



COLUMNISTS

An Arbiter's Notebook

Geurt Gijssen



CHESSTHEATRE

Play through and download the games from [ChessCafe.com](#) in the [DGT Game Viewer](#).

[The Complete DGT Product Line](#)

Stop the Clock!

Question Dear Mr. Geurt Gijssen, I have some questions regarding a dispute during a recent tournament. I played in the Open section of a five-round Swiss System, with a time control of 40/75, SD/30 and a time delay of five seconds from the first move.

In the game we used my opponent's digital clock, which did not count the moves and which was only set for the first time control. My opponent stopped the clocks when he had less than one minute and I had less than four minutes to bring a director to witness the end of the first period. I complained that there were no valid grounds to stop the clocks, but did not insist on it and continued the game.

He stopped the clocks again when he had only 9 seconds left and I had over 3 minutes. He complained to the director that he had made 40 moves and had the right to an additional 30 minutes. I objected that he did not make 40 moves. Another director joined and they requested that I prove I made 40 moves. I objected that I neither stopped the clocks nor made any complaints and by asking me to do that instead of him they were favoring him. Additionally, the director who witnessed the end of the game stated that the opponent had made five or six moves since he had been watching.

I objected that it was not the job of a director to count a player's moves and thereby assist one of the players instead of remaining neutral. The directors stated that they had a right to do it. I disagreed. Another player from the Open section joined the discussion and convinced the directors that the onus was on my opponent to prove he had made 40 moves, since he was the one that stopped the clocks. They accepted this and gave my opponent ten minutes to prove it.

My opponent asked for my score sheet to recover the game moves, and I rejected it. The directors then confiscated my score sheet and gave it to my opponent. I wrote the moves until number 34 and my opponent until number 29. Both directors and my opponent reconstructed the game moves using my score sheet. I objected that they should not be helping him and they responded that they had a right to do so.

After about ten minutes, I objected that my opponent was unsuccessful in proving that he made 40 moves. The directors stated that there was nothing in the rules about this situation and brought three players from the reserve section to form an appeals committee. They ruled that my opponent had to make one more move to reach move 40 and get an additional 30 minutes.

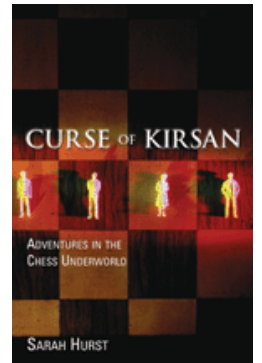
Question 1 Can players stop the clocks at any time (as my opponent stated) or do they need to have valid grounds to do so. Is stopping the clocks in time trouble to ask the TD to witness the game in accordance with chess rules?

Question 2 Can the TD count a player's moves to prove that he played 40 moves?

Question 3 Can the TD help a player reconstruct the game moves?

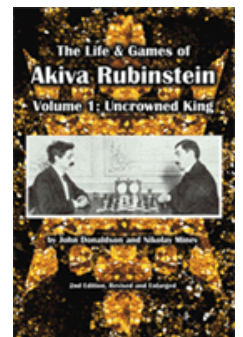
Question 4 When the TD rules that a player has to prove that he made 40

Check out these bestselling titles from [USCFSales.com](#):



[Curse of Kirsan](#) by Sarah Hurst

Read an excerpt [here](#).



[The Life & Games of Akiva Rubinstein](#) by John Donaldson & Nikolay Mineev



[Deluxe Tournament Scorebook](#)

moves, and the player is unable to do so, what is the sanction?

Question 5 Are there rules that handle this situation?

Question 6 Did the TDs make the right decisions?

Question 7 Do you have a comment on this dispute?

Thanks. **Mirko Zeljko (USA)**

Answer You wrote, "My opponent stopped the clocks when he had less than one minute and I had less than four minutes to bring a director to witness the end of the first period." In my opinion, the end of a period is marked in two ways:

1. When using the move counter, the moment that the time for the next period is added.
2. When not using the move counter, the moment that the flag falls and time for the next period is added.

Thus, it is completely unclear to me why he stopped the clocks at this moment.

Answer 1 Article 6.13 (b and d) explains when a player may stop the clocks:

b. A player may stop the clocks only in order to seek the arbiter's assistance, for instance when promotion has taken place and the piece required is not available.

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.

As you can see, the player must have a good reason for it. In my opinion, the only reason to stop the clocks was to reset them for the second period. It was clear that nobody knew how many moves were made, so one should wait until a flag had fallen.

Answer 2 An arbiter may count the moves, and even write the moves, but he should not inform the players about the number of completed moves. It is only after a flag fall that he must stop the clocks and inform the players about the number of moves.

Answer 3 The arbiter may assist the player in finding the missing moves, but only after a flag fall.

Answer 4 In the FIDE Laws of Chess such a requirement is not mentioned. According to the rules of the USCF, a player may only claim when he has a complete score sheet.

Answer 5 See my previous answer.

Answer 6-7 The arbiters should not intervene before a flag fall. Your opponent stopped the clocks twice without a valid reason, and the arbiter failed to punish him.

Question Dear Sir, As per the FIDE Swiss System, "pairing begins with the highest score-group and proceeds downward until just before the Median Score-group, then continues with the lowest score-group and proceeds upwards to the *Median Score-Group which is paired last* (my emphasis)." I do not understand the reason for the Median Score-Group being paired last. Thank you. **Anand Jain (India)**

Answer The Median score group is the one to which the player in the middle of the ranking belongs. The practice of pairing the Median group last is a relict from when we only had manual pairings. The logical way is to start at the top, go downwards, and then pair the last score group. But it often became problematic to make a full pairing of the last score group. The arbiter had to go back to a previous score group to find opponents for some of the players in the last score group. So he had to pair the penultimate score group and the last score group twice.

Following the procedure outlined in your question was designed to solve this problem. Thus, when the arbiter pairs the last score group starting from the bottom, it is easy to see which players can be paired. The unpaired players “float up” to the penultimate score group. Since the Median group generally does not create too many problems, this is an easier formula to follow.

Question Dear Geurt, in my chess club the number of participants differs from day to day, but the number of rounds per event is fixed, and some events are spread out across many days. For instance, our five round rapid championships sometimes only has eight players. What are the rules to determine the number of rounds per amount of players? I could not find this on the FIDE website. With best regards, **Kris Van Quickenborne (Belgium)**

Answer In the past we applied a formula invented by Mr. Model:

$$R = (P + 7 \times Q) : 5$$

R is the number of rounds, P is the number of participants, and Q is the number of participants who can qualify for another tournament or the number of participants who will receive a prize.

This formula can be applied in several ways:

- Example 1: Suppose there are 20 participants and 3 will receive a prize. In this case the number of rounds is $(20 + 7 \times 3) : 5 \rightarrow (20 + 21) : 5 = 8$.
- Example 2: There is time to play 9 rounds, there are 4 prizes. How many participants should take part? $9 = (P + 7 \times 4) : 5 \rightarrow 45 = P + 28 \rightarrow P = 17$
- Example 3: There are 16 participants and there is time for 12 rounds. How many places at the top are more or less reliable? $12 = (16 + 7 \times Q) : 5 \rightarrow 60 = 16 + 7 \times Q \rightarrow 44 = 7 \times Q \rightarrow Q = 6$.

To pair eight players for five rounds, I suggest the following:

Make two groups of four players. Each group will need three rounds. In round four, #1 from group A will play # 2 from group B, and vice versa. The same system will be used for #3 and #4 of group A and B. In round five, the winners will play each other, as will the losers.

Question Hello, I agree with Alberto Miatello’s suggestion from [last month](#) about searches and computer cheating. Alas, it seems that a simple solution should be that organizers state both electronic and other equipment prohibitions in their initial tournament announcement. Secondly, the organizers can and should require tournament participants to sign a waiver concerning possible clothing searches before and after tournament rounds. This would be similar to the blood testing for amateur and professional athletes. If the waiver is not signed, participation in the tournament is blocked.

My question involves tournament participants using headphones during a game. Invariably, the participant is listening to music, but of course this is a presumption. All of my tournaments are in the U.S., and USCF rules mention nothing about the use of headphones during play. Would you

please indicate what FIDE states about headphone use in open tournaments? Thank you, **Michael Allard (USA)**

Answer If we have time in Dresden, I will discuss your suggestion. The FIDE rules do not mention anything about the use of headphones. Nevertheless, if a player uses a headphone in a tournament in which I am the arbiter, I will forbid it. The music can disturb the opponent or other players who are nearby. Also, and this is quite important, I cannot be sure that there is only music on the device.

Question Dear Mr. Gijssen, I have a question regarding writing down moves during time trouble. Suppose a player has stopped writing his moves because he has less than five minutes on his clock, but, as a result of a penalty for his opponent, gains extra time that gives him more than five minutes. Is he then obliged to start writing down the moves again, and, if so, does he also have to write down the moves he missed during the earlier time trouble? Thank you in advance. Kind regards, **René Renders (The Netherlands)**

Answer There is a similar case mentioned in Article 8.4:

If a player has less than five minutes left on his clock at some stage in a period and does not have additional time of 30 seconds or more added with each move, then he is not obliged to meet the requirements of Article 8.1. Immediately after one flag has fallen the player must update his scoresheet completely before moving a piece on the chessboard.

Relevant to your question are the words *at some stage*. The meaning is that a player does not have to write the moves in time trouble when there was a moment in the period that he had less than five minutes left, provided that the increment per move was less than 30 seconds. In my opinion, the case you mention should be treated the same way.

Question Dear Mr. Gijssen, I played a tournament in May 2007, but it was never sent for rating calculations until this year's October 2008 FIDE rating list. Can a tournament be considered for rating calculations even more than a year after it was conducted? If not, what can be done about it? Thank you very much for a very informative article. With regards, **Ashwin Jayaram (India)**

Answer In Chapter B01 of the *FIDE Handbook*, Article 1.96 states "reports sent in *more than six months* late will not be accepted for rating or title purposes." The first step in determining whether the tournament was rated is to contact the Rating Officer of your federation.

Question Dear Geurt, what is your opinion about people drinking alcoholic beverages in the playing area? Whenever I am in charge this is not a problem. I ask people not to do so because they will be setting a bad example to youngsters and nobody has ever disagreed. But, when I am playing, or not in charge, I sometimes even observe players drinking alcohol. I had been meaning to raise this for years. Doing so was occasioned by your response to the last question in your [August](#) column from Hadi Bakhshayesh. **Stewart Reuben (UK)**

Answer I agree with you that people who drink alcoholic beverages set a bad example, especially for young people. But, as a matter of fact, it is quite difficult to forbid it, unless these people drink too much. Once I had such a case and I decided to declare the game lost for the drunkard. Furthermore, I removed him from the playing venue and even brought him to his room. It is very difficult to give a general guideline, but, as long the drinking player is quiet and makes his moves in a normal manner, I do not see any reason to intervene.

Question Dear Mr. Gijssen, your answer [last month](#) to Question 1 from Mr. Hadi Bakhshayesh leaves me puzzled. A team captain constantly

looks at the position on the board of his players. No arbiter can forbid this. When a player asks the captain whether to accept a draw offer, he probably already knows the position on the board. If he is not sure, he can rightfully say: "Don't accept the draw offer," have a quick look before the player follows his instructions, and then again rightfully instruct the player to offer a draw, which the player will interpret as a new instruction to accept the draw offer after all. Of course no team captain will do so; it is common practice for them to have a quick look at the boards before advising the player. The arbiter can't look inside the head of the team captain to see whether he bases his advice on the match situation or on the situation on the board(s).

The present rule expects a kind of self control of team captains that is unrealistic. The phrase "based solely on the circumstances pertaining to the match" makes it an empty rule, in my opinion, at least in your interpretation. For the rest, there is no problem. Of course a team captain shouldn't say "play on, the first board player thinks your position is better," or anything like that (which, alas, is also common practice).

If the above phrase is interpreted in this way: "the answer should not contain other information than based solely on the circumstances pertaining to the match," there is no problem either. It is not entirely clear to me whether the phrase "He may say to a player, 'offer a draw', 'accept the draw', or 'resign the game'" is limitative or is meant as giving examples of what is allowed. Although in the last case you will have to allow advice such as "on the other boards we are worse, so play for a win, but don't take too many chances." If you accept chess as a team sport, this doesn't sound unreasonable to me. What is your opinion? **Frits Fritschy (The Netherlands)**

Answer In my previous answer I simply quoted the Tournament Regulations. In my opinion, the captain should not give any advice regarding any game of any player of his team. He should arrange coffee and tea and, if they request it, some food, but in no way should he talk about the game.

I never liked it when team captains intervened. I remember in the last round of the European team Championships in Plovdiv 1983 when the match USSR – Hungary was scheduled. The captains of the Hungarian and USSR team walked together from board to board and told their teams to make a draw. All the players obeyed, except Romanishin. As captain of the Dutch team, I was furious and protested, but the arbiters accepted the results.

There is another reason to reduce the role of the captains. Many times the captains are stronger players than the team members. Finally, I would like to mention that the phrases "offer a draw," "accept a draw," etc., are in fact the only advice a captain may give.

Question In the introduction to the Regulations for Swiss System Tournaments, it is stated that any prospective players not present when the first round draw takes place shall be excluded from the tournament as long as they do not arrive in time for the pairing of another round.

I run the Beverley Chess Club Championship, a Swiss tournament played over most of a year. I distributed the first round draw last weekend, but another member has since asked to play. Given the above, can he play in the second and subsequent rounds? Thank you in advance. **Christopher W. Fox (USA)**

Answer Personally, I never had problems when a player started from the second round or even later. In Swiss Tournaments it is very easy to arrange. The only question is what to do with the unplayed games of the previous round(s). If it is clear that there was some *force majeure* for the late arrival, I am ready to give a half point to the absent player. If he did not start in the first round because he did not register in time, then he has

to accept a zero for the non-played games.

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!](#)

© 2008 Geurt Gijssen. All Rights Reserved.

 [TOP OF PAGE](#)

 [HOME](#)

 [COLUMNS](#)

 [LINKS](#)

 [ARCHIVES](#)

 [ABOUT THE
CHESS CAFE](#)

[\[ChessCafe Home Page\]](#) [\[Book Review\]](#) [\[Columnists\]](#)
[\[Endgame Study\]](#) [\[The Skittles Room\]](#) [\[Archives\]](#)
[\[Links\]](#) [\[Online Bookstore\]](#) [\[About ChessCafe.com\]](#) [\[Contact Us\]](#)

© 2008 CyberCafes, LLC. All Rights Reserved.
"ChessCafe.com®" is a registered trademark of Russell Enterprises, Inc.