



COLUMNISTS

An Arbiter's Notebook

Geurt Gijssen



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In Memoriam Bob Wade

I received the sad news that Bob Wade passed away at the age of eighty-seven. He played his last tournament in London in August. When I was young I read about his exploits as a chess player, and he was the arbiter in many important chess events. I met him in 1993 when I was the organizer of the first part of the match Karpov – Timman, played in The Netherlands in three different cities: Zwolle, Arnhem, and Amsterdam. He was the only member of the Appeals Committee and Bob was always present watching the games in the playing hall. He gave me invaluable advice about all elements of the match venues. It was very clear that he was an experienced chess player and arbiter, and I learned many things from him. May he rest in peace.



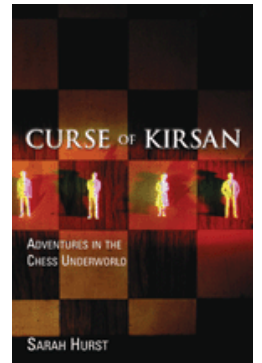
Bob Wade (left) with GM Jon Speelman and ECF International Director Peter Sowray in 2007
 Photo: [English Chess Federation](#)

In November the FIDE Congress was organized in Dresden. It began with the meetings of the commissions and committees, then the Executive Board, and finally the General Assembly. The meetings of the Rules and Tournaments Rules Committee (RTRC) took seven hours, instead of the scheduled four hours, and about eighty persons – a record in my opinion – attended. The meeting was scheduled on a rest day of the Olympiad. As you probably know, the Laws of Chess may be revised once every four years, and 2008 was such a year. As chairman of this committee, I received about 120 proposals for revising and amending the Laws of Chess. A small committee discussed these proposals and if a clear majority approved, the proposal was included in the draft for final approval. If there was not a majority, we kept the article as it was and added the proposal. In September these were sent to all federations.

I am quite curious as to what happened after the federations received the agenda and the annexes to the agenda of the General Assembly. For example, I am very interested to know whether the proposals for revision of the Laws were discussed with players and arbiters. I believe it is likely that professional chess players were not involved in the discussions and that this was left to an Arbiters' Committee, provided a federation even has one.

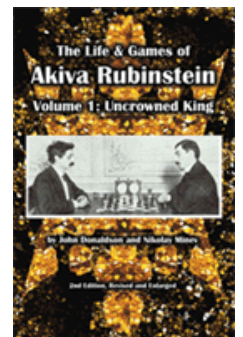
There was a lot of discussion about Article 6.7. The old version is:

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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.

The proposal was:

Any player who arrives at the chessboard after the start of the session shall lose the game, unless the arbiter decides otherwise. Thus the default time is 0 minutes. The rules of a competition may specify a different default time.

If we compare the two, we see that nothing has changed. A tournament committee still has the possibility of specifying a default time of one hour. And in the old version 0 minutes, as applied in the Olympiad, is also possible.

Based on the report made by the chief arbiter of the Olympiad, Ignatius Leong, among other factors, the proposal of the committee was accepted by the RTRC. In the meeting of the Executive Board, there was some opposition to the 0 minutes rule. There were several suggestions regarding 15 or 30 minutes, but there was no final proposal. In the General Assembly the discussion started again, and I explained that in effect nothing had been changed, but then the FIDE President proposed something different:

Any player who arrives at the chessboard after the start of the session shall lose the game.

As you can see, the FIDE President does not like to make any exception. Each tournament committee has to accept the 0 minutes rule and the arbiter has no possibility to accept an excuse for the late arrival of a player, even in case of a clear “force majeure.”

Ilyumzhinov based his proposal on the events that occurred at the start of the world championship match Karpov – Anand (Lausanne 1998). The scheduled start of the first game was 14.30 o'clock. Those present included Mr. Samaranch, President of the IOC; the FIDE President, Kirsan Ilyumzhinov; Karpov's opponent, Viswanathan Anand; but not Anatoly Karpov. He arrived at 14.40 o'clock. I did not know what to do. To start the clocks, was problematic, because such a match should be opened with a little ceremony. On the other hand, the situation was very unpleasant for Anand, who was forced to wait, which caused some tension. I took for myself the decision to wait a maximum of ten minutes. And just at that moment Karpov arrived. Ilyumzhinov mentioned in Dresden that Samaranch was very surprised that a player did not have to be present at the start of the round.

To avoid an endless discussion the General Assembly agreed that the Presidential Board shall make the final decision in February or March 2009. In the meantime, I have received several letters expressing the opinion that it would be a catastrophe for chess if Ilyumzhinov's proposal is accepted. In my next column I will indicate the other changes. To avoid any misunderstanding, the revised Laws of Chess will come into force beginning **July 1, 2009**.

Question Dear Mr. Gijssen, during a FIDE competition match the following occurred. The time control was 2 hours for the first 40 moves and one hour for the rest. The player with the black pieces had less than 5 minutes and was not recording his moves. The player with the white pieces had more than 5 minutes and was keeping a record. The player of the white pieces had played 41 moves. The player of the black pieces then asked for his opponent's score sheet before the flag dropped.

Is this right? The arbiter said that you can always ask for the score sheet during the game if you are on move. The arbiter then said that the

notation was not readable and warned white that he would lose the game if he did not correct this. He stopped the clocks and made them reconstruct the game. Not everyone writes neatly. Can an arbiter decide that something is not readable? What are the criteria? Can you lose if you do not write neatly? Was he right in stopping the clocks? I think I would be in trouble sometimes. But so would Korchnoi in almost every game. The player himself had no problems with the notation and they were able to reconstruct the game without problems. Greetings, **Bernard Bannink (The Netherlands)**

Answer The players were correct: the player who had more than 5 minutes left was still recording the moves, the player with less than 5 minutes may stop writing the moves. The player of the white pieces made his 41st move and both flags were still up. Unfortunately the player of the black pieces then made the first mistake. In the given situation it is forbidden to ask for the opponent's score sheet. The second mistake was made by the arbiter. Before a flag fall he may not indicate, directly or indirectly, that the prescribed number of moves was made. After a flag fall the arbiter has the power to request the player, who has a complete score sheet, to give it to the opponent. Stopping the clocks was also wrong. This is only allowed if both players were not able to record the moves. See 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.

b. If only one player is not required to keep score under Article 8.4 he must, as soon as either flag has fallen, update his scoresheet completely before moving a piece on the chessboard. Provided it is the player's move, he may use his opponent's scoresheet, but must return it before making a move.

This answers the first part of your question. The second part is more difficult to answer, because the definition of readable and neat is very subjective. Different arbiters would likely have differing opinions. But to declare the game lost goes too far. There is only one element in your letter that puzzles me. If the score sheet was readable, why did the players have to reconstruct the game?

Question Hi, I have a suggestion on the recent furor over the notion of players moving out of turn. If the clock docked a minimum amount of time for each move, then there would not be such a hurry to make the move. For example, if after playing a move you always used one second, then there would be no incentive to try to move at super-blitz pace, as you may as well make use of the entire second to avoid knocking over the chess pieces or committing a gross blunder. This would lead to both players having enough time to make a move without causing continuous chaos as the time winds down. I assume changes would have to be made to the existing chess clocks and this may raise some other issues, but the idea could have merit. I always appreciate your views. **Ralph Hart (New Zealand)**

Answer I appreciate your view as well. You are absolutely right that time controls with an increment are ideal for Armageddon games. I mentioned this in my report to the General Assembly when the rules were discussed. There are different options. It is possible to apply the Fischer mode or the Bronstein mode. In my opinion the Bronstein mode is probably preferable. The reason is that when using the Fischer mode, a player has the possibility to save the unused part of the increment by playing very quickly. In the Bronstein mode, this is impossible.

By example, suppose a player's clock shows 3 minutes and 20 seconds and the increment is 5 seconds per move.

Fischer mode: With 3'20'' on his clock the player makes a move and presses his clock; the clock shows then 3'25.'' For his next move the player uses 2.'' His clock goes down to 3'23.'' Then 5'' are added. That means for his next move he has 3'28.''

Bronstein mode: With 3'20'' on his clock the player makes a move; the clock shows then 3'25.'' For his next move the player uses 2.'' His clock goes down to 3'23.'' And now the difference appears. The 3'' the player saved from the increment in Fischer mode disappears in Bronstein mode. Once the player presses his clock, it shows only 3'25.'' He loses 3'' and receives the increment of 5.''

Question Dear sir, in India, because of a shortage of clocks, the settings in rated tournaments are as follows. The total time control is 90 minutes each + 30 second increment from move one.

1. For Analog clocks and Digital clocks that do not have an increment, the time first is set to 90 minutes each. Whenever a clock that has an increment is available, then the Analog clock is changed (within 90 minutes) to increment mode as follows: remaining time of each player + adding 30 seconds each to the number of moves made.
2. If both players do not have any clock, then the remaining time is equally shared with 30 seconds added to each move made. Is this correct?
3. How can the increments be distributed if 50 moves are made by each player and there is only 10 minutes left to the end, i.e., if it is 25 minutes each + 5 minutes with 30 second increment as per above?
4. If there are 5, 10, or 15 minutes left to the end of the day's play and the players are still only using an Analog clock, once it is changed to a digital clock, with an increment of 30 seconds, how can it be adjusted or set?

Thank you. **Raj Kadam (India)**

Answer I understand the situation: the number of digital clocks is insufficient; therefore, you have to take measures to solve this problem. And I have to admit that the organizers in India are very inventive.

1. This is a good solution. For the moment I do not see a problem, provided both players still have enough time left on the clock.
2. I am not completely happy with this solution, but I do not see another one.
3. Probably I misunderstood you, but in my opinion the following should happen: Both player have 10 minutes left and made 50 moves. For 50 moves, 25 minutes to each clock must be added. This means that the players have each 10 minutes + 25 minutes = 35 minutes left on the clock and they receive also from move 51 an increment of 30 seconds per move.
4. I do not see any difference with the other cases. The new clock setting is always: To the time left on the clock, 30 seconds x the number of made moves must be added.

Question Regarding Fabien Krzewinski's comments in the [October 2008](#) column. Do the rules of chess state that you must capture the king if you can? In my opinion, Player A did not make an illegal move in ignoring the failed escape from check. To my knowledge we do not have a rule as in draughts (checkers) where a capture is mandatory. **Stephan Bird (UK)**

Answer Mr. Krzewinski's question was as follows:

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?

At Step 2, Player B ignored the fact that his king was attacked. This means that he completed an illegal move. Agreed?

At Step 3, Player A did not claim the illegality of Player B's move. Now we apply Article C3 of the Blitz rules (the first sentence):

An illegal move is completed once the opponent's clock has been started. The opponent is entitled to claim a win before he has made his own move. ... Once the opponent has made his own move, an illegal move cannot be corrected.

Now we go to Step 4. Player B was very lucky that Player A did not claim an illegal move, but Player B's king is still attacked. Instead of claiming that Player A made an illegal move (this is nonsense of course), Player B had the possibility to solve the situation by making a move that brings his king out of check. This is what I meant in my previous answer.

By the way, if Player B makes another move that keeps his king under attack, then Player A still has the possibility to claim a win.

If Player A, instead of claiming a win, takes Player B's king, then Player B can claim a win, because taking the king is an illegal move. See Article 1.2:

*The objective of each player is to place the opponent's king 'under attack' in such a way that the opponent has no legal move. The player who achieves this goal is said to have 'checkmated' the opponent's king and to have won the game. **Leaving one's own king under attack, exposing one's own king to attack and also 'capturing' the opponent's king are not allowed.** The opponent whose king has been checkmated has lost the game.*

Question Dear Geurt, in your answer to Fabien Krzewinski you stated that the easiest way to solve the problem was for Player B to make a move that makes the position legal. Am I to understand, in other words, that Player A at Step 3 made a legal move and that the claim by Player B at Step 4 is incorrect? If I look to the position arisen after Step 2 (king in check), I could say that the only legal move for Player A is to make a request under Article C3. Any other move for Player A cannot be legal, as it is not permitted by the situation (the opponent's king is in check). Could you please explain this point? If an arbiter has to reject the claim of Player B at Step 4, which decision does he take? Does he give a warning, a time penalty or something else? Thank you in advance for your answer.
Kind regards, **Piero Galli (Switzerland)**

Answer Most of these questions were already answered in the previous letter above. I would just like to make two further remarks:

1. The problem is that Player A did not claim that his opponent made an illegal move and the intervention of the arbiter is not allowed. You mention that Player A has to request something according to Article C3, but, again, to claim a win he needs to notice that Player B made an illegal move. And he did not see it.

2. I mentioned that the claim made by Player B in Step 4 is invalid (i.e., nonsense). Therefore, the arbiter has to reject the claim. Whether the

arbiter penalizes Player B depends on the arbiter. If the arbiter is of the opinion that the intention was to disturb the opponent, he has to penalize Player B; for example, by awarding some extra time to Player A.

Question Dear Sir, A children's age category tournament is conducted in Bangalore every month. The time control is 30 minutes per game. However, because of a shortage of clocks, the clocks are only introduced at the end of select games (the slow ones) with 5 or 10 minutes each.

In a recent tournament this was done in a game played between a six year-old and a seven year-old. The six year-old had two queens against his opponent's queen and knight. The seven year-old made an illegal move, the other boy stopped the clocks and raised his hands, and said "illegal move." At that moment he only had 3 seconds remaining on his clock and his opponent (who made the illegal move) had 38 seconds. There was a huge crowd surrounding the board. There are no professional arbiters for these tournaments: designated parents or the organizers act as arbiters. One such "arbiter" asked the player to continue the game. Accordingly, the boy started the clocks and his flag soon fell. Initially the game was decided as lost for the six year-old. Later, after the boy's parents protested, the organizers consulted with a real arbiter, who suggested that the game be restarted with one minute added to the six year-olds time. The opponent then made another illegal move and again one minute was added to the six year-olds time. The seven year-old later lost the game on time.

There are two questions: Should the player claim or demand the arbiter increase his time as per Article 7.4 or is it the duty of the arbiter to add two minutes time immediately after the claim is made for an illegal move as per Article 7.4? Is there an option to give one minute time per illegal move anywhere else in the rules? Regards, **V. Sadashiva (India)**

Answer With 30 minutes for each player for the whole game, the game is a Rapid game. Therefore, the Rapid Laws of Chess apply. In case of an illegal move Article B6 apply:

An illegal move is completed once the opponent's clock has been started. The opponent is then entitled to claim that the player completed an illegal move before the claimant has made his move. Only after such a claim, shall the arbiter make a ruling. However, if both Kings are in check or the promotion of a pawn is not completed, the arbiter shall intervene, if possible.

This means that in case a player has completed an illegal move, the arbiter will only act after the opponent has made a claim. From your report I understand that a claim was made by the opponent. So far everything was done correctly. Regarding the penalty, there are no differences between the "normal" rules and rapid rules. Article 7.4 states clearly that for an illegal move two minutes will be added to the opponent's time. There is no option in the Laws of Chess to add only one minute in case of an illegal move. By the way, we have to keep in mind that volunteers (or designated parents) cannot be expected to know all rules. We should be happy that the parents are willing to give their time for such activities.

Question Dear Mr. Gijssen,

1. Suppose that in a Rapid game the arbiter notices that both kings are in check or are placed on two adjacent squares. As we know, here the arbiter may intervene in the game, what decision should he make? How about in Blitz?
2. According to Article B4, after three moves are completed, there will be no valid claim about the initial piece placement. But what if it is revealed that one or more pieces have been absent from the first move – especially if the absent piece is a king?
3. Article 10.2 is about claiming a draw when less than two minutes

is left for the claimant in a quick-play finish: this means making all the remaining moves in a limited time. Can we interpret this article that if an increment is used (e.g. one second per each move), then the right of claiming 10.2 is aborted?

Thanks in advance. **Hadi Bakhshayesh (Iran)**

Answer 1 In a Rapid game we have to apply Article 7.4:

If during a game it is found that an illegal move, including failing to meet the requirements of the promotion of a pawn or capturing the opponent's king, has been completed, the position immediately before the irregularity shall be reinstated. If the position immediately before the irregularity cannot be determined, the game shall continue from the last identifiable position prior to the irregularity. The clocks shall be adjusted according to Article 6.14. Article 4.3 applies to the move replacing the illegal move. The game shall then continue from this reinstated position.

I can imagine that this could happen, and that it would be quite difficult to determine the last identifiable position. A last resort in such a case is to play a new game.

For Blitz games the situation is different. The position you described is the result of an illegal move or even illegal moves by both players. For illegal moves we apply Article C3:

An illegal move is completed once the opponent's clock has been started. The opponent is entitled to claim a win before he has made his own move.

In my opinion, an illegal move in a Blitz game is only considered to be illegal when the opponent notices it, provided it is the opponent's move and he has not made a move. If both players have made an illegal move, only the player who is on move can claim the illegality. This means that the player who leaves his king in check made an illegal move. To be more precise: if both kings attack each other, the player on move may claim a win.

Answer 2 I am always amazed at how people are able to invent specific situations. Let us consider a situation in which, say, the white king is missing. It is clear that the player of the black pieces cannot checkmate the opponent's king. Therefore, the player of the white pieces can only lose the game by overstepping the time. Otherwise, Black gets checkmated or the game ends in a draw. By the way, I cannot imagine that any player would start a game without a king or even any other piece.

Answer 3 Yes, this is a correct interpretation. If there is any increment, Article 10 cannot apply.

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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