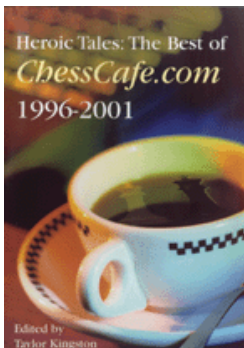




COLUMNISTS

*An Arbiter's Notebook*

Geurt Gijssen



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When is a Move "Made"?

**Question** Dear Geurt, last [month](#) you remarked about Kasparov being annoyed with Ivanchuk for saying *j'adoube*. This brought back pleasant memories of the Linares tournament of 1997. Ivanchuk was doing badly, whereas Kasparov was doing great. However, in their personal encounter Ivanchuk triumphed. That game started with an "incident" that almost made me fall off my chair. After Ivanchuk had made his first move, Kasparov started to adjust his pieces saying "*j'adoube*." To which Ivanchuk replied enthusiastically "*S'il vous plait!*" and turned to the audience with a highly satisfied smile. Kasparov wasn't too pleased with Ivanchuk's retort, as could easily be read from the expression on his face. Was this the game you were referring to? With best wishes, **Dirk Jan ten Geuzendam (The Netherlands)**

**Answer** You are right. This was the incident I had in mind, but apparently I did not remember the exact details.

**Question** Dear Geurt, I have a question in regards to Quick Play finishes. Article 10.2 states,

*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. 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.*

What if a player holds an absolute advantage and can win even with the most unskilled play, but he doesn't have enough time to execute his moves? In this case, is he able to claim the draw? Yet it's not really a drawn game, one player is winning. Or should it be a draw because one side cannot win and the opponent doesn't have enough time.

So can a player claim a draw during a Quick Play finish even though he has a winning position, but doesn't have enough time to finish it? Regards, **Edward Huang (New Zealand)**

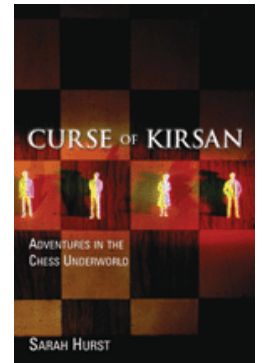
**Answer** To be honest, I do not have much experience with claims based on Article 10.2, because nowadays the time control during the last phase of a tournament game is almost always played with an increment. This is good in my opinion. Let us consider Article 10.2 in its entirety:

*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.*

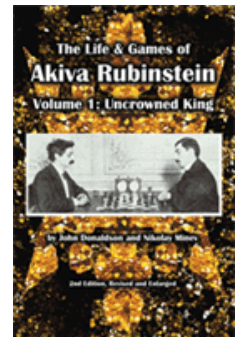
b. *If the arbiter postpones his decision, the opponent may be awarded two extra minutes and the game shall continue in the presence of an arbiter, if possible. The arbiter shall declare the final result later in the game or after a flag has fallen. He shall declare the game drawn if he agrees that*

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*the final position cannot be won by normal means, or that the opponent was not making sufficient attempts to win by normal means.*

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

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

When you read this carefully, you will see that the position on the board at the time of the claim is not the most essential element. Apparently, the conduct of the claimant's opponent is very important. Is he really making an effort to win the game by normal means? Or does he make the moves with one eye on the board and the other on the clock, especially the opponent's clock?

It is almost impossible for an arbiter to make a decision if he cannot observe the progress of the game. He can only declare the draw immediately if the opponent has just a king. But in this situation the player who is short of time can continue the game, because the opponent can never checkmate the player's king. Therefore, even after a flag fall, the game is draw.

The best the arbiter can do is to postpone his decision and watch the continuation of the game. Based on his observations, he then makes a decision. If the player waits until he has just seconds left on the clock before making a claim, then the arbiter can really only count the flag fall.

**Question** Dear Mr. Gijssen, I had the white pieces in a blitz game and when the arbiter called to start the game I accidentally started Black's clock. Black then, as a reflex, moved his pawn to d5 before I had moved. I found the situation quite funny, and my opponent became pretty nervous. But I just told him to take back his move, and I started the game with the white pieces. However, could I have claimed victory based on the article that says a blitz game is lost when an incorrect move is made by the opponent? Regards, **Bjorn Salvesen (Norway)**

**Answer** In my opinion you acted illegally when you started Black's clock. I can imagine that an inexperienced player would automatically make a move because his clock is running. Still, there is no reason for a claim in this situation. The easiest solution is to stop the clocks, reset the starting times, and begin the game anew.

**Question** Dear Mr Geurt Gijssen, Article 12.2b states, "If a player's mobile phone rings in the playing venue during play, that player shall lose the game." What happens if

1. The mobile phone vibrates but does not ring, is it still considered a "ring" and therefore the player loses the game?
2. The mobile phone rings while the player is on the way to bathroom, does the player lose the game? What is the definition of "playing venue"?
3. The position on the board is stalemate. What is the result if a stalemate occurs just prior to the mobile ringing?
4. The mobile rings just prior to the start of the round, before the clocks have been started? What is the definition of "during play"?
5. Last but not least, isn't it possible for one player to sabotage another, say, in the last round of a weekend tournament when the stakes are high, by placing a cheap throw-away phone in the opponent's jacket and then calling the number. Then, when the opponent's phone rings, a claim is made because of the ringing mobile?

Best regards, **Nor Ilhamuddin (Malaysia)**

**Answer** I mentioned last month that this Article will likely be revised, and if it is, it needs to be done very carefully. Nevertheless, I will answer

your questions based on the current rules, as the Article is valid until July 1, 2009. Let me refer to Article 12.2b:

*It is strictly forbidden to bring mobile phones or other electronic means of communication, not authorised 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.*

1. These days, the normal procedure is for the arbiter to announce that the players should switch off their mobiles. This means he authorises the players to have a mobile with them, provided it is completely switched off. A vibrating mobile is not switched off. Therefore, the arbiter should declare the game lost for the offending player.

2. The playing venue is defined in Article 12.5:

*The playing venue is defined as the playing area, rest rooms, refreshment area, area set aside for smoking and other places as designated by the arbiter.*

Given this definition it is clear that the arbiter should act in the same way as a ringing phone in the playing area.

3. The game is over the moment the stalemate position is on the board; anything that happens afterwards is irrelevant. So the stalemate stands.

4. I refer to Article 6.5 of the Laws of Chess:

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

Thus, if the clocks have not been started, there is no need for the arbiter to take action, except to tell the player to switch off his phone.

5. This, of course, is a very dirty trick. If the arbiter had no evidence of entrapment, then he has no choice but to declare the game lost for the player with the ringing mobile. Even if it were clear as to what happened, the arbiter could only declare the game lost and expel the cheating player from the tournament. He should also report the incident to the appeals committee, governing federations, and FIDE. These bodies could then institute a more severe penalty, for instance, a ban from entering any tournament for several years.

**Question** The rules of Blitz state that if one makes an illegal move, he loses the game. However, let's say Player A makes a legal move, but then accidentally knocks a piece over while moving his hand to push the clock, and then actually does push the clock to start Player B's clock, before restoring the board to its original position. Can Player B claim a win based on this? Can Player B claim some type of clock penalty for this? Thanks, **Robin Grochowski (USA)**

**Answer** The move Player A made is not illegal. Therefore, we do not apply the rule for illegal moves. Instead, Article 7.3 of the Laws of Chess should be applied:

*If a player displaces one or more pieces, he shall re-establish the correct position on his own time. If necessary, either the player or his opponent shall stop the clocks and ask for the arbiter's assistance. The arbiter may penalise the player who displaced the pieces*

This Article is valid for Rapid and Blitz chess. And as you can see, the arbiter can penalize the offending player, for instance, by awarding extra time to the opponent. If this happens several times during a game and the arbiter believes it is being done on purpose, he can even declare the game lost.

**Question** I'm sure you will receive many questions regarding the disputed U.S. Women's Championship, and I would like to ask two questions about moving the piece and then pressing the clock.

1. Is the scenario outlined below legal on Player's B part?

- Player A picks up piece.
- Player B picks up piece.
- Player A releases piece.
- Player B releases piece.

In other words, can Player B begin determining his/her move prior to Player A finishing the determination of his/her move? If it is illegal, what is the penalty?

2. Here is a scenario that you have claimed is legal:

- Player X moves piece.
- Player Y moves piece.
- Player X presses clock (since a player must be allowed to press his/her clock).
- Player Y presses clock.

3. Imagine this same scenario and notice how deliberate manipulation of the rules can disadvantage a player:

- Player X moves piece.
- Player Y moves piece.
- Player X waits until Player Y gets up from the board.
- Player Y leaves the board (for a walk, rest room, etc).
- Player X presses clock (since a player must be allowed to press his/her clock).

In such a case, Player Y's clock is running, while it is Player X's turn. If Player Y comes back to the board, there is a good chance that confusion will result.

It would be a good idea to stipulate that you must press your clock immediately after you move. Then such manipulation of the rules would be illegal? Thanks. **Rob Bernard (USA)**

**Answer** First, let me again define "making a move." It means to move a piece from one square to another and to release the piece on the second square. "Completing a move" means that the player has made a move (see previous definition), has stopped his own clock and started the opponent's clock. As I mentioned before, my interpretation is that after a player has **made a move**, the opponent can make his and then the first player still has the right to press his clock. This means,

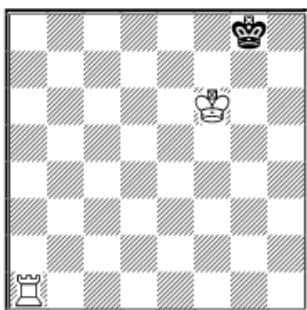
1. Player B acts incorrectly and it is the arbiter who decides the penalty, because a player may start to make his move after the opponent has made his move

2. You are right.

3. I do not see any illegality. If Player Y knows the rules, then he is aware that Player X still had the right to press the clock. By the way, Player Y has the same possibility for manipulation.

I am not sure about instituting a rule that the player who made his move has to complete it immediately. What is "immediately"? There are already proposals to delete this word from certain Articles in the Laws of Chess, and this is probably correct. One thing is sure, we recently had some problems in tournaments, and these will be discussed in Dresden.

**Question** Dear Geurt, I would like to comment on the recent discussion about making a move before the opponent has pressed the clock. In my view, this should be illegal and in fact, until I saw your comments, I assumed it was illegal. I believe that the Laws of Chess state that the players move alternately. I think the natural meaning of this is clear; White makes a move, then Black makes a move, then White again, and so on. It seems perverse to interpret this as meaning that both sides may execute a move at the same time. According to your interpretation (if I have understood it correctly), the following is legal: we have the position



White plays Ra8+ and then, before Black has even touched his king, White plays Ra8-b8 on the board (without touching the clock). Black then plays ... Kg8-h7, presses his clock and then White, without touching a piece, presses his clock. The chaos that this type of behaviour might cause with virtually all the Laws of Chess (suppose Black plays a move that makes White's pre-executed move illegal, what about draw offers and

claims of repetition, etc.). I can't believe that this is really intended. Best wishes, **John Nunn (UK)**

**Answer** Dear John, I believe I clarified my view on this matter in my answer to the previous question. The case you mention is illegal. To start a move before the other has made his move is illegal. Finally, let me refer to Article 1.1 of the Laws of Chess:

*The game of chess is played between two opponents who move their pieces alternately on a square board called a 'chessboard'. The player with the white pieces commences the game. A player is said to 'have the move', when his opponent's move has been 'made'.*

**Question** Dear Mr. Gijssen, do you know where I might find a comprehensive game file that includes as many "theoretically drawn" positions as possible in classical time controls? Thanks, **Jovan Petronic (Serbia)**

**Answer** As far as I know, such a file does not exist. There are some programs or tablebases that indicate the outcome of a game by best play from both sides, and for sure you know them even better than I do. But it would go too far, in my opinion, if, for instance, arbiters had to consult one of these programs whenever a player claimed a draw according to Article 10.2.

**Question** Geurt, You were the chief arbiter for Kasparov – Karpov 1990, and for [Kramnik – Topalov 2006](#). What ever happened to the chess sets, boards and clocks that were used in these matches? I would think the tournament organizers or sponsors would want a new identical set used for every game. Afterward each set would be boxed and carefully labeled, as each set would have historic value, and market value beyond its initial cost. Instead, it seems that one set is used for all games in the match, correct? Thanks, **Gene Milener (USA)**

**Answer** Dear Gene, I do not know what boards were used before 1987. But since then electronic boards have been used for the world championship matches. In 1987, the equipment was owned by Kevin O'Connell and he took it immediately after the last game. Only the table, as far as know, is still in Seville.

In 1990, the situation was the same. If I remember correctly, Kevin O'Connell was again in charge for the New York part of the match. For the second half in Lyon, the electronic board and pieces were owned by Jean-Paul Touzé.

The 1996 match between Karpov and Kamsky was played on an electronic board owned by FIDE. Only the table remained in Elista and this was also used for the Kramnik – Topalov match in 2006.

Before the start of this match, I was shown a board and pieces that were used during the Olympiad in Elista 1998. I did not like them and asked the Executive Director of the Russian Chess Federation, Mr. Alexander Bakh, who is also the organizer of the Aeroflot Festival, to bring the pieces used in this tournament to Elista. He did so, and they were returned to Moscow after the match.

The time when nice boards and pieces from world championship matches were put on display is over. If you want to see such a set, you should go to the chess club in Buenos Aires, where they still have the set used in the Alekhine – Capablanca, 1927 match.

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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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