ChessCafe.com

COLUMNISTS

## *An Arbiter's Notebook*

### Geurt Gijssen

Heroic Tales: The Best of ChessCafe.com 1996-2001
Edited by Taylor Kingston

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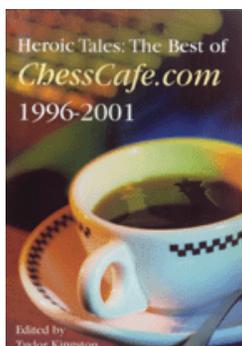
Play through and download the games from **ChessCafe.com** in the [DGT Game Viewer](.).

**The Complete DGT Product Line**

## Bothered by Buchholz

**Question** Dear Sir, I conduct an annual chess tournament that consists of players in Under 08, 10, 12, and 14 age groups. I have a question about the tie-break system, because most of the players are unrated and we follow FIDE rating and surname as sorting criteria. For the last three years I have used the Progressive System. This year I used M-Buchholz, Buchholz and Armageddon as the tie-breaks in that order. On average 50 or more players participate in each group, and boys and girls play in same group.

1. Is the progressive system good for tie-breaks?
2. Is M-Buchholz a better system?
3. What is the best tie-break system for top-level tournaments?
4. Is Swiss Perfect good software for use at any tournament or do you suggest something else?

Thank you. Sincerely, **Abhijeet Joshi (India)**

**Answer**

**1.** To be honest, I have never understood the merits of Progressive Scores to break ties. I do not like this as a tie-break system, but I am willing to change my opinion if anyone can explain how it is useful.

**2.** Median Buchholz is better than Progressive Score, but why not begin with Buchholz?

**3.** There is a difference between Round Robin Tournaments and Swiss Tournaments provided everybody has a rating:

For **Individual Round Robin Tournaments** the following criteria are recommended in this order:

- Direct Encounter
- Koya System
- Koya System extended
- Sonneborn-Berger
- Number of won games

For **Individual Swiss Tournaments** the recommended order is:

- Average Rating of Opponents
- Average Rating Cut

This cut can be done in different ways; for instance, the average rating of the opponents minus the lowest rating, or minus the highest and the lowest rating. It is up to the organizer, but it should be announced before the start of the tournament.

**4.** I have no experience with Swiss Perfect, but the Chairman of the FIDE Swiss Pairings Committee, Mr. Krause, informed me that he tested this program several years ago and found that the pairings were not correct in his opinion.

If you rely on an Armageddon game for tie-breaks, be sure to set a time
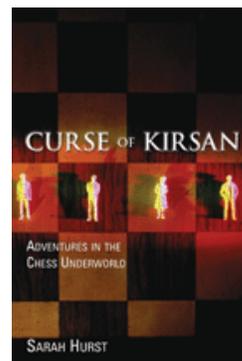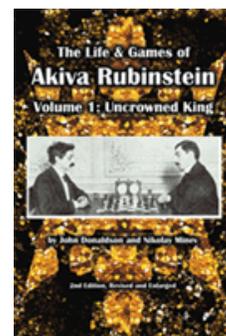
limit with an increment. There are too many problems when these games are played without increment.

**Question** Dear Mr. Gijssen, I am writing about some issues with the Buchholz tiebreak. For years tournament announcements have included the "Buchholzwertung" for ranking purposes. Only recently did FIDE finally describe the Buchholz System, which is a great step forward. However, our German federation rules state that the FIDE rules are valid only after an authorized translation is published. Yet only the Laws of Chess are translated, not the FIDE tournament rules or whatever else is in the FIDE handbook. The rules are accepted as valid anyway, but there are many chief arbiters who simply do not understand them. So some clarification could help.

**Question 1:** When you play an opponent who has won a round by default, you get his scores minus half a point. That is because his unplayed game counts as a draw. Is that correct?
**Question 2:** Similarly, you would gain half a point for a loss by default. Is that correct? To put it another way, you get the opponent's score from his played games plus half a point for each unplayed game.
**Question 3:** If a player wins by default, this should – for tiebreak purposes – be counted as a draw against himself. He should therefore gain his own points (possibly adjusted by the rules above) as Buchholz. Is that correct?
**Question 4:** Would it not make more sense (even if complicating matters) to reward him his own points he had before the win by default plus half a point for the win by default and each following round?
**Question 5:** Wouldn't his own points have to be adjusted in any case, because he certainly had an unplayed game?
**Question 6:** Following the rules he would get the same Buchholz for a loss by default. Should he get any Buchholz at all?
**Question 7:** The term "unplayed game" has caused confusion. The Preface of the Laws of Chess state "the game of chess is played between two opponents." If one opponent is missing, there cannot be a game of chess. So how can there be unplayed games?
**Question 8:** If a player drops out of a Swiss tournament, are their remaining rounds counted as "unplayed games"? For example, Player A wins his game against Player B in round one, and Player B then drops out. As the tournament is with 21 players and was set for 7 rounds, the remaining rounds were played with 10 games each and no bye awarded. Player B was not paired.
**Question 9:** How many Buchholz would Player B "bring" Player A?
**Question 10:** You mentioned last month (geurt126.pdf) that you would allow a player to enter a tournament in the second round, and you called his first round an unplayed game. Would you award him any Buchholz?

Thanks for your time and your effort! **Benjamin Dauth (Germany)**

**Answer** I think you understand how the system works. I can answer the majority of your questions with the following statement:

> **For Buchholz scores the results 1-0 by forfeit, 0-1 by forfeit, 0-0 by forfeit (because both players did not show up), bye (because an odd number of players), 0 (because the player left the tournament) 0 (because the player started in a later round the tournament) will be counted as ½-½.**

**Answer 8:** I think this may only be a question of semantics. I agree that two players are required to play a game, but consider the following Articles:

> *6.7 Any player who arrives at the chessboard more than one hour after the scheduled start of the session shall lose the game unless the rules of the competition specify or the arbiter decides otherwise.*

> *11.1 Unless announced otherwise in advance, a player who wins his*

> *game, or wins by forfeit, scores one point (1), a player who loses his game, or forfeits scores no points (0) and a player who draws his game scores a half point (½).*

If a player does not show up, he loses the game. For instance, if the player of the white pieces does not show up, then there is not even a move. Nevertheless, Article 6.7 points out that the game is lost for this player.

Article 11.1 mentions that a player can lose or win by forfeit. There is no game. Nevertheless, a player can win or lose.

Not mentioned in the Laws of Chess are the byes when there is no opponent available. This means that a player can score without playing a game.

**Question** Dear Geurt, in a local tournament Player A (with the white pieces), made his move when the round started. His opponent (Player B) was not in the playing hall. Ten minutes later, Player A received a cellular phone call and the arbiter told Player A the he must lose the game because of this. However, the call was made by Player B to tell Player A that he would be late. Did the arbiter make the right decision by forfeiting Player A? **Regards, Manuel López (México)**

**Answer** It is clear that Player A violated 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.*

According to the Laws of Chess, Player A loses the game. If Player B arrives in time, he will receive a point. But is it a normal 1-0? I was told that FIDE considers it 1-0 by forfeit, because there is a result before the game began. The question remains: at which moment does a game begin?

Last year in The Netherlands we had a case where both players were present in the playing hall at the start of the round, but one player refused to play. The arbiter declared the game won for his opponent. But it was thought that a game won in this way cannot be included for a norm. The arbiter contacted the FIDE rating officer and he informed the arbiter that the game cannot be rated, but can be included for a norm. A game can only be rated in case both players have made (completed?) at least one move. I will check in Dresden during the FIDE Congress as to whether this is correct or not. I will keep you informed.

**Question** Dear Geurt Gijssen, I know how to apply the correct Buchholz calculation when using Swiss Perfect, but I cannot do the calculation myself to check when we have situations with withdrawals (WO) in the first round. Can you explain how to manually calculate the correct Buchholz? Regards, **Antonio Mendonça (Brazil)**

**Answer** Unfortunately I could not use the file you attached, because I need all the individual results to make the calculations. But I will explain some tiebreak systems.

**The Buchholz score is the sum of the scores of each of the opponents of a player.**

Suppose a player participated in a Swiss tournament and he scored as shown in the table below.

**Table 1**

| # opponents | 1 | 5 | 8 | 14 | 21 | 28 | 39 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | | | | | |

| result of player #57 | 0 | ½ | 1 | 1 | ½ | ½ | 0 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| total score opponent | 3½ | 4½ | 2 | 5 | 4 | 6 | 5½ |

Example: Player #57 faced the players mentioned in the first line. In the second line the score of #57 against these opponents is listed, and in the third line you find the total scores of his opponents. The Buchholz score of player #57 is the sum of the scores: 3½ + 4½ + 2 + 5 + 4 + 6 + 5½ = 36.

**The Median Buchholz is the Buchholz score reduced by the highest and the lowest score of the opponents.**

In Table 1 we would have to reduce the scores of #8 (2 points) and #28 (6 points). The Median Buchholz is in this case: 3½ + 4½ + 5 + 4 + 5½ = 22½.

The following is very important and also a little bit complicated:

**Independent of the result of an unplayed game (win by bye, win or loss by forfeit, no game because the player withdrew or was absent for (some) round(s)), for reasons of tiebreak, the result shall be counted as a draw against the player himself.**

Let us assume that in previous rounds there were two unplayed games: #5 won a game by forfeit and #57 won his game against #8 because the latter did not show up. In this case the table will look like this:

**Table 2**

| # opponents | 1 | 5 | 8 | 14 | 21 | 28 | 39 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| result of the player #57 | 0 | ½ | 1 | 1 | ½ | ½ | 0 |
| total score opponent | 3½ | 4½ | 2 | 5 | 4 | 6 | 5½ |

The win of #5 against #16 will be considered as a draw against himself. Instead of 4½ his score for Buchholz calculations, and I repeat only for tiebreak calculations, will be 4. The same applies for the game #57 won by forfeit, but for the tiebreak calculations it will be counted as a draw. Thus, the table would be changed as follows:

**Table 3**

| # opponents | 1 | 5 | (8) | 14 | 21 | 28 | 39 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| result of the player #57 | 0 | ½ | 1F | 1 | ½ | ½ | 0 |
| total score opponent | 3½ | 4 | 2½ | 5 | 4 | 6 | 5½ |

Explanation: #57's score is 3½, but for our calculations we use only 3 points. Instead of #8's score (2 points) we use 2½ points for Buchholz calculations. For the same calculations we decrease the score of #5 with ½ point and increase the score of #16 with ½ point. The Buchholz score of #57 will be: 3½ + 4 + 2½ + 5 + 4 + 6 + 5½ = 30½. The Sonneborn-Berger scores will be calculated in a similar way.

**Question** Dear Geurt, playing with the black pieces I made the move 5… Qa5+, and only then noticed that my king was on d8 and queen on e8. I proposed to switch the pieces back to their correct position, but my opponent replied that they must remain where they are because we had gone past move three. (I understand that he noticed my queen and king were misplaced from the beginning, but he said nothing.) The arbiter then confirmed that the game must continue from that position, and

furthermore that I could not castle.

Yet I was later informed that according to the FIDE rules (paragraph 8.5):

> *If, during a game, it is found that the initial position of the pieces was incorrect, the game shall be annulled and a new game played.*

1. How did the chief arbiter and my opponent (who is also an arbiter) come to believe that the position was irreversible after three moves? Is this based on an old rule?
2. According to FIDE rules can my opponent, who lost the game, now dispute the result?

Many thanks, **Pietro Monari (Italy)**

**Answer** I understand that you are confused. You correctly referred to Article 8.5, but this reference is only correct in case of a normal game. If it is a Blitz or Rapid game your opponent and the arbiter are right. For Rapid and Blitz games, Article B4 of the Laws of Chess is applicable:

> *Once each player has completed three moves, no claim can be made regarding incorrect piece placement, orientation of the chessboard or clock setting. In case of reverse king and queen placement castling with this king is not allowed.*

Regarding your second question, provided it was a normal game, then you are the only person who has some moral right to claim a new game, because you are the player who had a disadvantage: you could not castle.

**Question** Dear Mr Gijssen, what kind of assistance can a player use to calculate the final standings? For example, if I am playing the last game of the last round of a tournament and my opponent offers a draw – in order to decide whether to accept it or not, I must check the crosstable and standings, and calculate the Buchholz. Can I ask a friend? Or do the calculations myself with pen and paper? Can I use a calculator? A computer? The arbiter's computer, where the Swiss program is running? What does the arbiter do if he sees this behaviour? Best regards, **Christian Sánchez (Argentina)**

**Answer** The first Article that came to mind is Article 12.2a of the Laws of Chess:

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

I understand that the advice you are asking about is different than the advice mentioned in Article 12.2a. What you are asking can be compared to the advice given by a team captain in a competition. The only difference that I can see between a round robin tournament and the calculations for a Swiss tournament is that the latter is much more complicated. If a player were to try and calculate the relevant Buchholz scores (without a calculator), I would not stop him, but I would inform him that it is almost impossible to do, especially when there are byes and/ or unplayed games in the tournament. I would never allow a player to use my computer for such calculations. Suppose I made a mistake, then I would be responsible if he made a bad decision based on incorrect information.

**Question** Dear Mr. Gijssen, during the third round of a Swiss System tournament, one pair of players played with the colors reversed. We noticed this just before the fourth round pairings. Should we then go back to the pairing program and reverse the color assigned to the pair before the fourth round is paired, or continue on as if nothing had happened? The latter choice would lead to violation of Swiss pairing principles; however, this would not be the arbiter's fault. Is there consensus in counting the number of wins or wins with black in case the game is won by forfeit?

Thanks in advance. Best regards, **Teerapong (Thailand)**

**Answer** Yes, before you pair the fourth round, you should return to the third round and swap the colors of this pair in your files, but the result stands. A game won by forfeit has no colors; therefore, you cannot count such a game as played with white or black by either player.

**Question** Dear Mr Gijssen, I must disagree with your opinion regarding the provision of an assistant for blind (visually-handicapped) participants.

Appendix F describes the powers that an assistant may exercise: they are not (by any stretch of the imagination) the same as the powers of an arbiter, nor indeed does such a person have to know the Laws of Chess, far less pass an examination of competence.

The assistant's role is solely to act as the instrument (acting as the "eyes" and, where necessary, the "arms") of the handicapped player (nothing more, nothing less) in that game, and that game alone.

Thus, I cannot see why you suggest that this person is in some way acting as an "assistant arbiter" (I also don't recognize the term "assistant arbiter," but that is another matter).

Therefore, I suggest that the chain of argument fails. It is clearly the organizers' responsibility to provide arbiters: I cannot see that it is the organiser's responsibility to provide assistants, as indeed the Laws make clear. (In some jurisdictions, "equal opportunity" legislation may require organizers to provide assistants, but that is another matter).

From a practical point of view, the player is often best placed to provide his own assistant. Where that is not possible, it is good practice (which I follow in my role as organizer) to appeal for volunteers to come forward to take this role. This is easier to arrange if advance notice is given.

I can say that if it became enshrined in chess law that organizers had to provide assistants, then the probable consequence would be an exodus of organizers and the demise of tournaments. Kindest Regards, **Trevor Davies (Scotland)**

**Answer** You are right that the assistant is not an arbiter. I was just so impressed by all the duties to be done by this assistant that I exaggerated when I wrote that he acts as an arbiter. I simply meant that he acts *like* an arbiter, not that he *is* an arbiter. I am aware that he is not an arbiter, especially when Article F9e is taken into account:

> *…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.*

And a controller is an arbiter.

---

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!*

---

---