance. However, the player could not overcome his habit and was repeatedly distracted by the arbiter. For what reasons was Article 8.1 instituted in the first place? Thanks in advance for your reply, **Raghunandan Gokhale (India)**

**Answer** The problem arises when a player crosses out the intended move and replaces it with another one. This can be considered as taking notes. I have seen scoresheets where this has occurred eight to ten times in the same game, in which case Article 12.2a is applicable:

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

The Laws of Chess require one to record one's moves. This refers to something that has already happened and not something that will happen.

**Question** I am handicapped and I enjoy playing chess, but it is almost impossible for me to play Rapid and Blitz games unless the clock is placed to my right. Is there any rule that allows the clock to be on my right hand side regardless of color? Many thanks for your answer. **Ruben Bernardi (Italy)**

**Answer** Usually the clocks are placed on the right hand side of the player with the black pieces, but this is not a rule. Article 6.4 states:

*Before the start of the game the arbiter decides where the chess clock*

*is placed.*

So you should inform the arbiter about your handicap before the start of the tournament and request him to place the clock on your right. The arbiter must then inform the players about it.

You could also avail yourself of Article 6.8d:

*If a player is unable to use the clock, an assistant, who is acceptable to the arbiter, may be provided by the player to perform this operation. His clock shall be adjusted by the arbiter in an equitable way.*

If you prefer an assistant then you must inform the arbiter or organizer in advance to give them time to be prepared for this situation.

**Question 1** Dear Mr. Gijssen, in a recent game my opponent wanted to make sure he would not forget to move his attacked queen and therefore touched it before thinking about his next move, thereby invoking the “touch-move rule.” Is this legitimate? Isn't it akin to taking notes or writing down the move before it's played?

**Question 2** If the opponent decides to move a different piece, am I allowed to ignore the touch-move requirement if I deem it is to my benefit?

**Question 3** If the opponent moves another piece can he retract that move and still move the queen and does it matter if he presses the clock? Thank you very much! **Marcel Bieler (Switzerland)**

**Answer 1** I am curious as to how you know that the opponent touched his queen to ensure that he would not move another piece. Still, when a player touches a piece that can make a legal move, then he has to play that piece. By the way, if the player did this repeatedly, it could be considered a disturbance to the opponent. Article 4 of the Laws of Chess describes different scenarios about what could happen if a player touches a piece.

**Answer 2** Yes, you can ignore what happened. Article 4.7 is applicable here:

*A player forfeits his right to a claim against his opponent's violation of Article 4.3 or 4.4 once he deliberately touches a piece.*

But the arbiter can force the player to play the touched piece as Article 13.1 stipulates:

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

**Answer 3** The opponent is not allowed to move another piece, but you must claim the touch-move rule before making your move.

**Question** Hello, during a recent team match a player was offered a draw

while in severe time trouble. Unfortunately, the team captain was not immediately available and so the player asked me to quickly retrieve the captain. I, of course, was rooting for “our” local team, but I *refused* to get the captain because I was only a spectator and I felt that I should remain strictly neutral. It was the task of our *team*, not of their supporters, but after the match my stance was somewhat ridiculed. What do the FIDE rules stipulate in such cases? Thank you. Kind regards, **Claus van de Vlierd (Germany)**

**Answer** You acted correctly. Article 13.7a states:

*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.*

**Question** Dear Friend, How can I obtain the program Swiss Master 5.0? Thank you. Sincerely, **Felix Aparcana (Peru)**

**Answer:** Go to the website of the [Dutch Chess Federation](#) and click on the link for Swissmaster 5.0. Good luck.

**Question** Dear Mr. Gijssen, In your [June](#) and [July](#) 2005 columns you wrote that Article 6.8a:

*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)*

Should be amended with the following:

“When a player touches a piece, before his opponent has stopped the clock, he has to play or capture this piece.”

I believe the amendment is unnecessary, but I have another point of view. I think that stopping the clock is a right, not a duty. So the wording “shall stop his own clock” should be replaced by “can stop his own clock.” Subsequently the following phrase can be deleted: “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).” The completion of a move has no relation with stopping the clock, which is only an option given to the player. Aaron Nimzovitch said, “the clock is a necessary evil,” so let us try to minimize its encumbrance. I look forward to your reply and thank you for your service to chess. Best regards, **Francesco Santelli (Italy)**

**Answer** Our opinions do not differ regarding the additional wording, but it is

wise to clarify something that causes confusion on the part of many players.

**Question** Dear Sir, are clocks that alert the players to a flag fall with a soft beep or flashing lights, or is a device that prevents a flag from falling after the other has already fallen allowed in a FIDE sanctioned game? Thank you,  
**John Sy (Philippines)**

**Answer** There is no Article in the Laws of Chess that clearly describes the requirements of a clock or what is forbidden. What is written in the FIDE Handbook is outdated and only pertains to *mechanical* clocks, and nothing is written about a signal indicating a flag fall. In my opinion if the sound emitted by a clock cannot be switched off then the clock will not be approved. The regulations clearly state that the players or the arbiter has to signal a flag fall. Moreover, beeps are quite disturbing.

The requirements for electronic clocks are given below:

1. Clocks must function in full accordance with the FIDE laws of chess.
2. Clocks must function in a way that the use of different clock types (analogue and digital) can be combined in one tournament.
3. Special attention should be given to the correct implementation of passing time controls.
  - a. Both players should have the same amount of time for the same amount of moves.
  - b. In display should at all times be visible the time that is available to complete a player's next move.
4. Clocks must be well designed according to modern electronic standards.
5. Clocks must contain a short user manual on the clock.
6. For battery powered clocks, a low-battery indication is required.
7. In case of a low-battery indication, a clock must continue to function flawlessly for at least 10 hours.
8. Displays must be legible from a distance of at least 3.5. meters (Formula: display height x 300, taking in account a straight line of vision towards the display).
9. From at least a 10 meter distance a player must have a clearly visible indication which clock is running.
10. In case of passing a time control, a "flag" must give clear signal which player passed the time limit first.
11. In case of accumulative or delay timing systems, the clock should not add any additional time if a player passed the last time control.
12. It must be impossible to erase or change the data in display with a simple manipulation.
13. In case of e.g. time penalties, it must be possible that time and move counter corrections are executed within 60 seconds.

**Question** Mr. Gijssen, Suppose a player is about to queen a pawn and the new queen will checkmate the opponent's king. However, the flag of the player falls before he can execute his move and he only says "queen" without replacing the pawn with a new piece. Has he checkmated his opponent's king or can the opponent protest and say the piece must be changed to a queen before the player hits the clock? Thanks, **Sal Geraci (USA)**

**Answer** Well, only saying "queen" does not mean that he has promoted to a queen. See Article 4.6:

*The move is considered to have been made when all the relevant requirements of Article 3 have been fulfilled, in the case of the promotion of a pawn, when the pawn has been removed from the chessboard and the player's hand has released the new piece after placing it on the promotion square. If the player has released from his hand the pawn that has reached the promotion square, the move is not yet made, but the player no longer has the right to play the pawn to another square.*

Therefore, the flag fall decides the game.

**Question** Dear Geurt, Article 8.1 specifies two exceptions: Article 9.2 and 9.3. Although this may only be a technicality, I wonder why Appendix A1 has been omitted as it explicitly details how moves can/should be written down in advance of playing them on the board. While adjourned games have become quite rare, they are still legal under the laws of chess (See Appendix A of the Law of Chess). If someone claims a draw under 9.2/9.3 and the claim turns out to be unjustified, is the claimant, apart from the penalty for wrongly claiming a draw, liable for a penalty for writing down his move in advance? I look forward to your response. Kind Regards, **Mark Heidenfeld (Ireland)**

**Answer** Article A1 states:

*If a game is not finished at the end of the time prescribed for play, the arbiter shall require the player having the move to 'seal' that move.*

Therefore, there is no misconduct on the part of the player for fulfilling a requirement from the arbiter. So, in my opinion, Article A1 does not need to be included in 8.1. Regarding your last question, a wrong claim will not be punished twice.

**Question** Hello Geurt, I have a question concerning Article 8.5:

*a. If neither player is required to keep score under Article 8.4, the arbiter or an assistant should try to be present and keep score. In this case, immediately after one flag has fallen, the arbiter shall stop the*



*clocks. Then both players shall update their score sheets, using the arbiter's or the opponent's scoresheet.*

A player's flag fell, but he had a complete scoresheet and 40 moves were written. His opponent, who still had half a minute on the clock, did not notice the flag fall and continued to play very quickly and did not find the best moves. This caused the following dilemma: does Article 8.5 apply or does this fall under the Article that states the arbiter shall not indicate the number of moves remaining until the time control? Because asking a player to update his scoresheet is an indication that the correct number of moves has been made. What do you think about this? Best regards, **Michel Piguet (Switzerland)**

**Answer** Your question is interesting, but I am afraid you missed the point. Article 8.5 clearly states that the scoresheets must be updated after a flag fall. It is the duty of the arbiter to do so together with the players. So if the arbiter notices the flag fall, he has to intervene, but that does not mean he should stop the clocks. In your case, he may not stop the clocks, but he has to order the player with an incomplete scoresheet to complete it.

It seems that this intervention can be considered as an indication of the number of moves made. But it is simply an indication of a flag fall and the end of a time period. In fact, Article 13.6 even states:

*The arbiter must not intervene in a game except in cases described by the Laws of Chess. He shall not indicate the number of moves made, except in applying Article 8.5 when at least one flag has fallen.*

**Question** Dear Sir, Last month you made an interesting proposal:

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

Yet I prefer the current rule because it enables me to intervene to declare the game drawn. In tournaments in which there are many beginners' it would be impossible to apply your proposal for two reasons:

- In well-attended tournaments the spectators will intervene.
- Children will continue playing until checkmate and do not look at the clock.

I think the arbiter should intervene upon the fall of the first flag. Isn't this what you did with the tie-break in the Las Vegas World Championship? Yours truly, **Stephane Escafre (Corsica)**

**Answer** It is not my intention to introduce a new rule; I just wanted to clarify

an existing one. In my opinion, B9 must be considered in connection with B8. You are introducing a new rule in proposing that the arbiter should intervene at the moment of the first flag fall.

In Las Vegas (and all World Championships with tiebreak games) it was explicitly mentioned in the regulations that the arbiter should call a flag fall. We had one arbiter for every game, which is an ideal situation. The reason is very simple: it would be a shame for the World Championship title to be awarded to a player because his opponent had not seen that the player's flag had fallen.

---

*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.*

---

Copyright 2006 Geurt Gijssen. All Rights Reserved.



[\[ChessCafe Home Page\]](#) [\[Book Review\]](#) [\[Columnists\]](#)  
[\[Endgame Study\]](#) [\[Skittles Room\]](#) [\[Archives\]](#)  
[\[Links\]](#) [\[Online Bookstore\]](#) [\[About ChessCafe\]](#) [\[Contact Us\]](#)

Copyright 2006 CyberCafes, LLC. All Rights Reserved.  
"The Chess Cafe®" is a registered trademark of Russell Enterprises, Inc.