



C O L U M N I S T S

An Arbiter's Notebook

Geurt Gijssen



Ringling Mobiles & 10.2 Never Die

I have just returned from a holiday in the Baltic countries, where I visited the capitals of Latvia and Estonia. In several places, it is apparent how important the game of chess is in these countries. For instance, a park in Riga features a nice monument of Misha Tal, and the atmosphere around the chess tables was surprisingly relaxed; the touch-move rule was not enforced and the players constantly kibitzed with each other. Most importantly, the players and spectators had plenty of fun. This made me wonder as to who the real lovers of chess are. Next, I asked the tour guide to bring me to the cemetery where Tal was buried, and he knew the exact location of Tal's grave.

I had a similar experience in Tallinn. I visited Paul Keres' gravesite, which is located in a place reserved for famous people. Keres' portrait still adorns the 5 crown Estonian note, plus there is a Paul Keres museum in the office of the Estonian Chess Federation and a nice Keres monument in the center of Tallinn. Many thanks are due to my good friend Lembit Vahesaar, who accompanied me during my visit in Tallinn. I have fond memories of our work together during the match Kasparov – Karpov, Seville 1987.

Question Dear Mr. Gijssen, One of my club mates is currently acting as tournament director in the Berlin Championship. This championship, for individual players, is based on a league-system with promotion and relegation. The tournament lasts for about three months, with one round per week being played in a round-robin system.

One of the players requested to play his last-round match in advance, because he couldn't be present on the scheduled date. This player was still fighting against relegation and he asked the tournament director to not publish the result of that game before the other last-round games were finished. He was afraid another player could benefit from knowing the result. The director respected this request and the tournament was finished correctly.

Do you think that the request was appropriate? And would you have kept the result secret even if it was not requested, since the result might influence other games? Many thanks for your answer. Yours, **Thomas Binder (Germany)**

Answer I have my doubts as to whether the request is correct. First, the player requested to play in advance, and I think he has to accept the disadvantages of the situation he created. Secondly, the tournament director cannot force the opponent to keep silent. And finally, this creates an unfair situation for the other players, as they normally can see what is going on in the other games and can then determine their best course of action based on that.

Question Dear Mr. Gijssen, Can a player resign in a position where only he has enough material to mate? Thank you in advance, **Mathijs Janssen (The Netherlands)**

Answer To answer to your question, I will refer to two Articles of the Laws of Chess:

5.1.b The game is won by the player whose opponent declares he resigns. This immediately ends the game.

This very clearly states that the game is over after a player resigns, and Article 8.7 confirms that the resignation stands:

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.

Nevertheless, if the arbiter is of the opinion that cheating occurred, then he should apply Article 12.1, along with any appropriate penalties:

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

Question Dear Sir, Article C3 of the Laws of Blitz games states:

An illegal move is completed once the opponent's clock has been started.

But Article 4.3 of the Laws of Chess says:

If a player touches one or more pieces, he must take or use the touched piece.

Therefore, is it correct to say that the blitz rule supersedes Article 4? In a blitz game, if an illegal move occurs, can the opponent claim victory? Thank you in advance. **Emmanuel Britto F. (Brazil)**

Answer I think you are correct. I refer to Article B2 of Rapidplay and C2 of Blitzgames:

B2. Play shall be governed by the FIDE Laws of Chess, except where they are overridden by the following Laws of Rapidplay.

C2. Play shall be governed by the Rapidplay Laws as in Appendix B except where they are overridden by the following Laws of Blitz. The Articles 10.2 and B6 do not apply.

As you can see, it is clearly stated that C2 supersedes the “normal” Laws of Chess. However, I would also like to refer to Article 4.5 of the Laws of Chess:

If none of the pieces touched can be moved or captured, the player may make any legal move.

Question Dear Mr. Gijssen, the following situation occurred in a German Team Cup. Under the regulations, every team was free to choose the board position of the players'. One team was late, so when the arbiter started White's clocks, one player pressed the clock without making a move, claiming that his first move would depend on his opponent, and otherwise the other team would be able to seat their players with respect to the first moves.

Though this makes sense, it seems to go against the intention of the Laws of Chess. Anyway, the arbiter insisted White execute a move before pressing the clock. However, the need for making a move without the existence of an opponent seems to be ridiculous, it would still be +- if he did not show up.

This leads to a second, more theoretical question. When does a game actually begin? If a player arrives very late to the tournament hall and his flag falls, at which moment should the result be 1-0? When he makes a move, or if he just shakes hands, or takes a seat, or is his mere presence sufficient? Best regards,
Olaf Teschke (Germany)

Answer As to when a game actually begins, Article 6.5 gives the answer:

At the time determined for the start of the game the clock of the player who has the white pieces is started.

Article 6.7 implicitly states that a player is present when he arrives at the chessboard. This avoids situations where a player claims that he was in the playing venue or area, but the arbiter did not see him. With this wording, the arbiter only has to observe the table where the game is played and check whether the player is on time or not. This makes all other factors irrelevant.

As for your initial question, I understand both the player's and arbiter's points of view. In the Dutch league, we had a very logical rule: both team captains were to deliver the line-up of their teams to the arbiter before the start of the match. If one player did not arrive on time, then, within the first hour, the

captain could replace this player. The white player would seal his move and press the clock. If the stated opponent arrives, then White has to play the sealed move, but if a replacement is appointed, White can change his move.

When we amend the Laws of Chess in 2008, I will make the proposal that if Black is not present at the start of the round, White has the right to seal his move.

Question Hello Mr. Gijssen, On page 120 of *Wereldtweekamp Schaken '87 in Seville Karpov - Kasparov* by Hans Böhm, (Baarn 1988) you are quoted in an interview saying that “Kasparov approached me and asked if it was really necessary, in order to claim a draw, that you have to reach the same position three times with the same player on move. If Kasparov had claimed a draw, I would have refused it and would have penalized him by subtracting 5 minutes from his time.”

What did you answer to Kasparov's question? And on the basis of what FIDE rule were you allowed to give Kasparov information about the “drawing rules”? My impression is that you helped Kasparov, by saving him from a five-minute penalty, when you should have been completely neutral by denying him an answer. Thanks for your response and for your excellent column. Regards, **Claus van de Vlierd (Germany)**

Answer The conversation was more or less as follows:

Kasparov: “To claim a draw for triple repetition of position, is it really necessary that each time the same player has the move?”

Gijssen: “Yes, it is.”

I did not do anything wrong. When a player asks me something about the rules, I can answer his question. Furthermore, I always bring a copy of the Laws of Chess with me to a tournament, and I leave it where the players' can access it, if they wish.

Question Sir, in Susan Polgar's June [column](#), she commented about a dirty trick that is being used in junior tournaments:

One player is losing badly, so he reaches out and offers his hand. The opponent is under the impression that the player is resigning. Therefore, he also reaches out his hand. All of a sudden, the losing player yells out: “Draw.” When the other player disputes it, the losing player says that it is too late. They already shook hands.

What should the arbiter do in such cases? My understanding is that the handshake is completely irrelevant, since it does not constitute a draw agreement; especially when it is evident that one of the players is cheating.

Therefore, the arbiter should refuse to declare the game a draw and should penalize the cheating player. **Eduardo S. Benazzi (Brazil)**

Answer Let me begin with an anecdote that I heard recently. A player with a lost position wanted to shake hands with his opponent. The opponent was confused and was wondering if he had just accepted a draw offer that was never made or whether the player had resigned. Then the player told him that they did not shake hands at the beginning of the game and that he only wanted to correct this transgression. But as I understand it, his intention was to get a draw.

In a normal game, there is only one way to be certain about the result. Both players should write the (same) result on their scoresheet and they should sign both scoresheets.

In rapid and blitz tournaments, it is normal to write the result and then sign a result sheet. I advise each arbiter to follow this procedure, and many Swiss-pairing programs produce these result sheets.

Question Hi, Article 12 states:

It is strictly forbidden to bring mobile phones or other electronic means of communication, not authorized by the arbiter, into the playing venue. If a player's mobile phone rings in the playing venue during play, that player shall lose the game. The score of the opponent shall be determined by the arbiter.

The article specifies that the player loses the game only if his mobile rings. But the sentence "It is strictly forbidden to bring mobile phones" does not specify a penalty, so the arbiter can apply a penalty other than forfeiting the game.

In the Egyptian League, I saw a player talking on the phone outside the playing hall, even though his game was still in progress. I had told all of the players to shut-off their phones before starting play. However, I did not hear the phone ring, so I can't forfeit the game. Meanwhile, his opponent requested that I forfeit the game on the basis that he used the phone during play. When I asked the player who he was talking to, he answered that he was discussing an important matter with his wife about a hospitalized child.

So, what should the arbiter do in that situation? What if a player brings his phone and switches it to vibrate, so that no ring can be heard? Thus, I believe that the following changes should be included in the article: "The player loses the game if they bring their mobile phone into the playing hall, even if it is switched off." Thanks in advance. **Dr. Moustafa Awwad (Egypt)**

Answer It is very difficult to forbid mobiles in the playing hall, as many

players do not like to leave them in their hotel room. By announcing that the players have to switch off their mobiles (including the built-in alarm), the arbiter implicitly allows mobiles in the playing hall, as long as they are switched off. And I think you will agree that a mobile set to vibrate mode is not switched off. In 2008, I will propose that if the arbiter notices that a player has a mobile switched on in the playing venue, he will declare the game lost for that player.

Question Dear Sir, I was the assistant arbiter in a recent FIDE rated tournament. In one of the games, a player claimed a draw according to the 10.2 rule. I postponed my decision, and after the flag fall, I declared the game lost for that player. While I was discussing it with the chief arbiter, the two players came and said that they had agreed to a draw, and the chief arbiter also agreed.

Was it correct for the players to agree to a draw after my ruling, and was it correct for the chief arbiter to go along with it? What is the correct method for a player to summon the arbiter when making a 10.2 claim? Some of the players simply show the position and say, "Draw"! Thank you. **Pranesh Yadav, India.**

Answer Before the Olympiads, I made the following agreement with the arbiters: in case of an infringement, only the chief arbiter or one of the two deputy chief arbiters can declare the game lost. This guarantees that the players will be treated in the same way. In all other cases, the match arbiter should always call a senior arbiter, or one of the deputies or the chief arbiter.

If there was no such agreement in your tournament, then generally the chief arbiter should respect your decision, especially with regard to Article 10.2. As Article 10.2.d states:

The decision of the arbiter shall be final relating to 10.2 a, b, and c.

I, personally, do not like this article because it gives the arbiter too much power.

Following your decision, if you had the players write the result on their scoresheet and sign them, then this problem would not have arose. I assume that you left the board without signed scoresheets, in which case, you made a mistake.

To make a claim under Article 10.2, the player should stop the clocks and summon the arbiter, then he should inform the arbiter that about his claim: "As you can see, I have less than 2 minutes left, and my opponent is not make any effort to win by normal means. He is only playing to win on time; therefore, I claim a draw. What is your opinion?"

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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