



COLUMNISTS

An Arbiter's Notebook

Geurt Gijssen



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Wil Haggenburg, R.I.P.

Last month Wil Haggenburg, one of the most active international chess arbiters in The Netherlands, passed away. There were only a few chess tournaments in which he did not act as an arbiter. He especially liked making pairings; he was a real virtuoso in this field. If participants withdrew from the tournament just before the start of a round, he was able to correct the situation in a very short time. He also gave courses for arbiters across the whole country and taught rules and pairings on each level. I had the pleasure to work with him in many tournaments, but my best memories are related to the discussions we had about Swiss Pairings System. The results of these discussions were made into a little booklet, and were accepted by FIDE to become known as the Dutch System. Wil died at the age of 68 years. May he rest in peace.



Wil Haggenburg

Question When does a player lose his right to move? During a game, when a player has completed his move, his opponent then has the right to move. But when does he lose it?

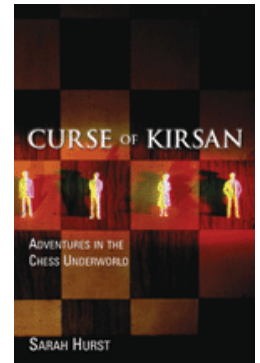
I was taught by Jacques Marceil, who used the *Chess Competitor's Handbook* by Bozidar Kazic. He thought that Kazic's judgment was always fair, and said that a game is composed of the following phases that are repeated until completion of the game:

- the player has the right to move,
- he makes the move,
- after completion of that move, his opponent has the right to move.

He used this example: when repeating a position for the third time a player must claim a draw while he has the right to move. If the player touches a piece before making the claim, then he cannot claim anything! This means that after touching a piece on the chessboard, the player no longer has the right to move. Thus, we can say that *the player loses his right to move upon touching a piece on the chessboard*.

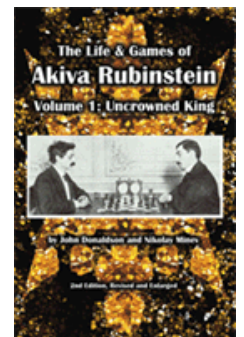
I have used this example when teaching young arbiters, but was recently informed that this is inaccurate as nothing is written in the rules. Nowadays, I'm upset that I told them something imprudent. What is your opinion on this point? **Christian Bernard (France)**

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Answer Dear Christian, let me begin by quoting Article 1.1:

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'.

After a player makes or completes a move (this is still a subject of discussion), the opponent has the right to make a move. In my opinion, "making a move" involves more than moving a piece from one square to another. It also means that the opponent has the possibility (or right) to make a claim. With this addition in mind, nothing has been changed. For instance, after making a move, a player loses the possibility (or right) to claim a draw.

I checked Kazic's *Handbook* and really nothing has been changed on this subject. I read in your letter some disappointment and I understand it. The way matters are discussed nowadays has changed and it is sometimes quite difficult for our generation to accept this.

Question Dear Mr. Gijssen, if a player is blind and needs an assistant, who is responsible for finding the assistant – the arbiter, the player himself or the tournament organizer? Thanks, **Christian De Vivo (Italy)**

Answer There are three Articles in the Laws of Chess dealing with an assistant for a handicapped player.

Article 6.8d: If a player is unable to use the clock, an assistant, who is acceptable to the arbiter, may be provided by the player to perform this operation. His clock shall be adjusted by the arbiter in an equitable way.

Article 8.1: If a player is unable to keep score, an assistant, who is acceptable to the arbiter, may be provided by the player to write the moves. His clock shall be adjusted by the arbiter in an equitable way.

Article F9: The visually handicapped player shall have the right to make use of an assistant who shall have any or all of the following duties:

- a. Make either player's move on the chessboard of the opponent.*
- b. Announce the moves of both players.*
- c. Keep the game score of the visually handicapped player and start his opponent's clock.*
- d. Inform the visually handicapped player only at his request of the number of moves completed and the time used up by both players.*
- e. Claim the game in cases where the time limit has been exceeded and inform the controller when the sighted player has touched one of his pieces.*
- f. Carry out the necessary formalities in case the game is adjourned. If the visually handicapped player does not make use of an assistant, the sighted player may make use of one who shall carry out the duties mentioned under point 9a and b.*

Only Article F9 applies to blind or visually handicapped players. Article 6.8d and 8.1 are applicable for all kinds of handicaps or restrictions; for instance, writing the moves or pressing the clock in case it is forbidden on religious grounds.

In my opinion, for cases dealing with Articles 6.8d and 9.1, the player must provide his own assistant. When I take into account all duties of the assistant under Article F9, it is clear that this assistant must be provided by the organizer, because he in fact acts as an assistant arbiter.

Question Dear Mr. Gijssen, what can be done about a player who abuses

the use of “j’adoube”? Say, the opponent complains and the arbiter intervenes according to Article 12.6. He asks the player not to overuse “j’adoube.” The player answers that he doesn’t see the pieces correctly because he has a problems with his eyes, and he invokes Article 4.2, since he is on move. What should the arbiter do? Thank you in advance.

Stéphane Escafre (Corsica)

Answer First let me quote the two Articles you mention:

12.6: It is forbidden to distract or annoy the opponent in any manner whatsoever. This includes unreasonable claims or unreasonable offers of a draw.

4.2: Provided that he first expresses his intention (for example by saying “j’adoube” or “I adjust”), the player having the move may adjust one or more pieces on their squares.

Even if a player adjusts the pieces on his “own” time, it can unintentionally distract the opponent if it occurs too often. Therefore, Article 12.6 is applicable. If it really is connected with poor eyesight, then the player should make use of an assistant as stipulated in Article F9.

Question Hello, Geurt Gijssen, as you are the chairman of the FIDE rules committee, I hope you are able to take my suggestions to the proper channels, if you think they are appropriate.

I was appalled by the circus displayed in the Armageddon games in the US championship and in the FIDE World Championship in Nalchik, Russia. I prefer the Blitz format with increment of time, as seen in the latest Blitz tournaments in Russia, where you will have 5 minutes for the whole game and 3 to 5 seconds of increment for each move. With this format, dead positions that can’t be won except on time or from an illegal move, will eventually be agreed drawn, since sooner or later both opponents will realize that there is nothing to gain by continuing. The problem is that the margin between a pretty dead position and a position with no mating material for either player is still great. It is a weakness of the sudden-death format altogether, and I hope in the future we will see more games with an increment. Perhaps one day the sudden-death will become extinct. That would at least have saved us from these horrific time scrambles and also of the dreaded 10.2 rule.

If an Armageddon game is needed to ensure that the match stops with that game, I think that it would be better with an increment of five seconds, as in the other Blitz games of Nalchik. The problem here is that it is not such an advantage to have white, when a draw becomes a win for black. However, I think this could be solved by the following format: each player can bid on the advantage of having black, who wins if the game is a draw, of how many minutes out of 11 (with half-minute increments) that they are willing to play with. The bids start at 6 minutes to black, 5 to white, but if Player A asks for 4½ against 6½ and Player B also asks for 4½, the bidding goes on until either one player accepts a given disadvantage where the other doesn’t (which means he will play black with the offered time) or there is a tie on a given time, for instance 4-7 (no player will accept 3½-7½), then this must be the acceptable format between those two players, and then a drawing of lots will be done to determine who is black.

Still the 5-minute Blitz is a die-hard, I suggest some clear rules for specific situations:

- Rule 5.2 (f) If the opponent has lone knight or lone bishop, you can summon the arbiter to declare the draw, if no special situation exists.
- Rule 5.2 (g) If Q vs. Q or R vs. R, a player can summon the arbiter for a draw, which is granted if in 5 moves no player gets a winning position.

- Rule 8.8 In a touch-move situation where the touched piece is returned to its square, the first part of the move should be recorded to the scoresheet, if possible by both players.
- Rule 3.7 (f) Incorrect promotion; for instance, to pawn or inverted rook, can be claimed incorrect by the opponent, who will receive 1 minute in compensation. It is not considered an illegal move and therefore will not decide a Blitz game as win for the claimant.
- Rule 3.7 (g) Promoting may be made without the pawn move if “before” and “after” positions are correct.

Regards, **Jesper Nørgaard Welen (Mexico)**

Answer To be honest, I never liked Armageddon games. I remember for instance the Immopar Tournaments in Paris (1990 – 1992), in which we had several problems with this type of decision. In the regulations of the World Chess Championship K.O. Tournament 1997/98 it was written that the Chief Arbiter could, in case of a tiebreak, if after several rapid games did not break the tie, decide that the next game should be decisive. I did not use this possibility, because I knew the problems related to such games. I still prefer to continue matches of two games until there is a decision.

I understand the practical reason to play only one game, but this does not change my opinion about Armageddon games. As a matter of fact, my preference is that all these decisive games should be played with an increment or with the time delay mode, which is probably even better. I shall do my best to discuss your proposals in Dresden.

Question Dear Geurt, the following situation occurred in a 5-minute blitz tournament:

1. Player A checked the king of Player B.
2. Player B made a move without responding to the check.
3. Player A didn't see that Player B didn't respond to the check and played a move.
4. Player B then stopped the clocks and claimed that Player A made an illegal move.

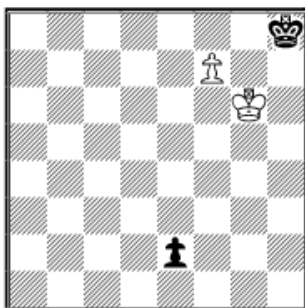
What is your opinion on this strange situation? Kind regards, **Fabien Krzewinski (Belgium)**

Answer At step 3, Player A had the possibility to claim an illegal move and even win the game. I refer to the last sentence of Article C3 of the Blitz Rules:

Once the opponent has made his own move, an illegal move cannot be corrected.

However, the illegal move was accepted by Player A. The easiest way to solve the problem is for Player B to make a move that makes the position legal, i.e. a move that brings his king out of check.

Question Dear Sir, in this position it is Black to move.



Black claimed a draw because if both pawns are promoted to same-colored bishops, then the final position cannot be won by normal means, even with unskilled counterplay. What is your opinion? **Raj Kadam (India)**

Answer A nice trick by the player of the black pieces. He of course saw that after f8Q or f8R his king is checkmated. The player of the white pieces cannot be forced to play f8B. In my opinion, the claim is nonsense.

Question Dear Mister Gijssen, during a game, Player A can promote a pawn on e7, so he grabs a queen and places it on e8. Then he realizes that this is actually a bad move and removes the queen from the board. Now he claims that because he did not touch the pawn, he does not have to play the move e7-e8Q. Is this correct? Kind regards, **Ralph Roder (Germany)**

Answer I think this is a clear example of using 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. Where cases are not precisely regulated by an Article of the Laws, it should be possible to reach a correct decision by studying analogous situations, which are discussed in the Laws. The Laws assume that arbiters have the necessary competence, sound judgement and absolute objectivity. Too detailed a rule might deprive the arbiter of his freedom of judgement and thus prevent him from finding the solution to a problem dictated by fairness, logic and special factors.

I would also like to refer to Article 4.4.d.:

If a player promotes a pawn, the choice of the piece is finalised, when the piece has touched the square of promotion.

The only reason that the player places a white queen on e8 is to promote the pawn on e7. Therefore, if I had been the arbiter in this game, my decision would be that the move e8Q stands, although he did not follow the procedure of Article 4.6:

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 the promotion of a pawn, when the pawn has been removed from the chessboard and the player's hand has released the new piece after placing it on the promotion square. If the player has released from his hand the pawn that has reached the promotion square, the move is not yet made, but the player no longer has the right to play the pawn to another square.

As a matter of fact, it is generally accepted to first place the queen on e8 and then to remove the pawn on e7.

Question Dear Geurt, I have a question regarding 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.

Imagine the following scenario: at a team competition the arbiter, for whatever reason, misses the moment when the flag of Player A falls, even though the arbiter is at the board. Several spectators claim that they saw Player A lose on time. What is the correct behavior for the arbiter? Is he allowed or rather obliged to

- ask spectators /assistant arbiters what they have seen?
- watch the video of a digital camera?
- use any means to establish the truth?

Any spectator could remark to the arbiter that Player A lost on time. Additionally, Player B might have heard this remark and claim the win before the time control. Is it against the rules to make such a remark in general or only if the players can hear it as well? What is the penalty if such behavior is against the rules? A spectator (fan or teammate) might be

expelled from the playing hall if he interferes with a game. From the perspective of the team it is preferable to win the game and accept this penalty. Does it make a difference if one of the assistant arbiters (standing at another board) makes such a remark? With kind regards, **Joachim Wintzer (Germany)**

Answer If the arbiter does not observe or either player does not claim the flag fall, the flag did not fall. See Article 6.9.

I like also to refer to 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.

But what are the possibilities in the event the arbiter misses a flag fall? You mention some of them in your question. The spectators are not an option, because the arbiter does not know if they are neutral. If it is observed by an assistant arbiter, the assistant arbiter should report to the chief arbiter, who should then make a decision. If everything happened to be recorded by a camera, then it is valid to use the recording in my opinion.

In the Immopar tournaments mentioned above there was one camera connected to the chess clock. An assistant arbiter watched a monitor that displayed the clock in order to inform me if I missed the flag fall; however, as it turned out this was not needed.

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

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