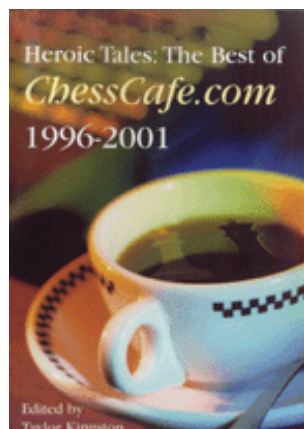




COLUMNISTS

An Arbiter's Notebook

Geurt Gijssen



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Is the Arbiter Always Right?

Question Hello, I disagree with some of the latest changes to the laws of chess; in particular, the prevention of recording before moving and the fact that the decision of the arbiter is final in 10.2 rulings. After all, even an arbiter may be wrong in some circumstances, and a player should have recourse to protest to a higher authority.

However, my main point is to suggest applying rule 10.2 in “time delay” mode, but with these alterations: 1) Reduce the time of claiming a draw from 2 minutes to 1 minute. 2) Only the player whose time is less than 30 seconds can claim a draw based on rule 10.2. Anyway, I do not think it is right for a player to lose a game just because of time or from an incorrect decision by the arbiter. Thank You, **Akbar Bagheri (Iran)**

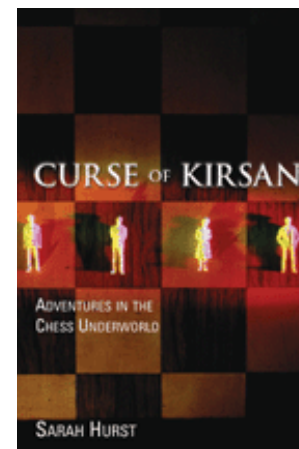
Answer All changes to the Laws of Chess are extensively discussed prior to the General Assembly or the Presidential Board approving the revision of any rule. Regarding your proposal, Fischer introduced the idea of adding some time after each move and Bronstein made a proposal for the time delay mode. The main principle of both modes is that a player always has at least a small increment of time for the next move.

In games without an increment, it is possible for a player to solely continue the game just to win on time, rather than by normal means. Article 10 was introduced to prevent this. Personally, I do not see any reason to apply Article 10.2 in games with a time delay mode.

The next opportunity for revising the Laws of Chess will occur in November 2008, during the FIDE Congress in Dresden. If you would like to formally propose such a change to Article 10.2, please let me know.

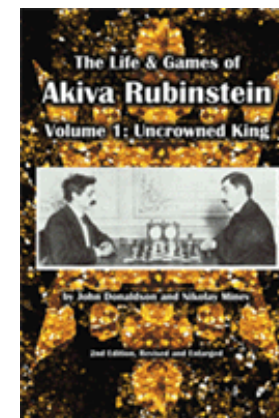
Question Hi Mr. Gijssen, during a rapid game, a player claimed a draw based on Article 10 and the arbiter decided to postpone his decision. However, in such a case, should the arbiter still refrain from signaling a flag fall, as stated in the last sentence of Article B7, while he is monitoring the game in order to make his decision? Your opinion will be most welcome. Best Regards, **Sergio Pagano (Italy)**

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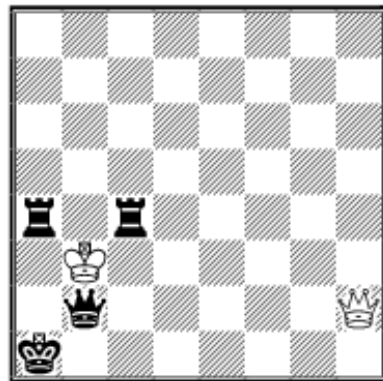
Answer Article B7 states:

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.

This means that it is not relevant if the arbiter notices the flag fall. It also means that the arbiter should make a decision about the claim for a draw only after either player claims the flag fall.

Question Dear Sir, Please answer the following question: A player is about to give mate on his next move (the opponent cannot avoid being mated no matter what he does). However, the flag falls of the player who is about to give mate and the opponent claims a win. Who wins in this situation? With Regards,
Haroon Or Rashid (Bangladesh)

Answer If I understand you correctly, you refer to a situation similar to the following diagram:

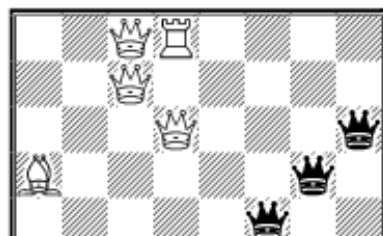


White is on move, and must play Qxb2#, but he oversteps the time before executing his move. Black claims a win on time and White claims he had a forced win. Here we have to apply Article 6.10:

Except where Articles 5.1 or one of the Articles 5.2 (a), (b) and (c) apply, if a player does not complete the prescribed number of moves in the allotted time, the game is lost by the player. However, the game is drawn, if the position is such that

the opponent cannot checkmate the player's king by any possible series of legal moves, even with the most unskilled counterplay.

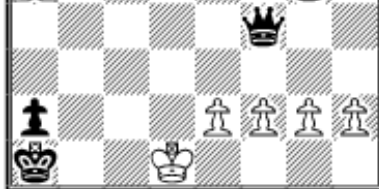
Thus, even though White overstepped the time, it is a draw, because Black can never win in this position. Your question reminded me of a position that was discussed in the [December 2004](#) column:



The game continues: 1...Qc1+ 2.Qxc1+ Qxc1+ 3.Qxc1+ Qxc1+, when White's flag falls. However, the game is not won for Black, because after the forced 4.Kxc1, it is stalemate. Again, if it is clear that *the position is such that the opponent* (in this



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case Black) *cannot checkmate the player's king by any possible series of legal moves, even with the most unskilled counterplay.*

Question Dear Geurt, 1. Is an organizer of an official FIDE-rated tournament allowed to penalize late players differently than what is stated in the Laws of Chess?

- Case 1: The organizer allows a player to be more than an hour late with the player's clock still running. In an extreme case, this means that the player has 30 seconds against 90 minutes.
- Case 2: The organizer declares a game lost for a player if he or she is absent the moment the round begins (even if it is half a minute later).
- Case 3: The organizer doubles the time-penalty for being late (e.g. a player arriving 15 minutes late starts with 30 minutes less than his opponent).

2. What do you think about applying Fischer-style time controls to an entire tournament? For example: in a 9-round tournament a player has 9 hours for all games + 30 minutes for each game (in this case, the extra minutes are not added for the rounds the player is not paired in) + 30 seconds for each move, cumulative between the games? The extra-time for the game would be awarded only after decisive games or fighting draws (to be adjudicated by the arbiter) to avoid grandmaster draws geared towards accumulating time for decisive games. Best regards, **Wojciech Pietrzak (Poland)**

Answer Regarding your first question, I refer to Article 6.7:

Any player who arrives at the chessboard more than one hour after the scheduled start of the session shall lose the game unless the rules of the competition specify or the arbiter decides otherwise.

In my opinion, cases 1 and 2 are covered under Article 6.7. The one hour mentioned in Article 6.7 can be changed to 0 or 15 minutes, provided it is clearly announced in the regulations in advance of the event. I have my doubts about case 3. In fact, it is quite a harsh penalty. It may not be against the Laws of Chess, but I cannot imagine any organizer applying it.

Your second point is not covered in the Laws of Chess. The Laws only deal with single games, not a series of games. And when the Laws refer to time limits, they always mean the time limit for an individual game.

Question During the recent European Team Championships a player apparently claimed a draw based on triple-repetition of position by stopping the

clocks, calling the arbiter and writing down his proposed move. The opponent requested that the claim be refused because the proper order is to write the move, stop the clocks and inform the arbiter. The relevant laws are:

9.2.a. The game is drawn, upon a correct claim by the player having the move, when the same position, for at least the third time (not necessarily by a repetition of moves) is about to appear, if he first writes his move on his scoresheet and declares to the arbiter his intention to make this move.
9.5 If a player claims a draw as in Article 9.2 or 9.3, he shall immediately stop both clocks.

The above wording suggests that the correct order of action is to write the move and call the arbiter simultaneously and then stop the clocks (as in 9.5). I believe the easiest way to clarify these articles would be to change article 9.2.a to:

a. is about to appear, if he first writes his move on his scoresheet, then stops the clocks, and lastly declares to the arbiter his intention to make this move, or...

Article 9.3.a should then be brought into line by changing it to:

a. he first writes his move on his scoresheet, then stops the clocks, and lastly 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...

Finally, the text in 9.5 should be changed from “he shall immediately stop both clocks. He is not allowed to withdraw his claim.” to “he is not allowed to withdraw his claim.” Regards, **Chris Hinman (Norway)**

Answer Three actions are required by a player in order to claim a draw based on triple repetition of position or the 50-move rule:

- he has to write the intended move,
- he has to stop the clocks,
- he has to summon the arbiter.

The main question is: in which sequence should these actions be done. In my opinion, it is dangerous to begin with step 1 or 2, because it is forbidden to record the move before making it, and stopping the clock can be interpreted as a resignation. Therefore, the most logical order is:

- he has to summon the arbiter,
- he has to stop the clocks,

- he has to write the intended move.

However, this might not be practical, especially if the arbiter is not nearby. In this case the preferable order is:

- he has to stop the clocks,
- he has to summon the arbiter,
- he has to write the intended move.

In the event that stopping the clocks was an unreasonable action; for instance, the player changed his mind and decided not to claim a draw, the arbiter can apply Article 6.13.d:

If a player stops the clocks in order to seek the arbiter's assistance, the arbiter shall determine if the player had any valid reason for doing so. If it is obvious that the player has no valid reason for stopping the clocks, the player shall be penalised according to Article 13.4.

Another way of handling the situation is via Article 9.1c:

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

The player can offer a draw to the opponent, informing him that the next move fulfills the requirements of 9.2 or 9.5. If the player refuses, then the arbiter can be summoned. Finally, provided that the situation occurred as you describe, the objection was a bit childish.

Question Hello, During the world youth championship, a game in the penultimate round was incorrectly declared drawn by the arbiter. After a protest to the appeals committee the decision was reversed and two 14-year-olds were dragged from their beds in the middle of the night to continue the game. (See the [January 2008 Scholastic Chess](#) column – ed.)

This was obviously a very bad decision, but there was no right one. If the game has to be replayed, it should have been from the beginning, because it is impossible nowadays to continue a game after a break of several hours. This shows that the rules of chess are incomplete. I think under certain conditions the decision of the arbiter should be final, even if it is shown to be wrong after the fact. Best regards, **Gerd Lorscheid (Germany)**

Answer More and more I understand the first sentence of 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.

I agree that in this computer age it is impossible in most cases to continue a game after a break of many hours. I also agree that in general it is not fair to force players to play a new game in the middle of the night. So your proposal is reasonable. As a matter of fact, we already have this situation in Article 10.2 of the Laws of Chess in regards to a Quickplay finish:

If the player, having the move, has less than two minutes left on his clock, he may claim a draw before his flag falls. He shall stop the clocks and summon the arbiter.

a. If the arbiter agrees the opponent is making no effort to win the game by normal means, or that it is not possible to win by normal means, then he shall declare the game drawn. Otherwise he shall postpone his decision or reject the claim.

If the arbiter postpones his decision, the opponent may be awarded two extra minutes and the game shall continue in the presence of an arbiter, if possible. The arbiter shall declare the final result later in the game or after a flag has fallen. He shall declare the game drawn if he agrees that the final position cannot be won by normal means, or that the opponent was not making sufficient attempts to win by normal means.

If the arbiter has rejected the claim, the opponent shall be awarded two extra minutes time.

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

However, I came across an article written by the captain of the Canadian team in this event. His boy was the protesting player and he describes the incident as follows:

In round 10 Lloyd was white against a player from Belgium named Nils Nijs. Lloyd had an advantage for most of the game but drifted a bit in the middle game and at some point approaching time trouble allowed a three-fold repetition still in a much better, probably close to winning position. According to the rules of chess Lloyd's opponent could write his move down then call the arbiter and claim the draw by three-fold repetition. His opponent had a lot of time, much more than Lloyd. Instead, the player from Belgium makes his move on the board, thus already invalidating any possible draw claims. Moreover, after this move Lloyd made another (good) move away from the repetition and pressed

the clock. At this moment Lloyd's opponent stops the clock, calls the arbiter and demands the draw retroactively as if he did not make his last move and Lloyd did not make his reply - clearly an invalid claim.

From the report, it appears that the Canadian player went to the match arbiter, senior arbiter, chief arbiter, and submitted a written appeal, thereby spending a lot of time explaining his case. Unfortunately, by the time the Appeals Committee had completed their investigation and overruled the decision made by the match arbiter, it was about 11 o'clock at night. Thus, although there were some drawbacks, the decision of the Appeals Committee is very reasonable. Finally, I would like to quote from the last part of the Canadian arbiter's report:

While it is unfair to have the player woken up at 11pm to testify, the root of the problem were the Belgian player not knowing the rules and the arbiter making a big mistake and then trying to cover it up. I believe we did the right thing and thanks to the Belgian player's honesty justice prevailed. I believe the Belgian player received an award for the most honest player or something similar at the closing ceremony (I do not remember the exact title of the award).

Question Dear Mr. Gijssen, Could you please answer the following questions, which arose during a discussion among arbiters in The Netherlands.

Article 8.5a reads in part: "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." The reasons for this are (probably) that the arbiter has to be able to:

- Check the number of moves played in case of a flag fall;
- Establish the correctness of a claim according to articles 9.2 (repetition of positions) or 9.3 (50-move rule).

1: Should the arbiter also keep track of the moves in the case of a "quickplay finish": "the phase of a game, when all the (remaining) moves must be made in a limited time"? We think that this is not the case, because in this situation reason clearly does not apply, and with regard to reason if no moves are recorded, the players just cannot make these claims, but it is their own decision not to do so.

2: It often occurs (at least in regional matches) that a player who has less than five minutes left on his clock and therefore is "not obliged to meet the requirements of article 8.1" (recording the moves), has one of the spectators (or team members who already finished their game) writing down the moves for him. Is this allowed?

3: If the answer to the previous question is “yes,” may these recordings be used to check the number of moves played, or as “evidence” in case of a claim according to articles 9.2 or 9.3?

With kind regards, **Rob de Vries (The Netherlands)**

Answer 1. Unfortunately, you are incorrect regarding point b. It is not written in the FIDE Laws of Chess that the player who claims a draw based on Article 9.2 or 9.5 has to write his moves. The USCF rules explicitly state that the claimant has to show a complete scoresheet, but the FIDE rules do not.

2: An arbiter cannot forbid a spectator from writing the moves of any game that is in progress. But a spectator is a spectator and Article 13.7c has to be applied:

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.

This means a spectator may write the moves, but he can never inform the players that the number of prescribed moves has been completed or that a player has overstepped the time limit.

If a player claims that his opponent has overstepped the time limit, I do not see any problem with the arbiter using the information produced by a spectator. Yet the arbiter has to be very careful if the information comes from a teammate.

3: See Answer 2.

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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