



Controversial Decisions

Question Dear Geurt, I have a different opinion in regards to your answer to Mr. Krzewinski from Belgium in last month's [column](#). Player B checkmated his opponent's king, and According to Article 5.1a:

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.

There is no difference between normal chess, Rapid and Blitz. The game ended once Player A was checkmated, anything that happened afterwards is insignificant. The arbiter presumably saw what happened and did not object to the course of events as presented in Mr. Krzewinski's letter. So the arbiter's decision was correct; Player B was declared the winner. I don't understand how the player whose king was checkmated must be declared the winner. Blitz is chess too. With best wishes, **Lembit Vaheasaar (Estonia)**

Answer I also received similar letters from **Sigvat Stensholt** from Norway and **Peter Anderberg** from Germany. First I would like to refer to the following Articles of the Laws of Chess:

B5. The arbiter shall make a ruling according to Article 4 (The act of moving pieces), only if requested to do so by one or both players.

B6. An illegal move is completed once the opponent's clock has been started. The opponent is then entitled to claim that the player completed an illegal move before the claimant has made his move. Only after such a claim, shall the arbiter make a ruling. However, if both Kings are in check or the promotion of a pawn is not completed, the arbiter shall intervene, if possible.

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.

In "normal chess" the arbiter must signal a flag fall, but in Rapid and Blitz chess that is not the case. Only the player is responsible for signalling (i.e. claiming) a flag fall.

Articles B6 and B7 explicitly explain the role of the arbiter in Rapid and Blitz chess. There are only two situations in which the arbiter may intervene without a claim from either player: an uncompleted pawn promotion or if both kings are in check.

One problem, especially in Blitz, is the fact that it is very difficult for the arbiter to be present at the each board. It occasionally happens that games continue after a checkmate and that even the checkmated player wins the game.

I do not see any reference or indication that the arbiter may intervene when a player has overlooked that he has checkmated the opponent's king or that the game has finished by stalemate.

I am not against adding an Article to the Laws of Chess stating that the arbiter should intervene in Rapid and Blitz games when he observes a checkmated king or a stalemate, but at the moment no such Article exists.

By the way, Eddie Price of South Africa once suggested changing Article 5.1 as follows: "The game is won by the player who has checkmated his opponent's king, *if noticed*." In which case even a normal game could continue after checkmate or stalemate, but I am not in favor of such a change for normal games.

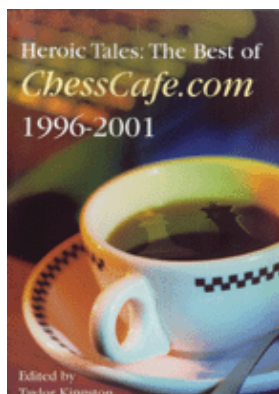
Question Dear Geurt, The Rapidplay Appendix of the Laws of Chess states that a game is considered to be "Rapidplay" when the time is fixed from 15 to 60 minutes for each player. My question is whether 60 minutes is considered to be normal chess or rapid? Best wishes, **Ashot Vardapetian (Armenia)**

Answer Article C1 mentions for Blitz games:

A 'blitz' game is one where all the moves must be made in a fixed time of less than 15 minutes for each player; or the allotted time + 60 times any increment is less than 15 minutes.

COLUMNISTS

An Arbiter's Notebook Geurt Gijssen



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This means that a time control of 15 minutes for the whole game is not a Blitz game, but a Rapid game.

Article B1 states:

A 'Rapidplay' game is one where either all the moves must be made in a fixed time from 15 to 60 minutes; or the time allotted + 60 times any increment is from 15 to 60 minutes.

I am inclined to handle the time control for Rapid games in an analogous way, which means a game of 60 minutes is a normal game.

In the FIDE Rating Regulations I found the following:

Rate of Play:

1.1 For a game to be rated each player must have the following minimum periods in which to complete all the moves, assuming the game lasts 60 moves. (PB 2000)

1.11 Where at least one of the players in the tournament has a rating 2200 or higher, each player must have a minimum of 120 minutes.

1.12 Where at least one of the players in the tournament has a rating 1600 or higher, each player must have a minimum of 90 minutes.

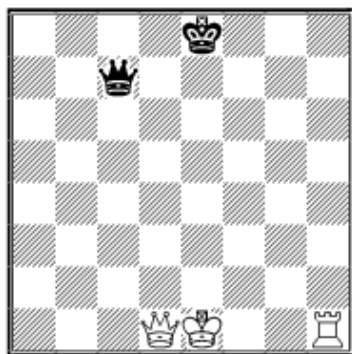
1.13 Where all the players in the tournament are rated below 1600, each player must have a minimum of 60 minutes.

So according to 1.13 above, a 60 minute game is a normal game. To avoid these kinds of misunderstandings it is probably preferable to change the text of C1:

A Rapidplay game is one where either all the moves must be made in a fixed time of 15 minutes or more, but less than 60 minutes; or the time allotted + 60 times any increment is 15 minutes or more, but less than 60 minutes.

Question Dear Sir, Is there any recent clarification on “temporary castling rights” in respect to repetitions of position. Some peers and I are writing chess programs and are in a heated debate about this issue. My take is that this rule is meaningless and irrelevant. I have not even seen any accurate definition as to what exactly this refers to; if a position is identical, what is the significance of what happened in the interim? Please give any FIDE references in your response. **Alan Pittman (Canada)**

Answer In temporary castling rights there are no changes. The only recent clarification regarding repetition of positions in connection with the castling rules is what was discussed and accepted in the FIDE Congress, Dresden 2005. In a previous [Notebook](#), I gave the following example:



“Black is on move and White hasn’t moved his king or h1-rook:

Play continues 1...Qg3+ 2.Kf1 Qf4+ 3.Ke1 Qg3+ 4.Kf1 Qf4+ 5...Qg3+ and at this moment Black claims a draw because after 5...Qg3+ we have a third repetition of position, with the same player on move. Is this claim correct?

The Rules and Tournament Regulations Committee discussed this matter very extensively during the meeting of the Executive Board in Dresden and made a proposal to the Executive Board, which was accepted.

The answer is: the claim is incorrect. The arbiter must reject the claim because when the position was first on the board, White had not lost the right to castle. He lost this right not by 1...Qg3+, but by 2 Kf1, when he moved his king. ... The general rule is: *A player loses his right to castle with his own move and not by an opponent's move.*”

Question Dear Mr. Gijssen, I recently played a game (the time control was 90 minutes each) where I had an ending with bishop and right-colored rook’s pawn versus three pawns. When my opponent had seven seconds left, I decided that the easiest way to conclude the game would be to sacrifice my bishop for two of his pawns and then win the last one (which was blockading my rook’s pawn) with my king. My opponent’s conduct was inappropriate in that he was slamming the clock and not allowing me to press my clock before he responded to my moves. The arbiter was watching the time scramble and my opponent was warned about not letting me press the clock, once by me and then by the arbiter when he did it a second time. However, he

received no penalty for this. Then, with one second on his clock, my opponent turned to the arbiter and said: “draw.” When his time expired, the arbiter awarded a draw after consulting a tablebase. Was this decision correct? I still had mating material (a rook’s pawn) and my opponent wasn’t asked to prove that he knew how to draw the position. Did he have a right to claim a draw while I was still attempting to win the game? **Peter Jones (USA)**

Answer With less than two minutes on his clock and playing without an increment in the last phase of a game, a player always has the right to claim a draw. This is in accordance with the Laws of Chess. Furthermore, Article 10.2.d states:

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

However, different arbiters may make different decisions. I assume that the arbiter observed you sacrifice your bishop and reach a position with an a- or h-pawn. I do not know whether the position was winning or not, but it is probably not important. I would likely have decided to let the game continue and postpone my decision.

Question Dear Geurt, Regarding a query [last month](#) by Viron Tsorbatzoglou of Greece about publishing interpretations of the Laws of Chess, would it be possible to include them in a book such as *The Chess Organiser’s Handbook*?

Many years ago the *Chess Competitors Handbook* included both the Laws of Chess and their interpretations and was of great assistance to arbiters and players alike. It was so popular that it was almost impossible to get a copy. **Tim Conlan (Ireland)**

Answer I know this book very well. It was authored by Bozidar Kazic, and from time to time I refer to it for my own purposes. However, the interpretations in Kazic’s book were part of the Laws, as proposed by the Rules Committee and accepted by the General Assembly of FIDE.

In Stewart Reuben’s third edition of the *Chess Organiser’s Handbook*, he incorporated the FIDE Laws of Chess as of 2005, but the commentary is his opinion on certain matters. As I mentioned last month, we should publish interpretations and explanations of the Laws of Chess.

Question Geurt, There is a simple remedy as to what to do about mobile phones in the playing hall. Just have every participant remove the battery prior to the game. This way, they can still keep their mobile with them but will be unable to use it. This also eliminates any worries that the mobile will turn on in the player’s pocket. Obviously, if a mobile is on during the match, then normal rules will apply. And if the mobile rings with the battery out, then I’m pretty sure it’s a message from someone transcendent of us. **Matt Schladweiler (Netherlands)**

Answer This does seem like a viable solution to the problem. I prefer to ask the readers’ opinion regarding this question.

Question Dear Mr. Gijssen, I have a question concerning late players. Wouldn’t it make sense that when only the white player is present and the opponent’s clock is running, he does not have to make a move until his opponent appears? There have been cases where a player, as black, has sent a collaborator to spy White’s first move in order to spend an extra thirty minutes or so in preparation. The black player may then be down on time, but he is compensated by the extra preparation specific to his opponent’s move.

Also, I do not agree with some of your recent answers:

Case 1: [Last month’s](#) question from Joachim Heuser: In regards to promoting a white pawn to a black queen, you write: “It is clear that the player completed an illegal move. Normally the opponent can claim a win, but because of a lack of material he can only claim a draw.” Is there really a lack of material? The black player has been gifted a queen as a result of White’s illegal (but completed!) move. Moreover, if the black player did not make a claim, then the position should be played without regard to the illegal moves that led to it. I would say that in case of a proper claim, the claimant should win, since he has mating material at that moment.

Case 2: Also from [last month](#), I strongly disagree with your answer to Fabien Krzewinski. Checkmate ends the game without regard to the validity of the claim or it being a Blitz game. Whatever happens after a checkmate cannot change the result. The only requirement is that the mating move must be valid. In the described case this requirement seems to be fulfilled. Best regards, **Wojciech Pietrzak (Poland)**

Answer In a previous [Notebook](#), I discussed a similar case with regard to team competitions. I wrote:

“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.”

Why not apply a similar rule? The text of the Article could be:

In case the black player is absent at the start of the round, the white player has the right to seal his move.

Still, there is also another option. Why not declare the game lost for any player that is absent at the start of the round? I do not know of any other sport that tolerates a competitor being absent at the start of the competition. Moreover, it is disrespectful to the opponent, the organizer and the sponsor. Certainly there may be cases of “*force majeure*,” but here the arbiter could have the right to decide otherwise. This subject should be discussed in further detail.

Case 1: I am afraid I have to disagree with you. A player claims that his opponent completed an illegal move. In my opinion there is no discussion about the legality of this claim. If the opponent has no mating material (for instance a bare king), it is quite logical to award a draw. It is incorrect to declare the game lost for the player who offers his opponent an extra piece because of an illegal move. This is like double jeopardy.

Case 2: See my answer to the first question of this column.

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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