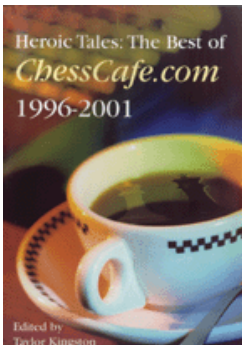




COLUMNISTS

An Arbiter's Notebook

Geurt Gijssen



CHESSTHEATRE

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Ratings!

Question Dear Mr. Gijssen, I recently contacted the All India Chess Federation in regards to ratings calculation. My child, rated 1791, played in the All India Open International against opponents rated 2281, 2261, and 2326. Yet the rating calculation formula was based on a rating of 2141 for each opponent.

The explanation from the All India Chess Federation was that "Clause 10.51 of the FIDE Rating Regulations only allows a maximum rating difference of 350 points. At the time of that event, your son was rated 1791 ELO. Hence all his opponents are taken as 2141 (1791 + 350). As such, there is no error in calculating his rating change." Can you please clarify the reasons behind this calculation? Thank you. **Nitin Shenvi (India)**

Answer I checked the calculations and they are absolutely correct. In the past the rating officer calculated the average rating of the opponents, but if the difference was more than 350, he used the rating of the player involved +350. More importantly, for the higher rated player, the opponent's rating was calculated as the player's rating -350.

Let me give you an example. If Player A is rated 2500 and Player B is rated 2000, then the rating calculations for Player A is based on an opponent's rating of 2150. Similarly, when calculating the rating for Player B, his opponent is considered to have a rating of 2350. This made sense because the average rating of the higher rated player's opponents would be lower if one of his opponents had a very low rating.

For a few years now the rating calculations are done per individual game, yet the 350 rule is still applied. So the Indian rating officer is right. The calculated rating of your son's opponents is $1791 + 350 = 2141$ in all cases. And since all of them have the same rating, it does not make any difference between the old system of calculating the average rating of the opponents and the new system of calculating per game. However, I do not see any reason to maintain this 350 rule and I think it should be abolished.

Question Imagine a scenario where an unrated player scores 8 out of 8 against opponents with an average ELO of 2000 in a big open tournament. For arguments sake, say in the last round he is paired against an opponent who has an ELO of 1400 and no other player has more than 6½ points, so the first player has already won the event. If the first player wins against the 1400 in the last round, his ELO would be smaller than if he didn't play! How is it possible that one loses rating points for winning? **Paul Linshits (Germany)**

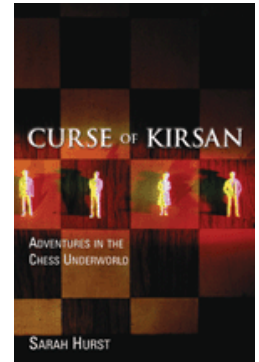
Answer An unrated player receives a rating after he has played at least nine games against rated players. This simply means that his rating will not be lower after nine games than after eight games, because after eight games he has no rating at all.

Question Dear Geurt, I am confused about the implementation and interpretation of rule 8.1, specifically the prohibition against writing down one's move before playing it.

I was recently playing a club match in which my opponent persistently did this. I must stress that there was no intention on his part to annoy or disturb in any way, but it is, as I understand it, against the rules. On his twenty-second move he wrote down Qd2 and after considering it, changed his mind, crossed it out, and wrote down and played Bf4 instead.

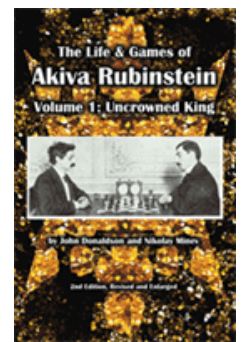
I stopped the clocks to query this, since I was sure I could recall players being prevented by arbiters from changing the move they had first written down. A qualified international FIDE arbiter happened to be present and indicated that there was no need for my opponent to play the move he had first written. This

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was accepted by both parties, play continued, and the result was a draw.

On later inspection, I see that rule 8.1 says “it is forbidden to write the moves in advance.” However, it mentions no penalty. This being so: 1. May a player who writes down and then changes a move, play a move different to that originally written? 2. When a player writes a move down before playing it, what should his or her opponent do? 3. What should the arbiter do in such situations? Yours, **Justin Horton (Spain)**

Answer I would like to refer to four Articles of the Laws of Chess:

Article 8.1 (in part):

It is forbidden to write the moves in advance, unless the player is claiming a draw according to Article 9.2 or 9.3.

Article 13.1:

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

Article 13.3:

The arbiter shall observe the games, especially when the players are short of time, enforce decisions he has made and impose penalties on players where appropriate.

Article 13.4:

The arbiter can apply one or more of the following penalties:

- a. warning,*
- b. increasing the remaining time of the opponent,*
- c. reducing the remaining time of the offending player,*
- d. declaring the game to be lost,*
- e. reducing the points scored in a game by the offending party,*
- f. increasing the points scored in a game by the opponent to the maximum available for that game,*
- g. expulsion from the event.*

It is not written in the Laws of Chess that a player has to play the move he wrote in advance. But there are remedies when a player violates one of the Laws; for instance, see Article 13.4. I hope that it is clear to everyone that the arbiter should start with a warning or by applying Article 13.4 b or c. The arbiter may consider 13.4.d only after the violation has been repeated several times. As a matter of fact, I cannot remember ever applying Articles 13.e, f and g. And I applied Article 13.d only after a ringing phone.

So, if a player writes his move in advance, the answer is very simple: inform the arbiter.

Question Mr. Gijssen, regarding the 50-move draw rule, the FIDE and USCF rules agree that the move counter is reset to zero by any pawn move or capture.

I believe these events reset the counter because the moves are “irreversible.” No legal continuations can reestablish the prior position. Therefore, I think there should be one more item added to the list: any move that irreversibly (or permanently) changes a castling right.

Castling privileges are taken into consideration in the triple repetition rule and I think it should be recognized in the 50-move draw rule too. Wouldn't adding castling rights to the 50-move draw rule be more consistent? Thank you. **Gene Milener (USA)**

Answer We have to first consider the history of the 50-move rule. In the past there were some specific endgames that could be played for 75 moves. These endgames had nothing to do with the position on the board, but with the available pieces on the board. In how many moves is it possible to checkmate the opponent's king with the available material? Therefore, in my very modest opinion, there is no reason to add your point to the Laws of Chess.

Question Geurt, I want to dare quibble with you about a response in your [December 2007](#) column. You were asked:

In a 5-minute game, Player A made his move, but did not even have time to press his clock before Player B delivered a checkmate. Thereafter, Player A realized that Player B had overstepped the time limit at least one move before the checkmate. Player A claimed a win on time, while Player B claimed a win on checkmate. Who is correct in your opinion?

You said the checkmate stands. However, the checkmate needs to be a legal move, and it is not legal to move before one's opponent has hit the clock, right? Player A could have reached over to hit the clock, and in doing so noticed the flag fall, and stopped the clock without pressing it to call the flag fall. Thus, it would seem to me, the checkmate is illegal and the flag fall should be allowed. Respectfully, **Dave Ellinger (USA)**

Answer Let me begin by referring to Article B7 of the Laws of Chess:

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 the flag is considered to have fallen only when the player claims it, irrespective of when the actual flag fall occurred. If a player claims a flag fall after his king is checkmated, he is simply too late, because the game is already over. But please be aware that what I wrote only applies to Rapid and Blitz games.

As to what constitutes a legal move, in my opinion, a move is legal if all relevant requirements of Article 3: "The moves of the pieces" are fulfilled. And apparently there is no question about the legality of the checkmating move.

Your question is in fact: Can one make a move before the opponent has stopped his clock and started the opponent's clock?

To answer this I refer to Article 6.8.a:

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)

Although it is not articulated clearly, it is generally accepted that based on this Article the opponent has the right to make his move before the player has stopped his clock. However, the player still has the right to stop his own clock and to start the opponent's clock, even after the opponent has made his move.

Question Dear Geurt, can you help me with these questions?

- 1) Aren't Articles 6.15 and 12.2.a contradictory?
- 2) Can an arbiter, who is also playing in an event, stop his clock when he has to rule on another game? Yours sincerely, **Ladislav Ester (Czech Republic)**

Answer You refer to the following Articles:

6.15: Screens, monitors, or demonstration boards showing the current position on the chessboard, the moves and the number of moves made, and clocks which also show the number of moves, are allowed in the playing hall. However, the player may not make a claim relying solely on information shown in this manner.

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

First of all, demonstration boards that are visible to the players have always been allowed in the playing hall. You may recall pictures from the World Championship Matches in Moscow that depict enormous demonstration boards in the background. Also, during the Kasparov – Karpov and subsequent matches (with the exception of Kramnik – Topalov), monitors were located in

the restrooms of the players. Thus, they were accepted. The demonstration boards and monitors show only the actual positions and sometimes the clock times. Article 6.15 deals with what has already occurred during the game and simply states that a player may not make a claim based on what is displayed on these monitors.

Article 12.2.a refers to what could possibly occur in a game. It forbids consultation with a computer, or analyzing the game on another board, or making notes that can help a player when contemplating the next moves, et cetera.

As far as I can see, there is no contradiction between these two Articles.

2) Nothing about this is written in the Laws of Chess, but it is clear that a combination player/arbitrator is not desirable. In my opinion, to stop the clocks as a player, when the player has to act as an arbitrator, is impossible. A player may stop the clock when he needs the arbitrator's assistance, but not for another "job."

Question Dear Mr. Gijssen, the FIDE rules on tie-break systems state in the appendix on handling of unplayed games:

For tiebreak purposes, the result shall be counted as a draw against the player himself.

The normal Swiss tournament programs handle this rule as follows:

If a player won a game by forfeit his score is decreased by half a point for the calculation of the Buchholz score of his opponents. (The score of the loser is increased by half a point.)

Most programs have a checkbox to activate this function. If the box is unchecked, they give rankings with "full points" without considering the state of unplayed games. Currently we have a protest in the Berlin Championship for Boys Under 12 concerning the last qualifying spot for the finals (fifth place). Two players have equal points, and if we apply the above-mentioned FIDE rule, one player has an advantage of a half point in Buchholz. By not applying the rule, both players have the same Buchholz score, and the other player has a small advantage in Buchholz-Sum on the next level of tiebreak. The announcement of the championship only states the "Buchholz" and "Buchholz-Sum" as tiebreakers in that order. The tournament director believes that this implies the use of the complete FIDE rules. Unfortunately, the organizers did not check the box for this correct calculation. So the published rankings were wrong. The correction was made immediately after the last round, before the award ceremony.

I have the following questions:

- 1) Do you think it should be the normal procedure to apply this FIDE rule from the appendix in a Swiss System without further notice?
- 2) Do you think organizers have to announce whether they do so or not?
- 3) Do you think it is important that rankings during the tournament are published based on settings other than the final table? I look forward to your opinion. Many thanks in advance. **Thomas Binder (Germany)**

Answer 1) Yes, in my opinion if an organizer applies the FIDE regulations, he does not have to specify anything. It only needs to be announced in advance if FIDE regulations will not be applied.

2) I answered this above.

3) Everyone knows that Buchholz scores during the tournament have no meaning. So the final standings should be calculated according to the rules published in the FIDE regulations. This means that a forfeit should be calculated as a draw against the player himself.

Question Hello Geurt, I recently lost a game on time with king + two bishops vs. king + bishop. There was no arbitrator present. The moves were not being recorded when I offered a draw prior to capturing the last pawn. My opponent ignored the offer and continued to Blitzkrieg. After move 93, the position was as follows:

