



COLUMNISTS

An Arbiter's Notebook

Geurt Gijssen



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The Arbiter is My Opponent's Mother

**Question** Dear Mr. Gijssen, after the recent Dubai open, in which an Iranian player was caught receiving assistance via SMS on his cell phone, I sincerely hope that the next FIDE congress will address the topic of cheating with phone cells and other devices. The credibility of all tournaments is at stake; strong measures should be taken to prevent fraud with computers! I suggest:

- a) if a player reports that their opponent is frequently absent from the tournament room without good reason, the arbiter should verify this fact and if necessary inspect whether the player has any hidden electronic devices on his person or possessions, etc.
- b) if a player refuses to comply, the arbiter may immediately declare the game lost for the player or perhaps call the police to search for evidence of fraud.

Thanks for your attention. Best regards, **Alberto Miatello (Italy)**

**Answer** I agree that these issues should be discussed during the next FIDE Congress. However, I am always wary of issuing new rules based on a specific incident. The danger is that these new rules will be overly zealous. A few days ago I spoke with a Dutch grandmaster, who told me to quit the chess scene because of this kind of cheating. Nevertheless, in my opinion we should not do as you suggest. For one, the police have more important things to do. We should revise the Laws of Chess in Dresden, but it must be done with deft precision.

**Question** Hi, Consider the following case: after shaking hands, the game starts and White plays 1.e4. Then before the black player moves, he tries to "correct the position of his pieces" (without saying *J'adoube*). He first touches the f-pawn, and later tries to play 1...c5. If White calls the arbiter, is Black obligated to move the f-pawn? **Giachos Gerasimos (Greece)**

**Answer** It is accepted that players may adjust their pieces without saying *J'adoube* before they make their first move. I do not know of any case where a complaint was made in this situation. Yet, if I remember correctly, Kasparov once became annoyed with Ivanchuk for very loudly saying *J'adoube* before adjusting the pieces.

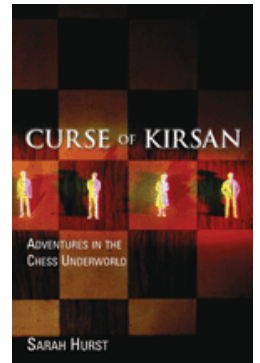
**Question** Dear Mr. Gijssen, in your [February 2008](#) and [May 2008](#) columns you advised the following sequence of actions for players that wish to claim a draw based on triple repetition of position or the 50-move rule:

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

In February you wrote that "it is dangerous to begin with [the last step] because it is forbidden to record the move before making it." However, this is incorrect. Article 8.1 indicates a clear exception:

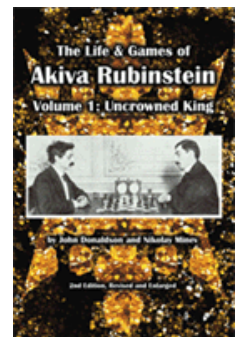
*It is forbidden to write the moves in advance, unless the player is claiming a draw according to Article 9.2 or 9.3.*

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Thus, I think that the correct sequence of actions is:

- write the intended move based on Article 9.2.a or Article 9.3.a;
- immediately stop the clocks (Article 9.5);
- summon the arbiter (again 9.2.a or 9.3.a).

To avoid any misunderstandings a player should inform his opponent about his actions. Articles 9.2.a and 9.3.a should be modified to include this “declaration of intention.” Best regards. **Eugenio Davolio (Italy)**

**Answer** If we change the Laws as you suggest, the problem is probably solved.

**Question** Dear Mr. Gijssen, I have one comment and one question.

1) In your [April 2008](#) column you were asked about an “incomplete castling” (Ke1-g1) and whether a player could free himself of the obligation to castle by pressing his clock and thus be able to only move the king. I note that this controversy could be avoided by changing the word “position” to “situation” in Article 7.4.a.:

*If during a game it is found that an illegal move.... has been completed, the position immediately before the irregularity shall be reinstated. .... Article 4.3 applies to the move replacing the illegal move.*

2) In regards to the handshake incident between Cheparinov and Short, how is it possible that GM Short was able to “fool” the chief arbiter of Wijk aan Zee B-group? Best Regards, **Tuomo Niemelä (Finland)**

**Answer** I received quite a few proposals for revising the Laws of Chess in this manner. I will bring it to the attention of the Rules and Tournament Regulations Committee. I looked again at Article 4.6 and I refer only to what should happen if White played Ke1-g1:

*When, as a legal move or part of a legal move, a piece has been released on a square, it cannot then be moved to another square. The move is considered to have been made when all the relevant requirements of Article 3 have been fulfilled in the case of castling, when the player has released the king from his hand, the move is not yet made, but the player no longer has the right to make any move other than castling on that side, if this is legal...*

This means that if Ke1-h1 (or Ke1-b1) is played, then it is an illegal move. But if Ke1-g1 is played, the player may only castle on that side, if it is legal. I see no other option: the position after Ke1-g1 should be reinstated on the board and the player has to place the rook from h1 to f1.

Regarding your second question, in my opinion, Mr. Short was apparently well prepared and knew exactly what was decided by the FIDE Presidential Board. His opponent was also well prepared. It seems to me that the arbiter did not know of the Board’s decision and did not know how to handle the situation. However, there is another interesting question: the Board decided that this rule should be applied to FIDE events. But what are FIDE events? Are they only tournaments organized by or on behalf of FIDE, e.g. Olympiads, World Championships etc.? Or are all FIDE-rated tournaments included? It is not clear to me.

**Question** Mr. Gijssen, A student of mine recently lost a game in a qualifying round to represent Taiwan at the World Juniors. He claims that during the game he clearly said “adjust,” then adjusted his knight and moved his queen (which was under attack). Whereupon his opponent called the arbiter, who judged that my student did not say it loudly enough for his opponent to hear. My student was forced to move his knight, and so lost the game. However, the arbiter was his opponent’s mother! It is clear that she should not have been in this position, but I’m

curious as to how you think a completely objective arbiter should handle the case. For what it's worth, other nearby students stated that they heard him say "adjust," but, from what I understand, the arbiter is not permitted to listen to bystanders. Thanks for any information you can pass on! Best,  
**Andrew Hobbs (Taiwan)**

**Answer** When two players have different opinions about what did or did not happen, the arbiter is always in a difficult position. At least one player will feel badly treated by the arbiter's decision. Nevertheless, the arbiter must make a decision.

In such situations the arbiter should take all actions necessary to discover the truth. In this case it is to listen to witnesses that were present. The problem is that the arbiter does not know whether they are neutral bystanders. Still, I would have listened to them and acted accordingly.

By the way, it is irrelevant that the arbiter was the player's mother, although it was probably preferable for her to leave the case to a colleague.

**Question** Mr. Gijssen, the following incident occurred on board two in a recent national junior championship event. White played 9.g5-g6. Black responded with ...f7-f5, threatening White's queen, and White then played 10.g6xf7 en passant. Black immediately claimed that White made an illegal move and added two minutes to his own clock. Instead of playing his g-pawn (gxf7 was legal), White moved his queen.

A few moves later, Black summoned the arbiter and claimed a touch-move violation. The arbiter ruled that since the violation occurred within the last ten moves, the position should be restored to where the violation took place. White was forced to move his g-pawn, whereupon he resigned and signed the scoresheets. He then asked the arbiter if he could appeal.

The arbiter brought the matter to the chief arbiter, who said that there was no such rule, and he ruled that play could continue (either from the point where Black claimed the touch-move or move 10 with White not obligated to move his g-pawn, I'm unsure). Black later blundered a piece and lost, but then his father and coach appealed the decision of the arbiters and was awarded a half point, while White still received a full point.

I believe that anything that happens after White has resigned is irrelevant, since his resignation ends the game and he has no grounds for appeal. Others have said that since his resignation was based on an incorrect arbiter ruling, everything after that is subject to review. Your comments, please. **Alex Relyea (USA)**

**Answer** Some Articles of the Laws of Chess are relevant for this case:

*7.4 a. If during a game it is found that an illegal move, has been completed, (...) Article 4.3 applies to the move replacing the illegal move. The game shall then continue from this reinstated position.*

*7.4 b. After the action taken under Article 7.4(a), for the first two illegal moves by a player the arbiter shall give two minutes extra time to his opponent in each instance; for a third illegal move by the same player, the arbiter shall declare the game lost by this player.*

*4.3 a. Except as provided in Article 4.2, if the player having the move deliberately touches on the chessboard one or more of his own pieces, he must move the first piece touched that can be moved.*

*4.7. 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.*

*5.1 b. The game is won by the player whose opponent declares he*

*resigns. This immediately ends the game.*

The player of the black pieces claimed correctly that the player of the white pieces made an illegal move. The player of the white pieces was then obligated to move his g-pawn provided that a legal move was available. Yet he apparently played something else. The player of the black pieces did not protest and the game continued. The consequence is that Black's claim a few moves later that White had to move the pawn instead of the queen is not valid (See Article 4.7), and the arbiter should reject the claim. By the way, it is strange that the opponent himself added two minutes to his own time instead of the arbiter. Too many disturbing elements were part of this game.

According to Article 5.1 b, the game finished as soon as White resigned. But, as you mentioned, his resignation was based on the incorrect decision of the arbiter. I have the feeling that White was very emotional when he decided to resign. However, I agree that after signing the scoresheets to confirm the result, everything is irrelevant.

Thus, in my opinion, the result stands: White resigned and signed the scoresheets. In the future we may see players refuse to sign the scoresheets in order to retain the possibility of an appeal. The whole matter of appeals should be discussed in Dresden. There is a proposal that appeals should be possible even after signing the scoresheets. Finally, to declare the result of the game 1-½ is very unusual.

**Question** Dear Geurt, recently we had the following incident at our club competition: both players were in severe time trouble before the first time control (40 moves in 1½ hours, plus 30 minutes KO), when the flag of Player B fell around move 38. The arbiter was recording the moves and saw that the flag had fallen. He told the assistant arbiter (who also noticed the flag fall) that he was not sure whether it was appropriate to say anything, because they were both playing in the same tournament. Player A, unfamiliar with the electronic clock (only recently introduced in our club), proposed a draw to Player B, who gladly accepted it. They shook hands, both happy with the draw. But now the arbiter said: "Player B's flag fell before completing the 40th move, so I declare Player A the winner!" What is more important, the end of the game by agreement between the players, or the end of the game because of the fallen flag as seen by the arbiter? Kind regards, **Willem Hajenius (Belgium)**

**Answer** The following Articles of the Laws of Chess are relevant:

*Article 5.2 c. The game is drawn upon agreement between the two players during the game. This immediately ends the game. (See Article 9.1)*

*Article 6.9 A flag is considered to have fallen when the arbiter observes the fact or when either player has made a valid claim to that effect.*

*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 scoresheets, using the arbiter's or the opponent's scoresheet.*

*Article 9.1 a A player wishing to offer a draw shall do so after having made a move on the chessboard and before stopping his clock and starting the opponent's clock. An offer at any other time during play is still valid, but Article 12.6 must be considered. No conditions can be attached to the offer. In both cases the offer cannot be withdrawn and remains valid until the opponent accepts it, rejects it orally, rejects it by touching a piece with the intention of moving or capturing it, or the game is concluded in some other way.*

*Article 13.6 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. The arbiter shall refrain from informing a player that his opponent has completed a move or that the player has not pressed his clock.*

There is no dispute about the order of events: first there was a flag fall, which was noticed by the arbiter, then the game continued and there was a draw agreement. Article 13.6 explicitly states that the arbiter had to intervene “when at least one flag has fallen.” Therefore, the game must be declared lost for the player who did not complete the required number of moves. I would also take into consideration the fact that the players were unfamiliar with the DGT clock. If they had played with an analogue clock, the flag fall would have been easier to see. One of the duties of an arbiter is to protect the rights of the players. Nevertheless, the question remains: is the draw agreement valid? In my opinion it is not. The game finished the moment one of the players overstepped the time limit.

**Question** Mr. Gijssen, the website of the Dutch Chess Federation has a Microsoft Word file containing detailed instructions for conducting a Swiss System tournament using Buchholz points as the basis in classification. Is there an English translation available? I believe I understand the rules, but would like to confirm my understanding by seeing the narrative in English. I am interested because I believe you have a different method of handling floats in comparison to the Burstein method. Thank you for your help. **Vincent Jackson (USA)**

**Answer** You are correct that how to handle the floats is one of the main differences between the Burstein system and the Dutch system based on Buchholz. (If a score is uneven, one player will be moved to the lower score group. He is called a “down floater.”) Here is an example: suppose there are seven players in a score group who all have the same score. We put these players in order of their Buchholz score.

The Burstein system starts to look for an opponent for Player #1 (in principle against the lowest ranked player). Then the system looks for an opponent for #2, and so on. With seven players, three pairings are possible in principle. The player who remains unpaired floats down, this means he will be added to the next score group.

In the Dutch system, #1 will float down, provided an opponent is available in the next score group. Then the Dutch system tries to make three pairings among the remaining six players. If there is no opponent available in the next score group for #1, then #2 will float down and we follow the same procedure.

The reason that #1 floats down in first instance is that he has the highest Buchholz score, which means that he also had the strongest opponents until this round. Therefore, he “deserves” to receive a “weaker” opponent than the other players in his score group.

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Have a question for Geurt Gijssen? Perhaps he will reply in his next **ChessCafe.com** column. Please include your name and country of residence.

***Yes, I have a question for Geurt!***

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