



## COLUMNISTS

An Arbiter's  
Notebook

Geurt Gijssen



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## Changes to the Laws of Chess

Last [month](#) I announced that in this column I will indicate some of the major changes to the Laws of Chess that will come into force on July 1, 2009.

1. The first item is a new one. Article 6.11.b:

*If during a game it is found that the setting of either or both clocks was incorrect, either player or the arbiter shall stop the clocks immediately. The arbiter shall install the correct setting and adjust the times and move counter. He shall use his best judgement when determining the correct settings.*

With analogue clocks, there were never problems with the settings. With digital clocks, many incidents occur because of a wrong setting; for instance, the increment was not installed.

2. If a player completes in the same game for the third time an illegal move, the game will be declared lost for this player. In Dresden the following sentence was added:

*However, the game is drawn if the position is such that the opponent cannot checkmate the player's king by any possible series of legal moves.*

3. As you know, there have been tournaments in which it was forbidden to offer a draw without the consent of the arbiter. In my opinion this rule was not stipulated in the actual Laws of Chess. In Dresden it was decided to make it legal:

9.1a. *The rules of a competition may specify that players cannot agree to a draw in less than a specified number of moves or at all, without the consent of the arbiter.*

9.1b. *If the rules of a competition allow a draw agreement the following apply:*

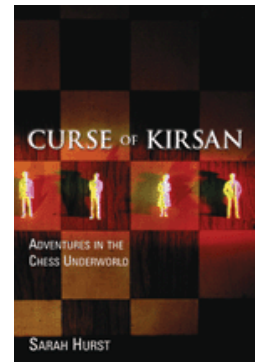
(1) *A player wishing to offer a draw shall do so after having made a move on the chessboard and before stopping his clock and starting the opponent's clock. An offer at any other time during play is still valid, but Article 12.6 must be considered. No conditions can be attached to the offer. In both cases the offer cannot be withdrawn and remains valid until the opponent accepts it, rejects it orally, rejects it by touching a piece with the intention of moving or capturing it, or the game is concluded in some other way.*

(2) *The offer of a draw shall be noted by each player on his scoresheet with a symbol. (See Appendix C13)*

(3) *A claim of a draw under Article 9.2, 9.3 or 10.2 shall be considered to be an offer of a draw.*

As a matter of fact, Article 9.1.b is the original version of Article 9.1, only Article 9.1.a is new. Each tournament committee has to announce in advance how it will apply Article 9.1. As you can construe, there are

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several possibilities:

It is possible to decide that proposals of a draw may not be made before a certain number of moves, for example 30, 40 or 50 moves or even totally forbidden, unless the arbiter agrees. This is mentioned in Article 9.1.a.

But a tournament committee can also decide to keep the old rule, that a draw offer is possible at any moment during the game. See Article 9.1.b.

4. The last sentence of Article 9.2 has been changed. This change probably ends the discussion regarding the temporary or permanent change of the right for castling.

*The game is drawn, upon a correct claim by the player having the move, when the same position, for at least the third time (not necessarily by a repetition of moves)*

*a. is about to appear, if he first writes his move on his scoresheet and declares to the arbiter his intention to make this move, or*

*b. has just appeared, and the player claiming the draw has the move.*

*Positions as in (a) and (b) are considered the same, if the same player has the move, pieces of the same kind and colour occupy the same squares, and the possible moves of all the pieces of both players are the same. Positions are not the same if a pawn that could have been captured en passant can no longer be captured in this manner. When a king or a rook is forced to move, it will lose its castling rights, if any, only after it is moved.*

5. In Article 9.4 there was a small, but important change. The new text is:

*If the player touches a piece as in Article 4.3 without having claimed the draw, he loses the right to claim, as in Article 9.2 or 9.3, on that move.*

The old text was:

If the player **makes a move** without having claimed the draw he loses the right to claim, as in Article 9.2 or 9.3, on that move.

6. Article 9.5 has two changes:

*If a player claims a draw as in Article 9.2 or 9.3, he may stop both clocks. (See Article 6.13.b). He is not allowed to withdraw his claim.*

*a. If the claim is found to be correct the game is immediately drawn.*

*b. If the claim is found to be incorrect, the arbiter shall add three minutes to the opponent's thinking time. Then the game shall continue. If the claim was based on an intended move, this move must be made as according to Article 4.*

In the first sentence it was written, that a player must stop the clocks if he wishes to claim a draw. The new version is that he **may** stop the clocks.

More important is the change in Article 9.5.b. In the old version time was deducted from the player who made an incorrect claim. Now, in case of a wrong draw claim, the only penalty is that the opponent receives three minutes extra.

7. The well known Article 12.3.b (mobiles!) was modified and Article 12.3.c was added.

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

*b. Without the permission of the arbiter a player is forbidden to have a mobile phone or other electronic means of communication in the playing venue, unless they are completely switched off. If any such device produces a sound, the player shall lose the game. The opponent shall win. However, if the opponent cannot win the game by any series of legal moves, his score shall be a draw.*

*c. Smoking is permitted only in the section of the venue designated by the arbiter.*

Notice that the old number of this Article was 12.2 and that no changes were made in Article 12.3.a. Some remarks regarding 12.3b:

1. A player may have a mobile in the playing area, but it must be completely switched off.
2. Any sound has as consequence that the player involved loses the game.
3. The result ½-0 or 0-½ is possible.

Article 12.3.c is “new” in the Laws of Chess. Curiously, it was previously only mentioned in the Rating Regulations.

**8.** An interesting item was added to Article 12.6:

*It is forbidden to distract or annoy the opponent in any manner whatsoever. This includes unreasonable claims, unreasonable offers of a draw or the introduction of a source of noise into the playing area.*

This likely applies to MP3 players and iPods, but perhaps even crying babies can be banned from the playing hall with this addition.

**9.** It is strange that the Laws of Chess made no mention that a player can appeal a decision of an arbiter. In only two cases was it mentioned that appeals were not possible. Article 12.10 is therefore a logical addition:

*In the case of Article 10.2.d or Appendix D a player may not appeal against the decision of the arbiter. Otherwise a player may appeal against any decision of the arbiter, unless the rules of the competition specify otherwise.*

I only question why the rules of a competition should allow for appeals to be impossible.

**10.** The definitions of Rapid and Blitz games are now more precise. In both types of chess the players are not obliged to record the moves. The main change in Rapid and Blitz games is the difference in the Laws of Chess between adequate and inadequate supervision:

### **Rapid**

**A3** *Where there is adequate supervision of play, (for example one arbiter for at most three games) the Competition Rules shall apply.*

**A4** *Where supervision is inadequate the Competition Rules shall apply, except where they are overridden by the following Laws of Rapidplay:*

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

*b. The arbiter shall make a ruling according to Article 4 (The act of moving the pieces), only if requested to do so by one or both players.*

*c. 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, the arbiter shall 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.*

*d.1. The flag is considered to have fallen when a player has made a valid claim to that effect. The arbiter shall refrain from signalling a flag fall, but he may do so if both flags have fallen.*

*2. To claim a win on time, the claimant must stop both clocks and notify the arbiter. For the claim to be successful the claimant's flag must remain up and his opponent's flag down after the clocks have been stopped.*

*3. If both flags have fallen as described in (1) and (2), the arbiter shall declare the game drawn.*

## **Blitz**

***B2 Where there is adequate supervision of play, (one arbiter for one game) the Competition Rules and Article A2 (no obligation to write the moves – GG) shall apply.***

***B3 Where supervision is inadequate the following shall apply:***

*a. Play shall be governed by the Rapidplay Laws as in Appendix A except where they are overridden by the following Laws of Blitz.*

*b. Article A4.c does not apply.*

*c. 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. However, if the opponent cannot checkmate the player's king by any possible series of legal moves, then the claimant is entitled to claim a draw before he has made his own move. Once the opponent has made his own move, an illegal move cannot be corrected **unless mutually agreed without intervention of an arbiter.***

The most significant change here is that the “normal” Laws of Chess shall be applied in Rapid and Blitz chess in case of adequate supervision. If the supervision is inadequate, the “old” rules with very few changes are still valid.

At the next Presidential Board meeting, it will be decided whether the Rules of Chess960 (Fischer Random Chess) will be added as an Appendix to the Laws of Chess. There is a petition signed by many chessplayers (i. e., Anand, Kramnik and Kosteniuk) to include these rules.

I already mentioned that we discussed the revisions to the Laws of Chess in two meetings totalling seven hours. As usual, we needed much more time for these discussions. I would have liked to discuss many other points unrelated to the revision of the Laws of Chess, but unfortunately this was impossible.

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Let us go to some questions:

## **Progressive Scores**

I would like to thank all the readers who sent explanations on how to calculate the Progressive Score of a player in a Swiss Tournament. As a matter of fact, I do know how to calculate it, but I still wonder about the value of the system. In fact, the only advantage of Progressive Score compared to Buchholz and Sonneborn-Berger is that players can calculate

the Progressive Scores of all players before the start of the last round.

Finally, let me quote **Stewart Reuben**:

“You wrote about sum of Progressive Scores and that you did not understand it, or its use. Perhaps you meant this or perhaps you were making a political statement. For me, all tiebreak systems are nonsense when based on the results of the opponents, such as Buchholz or Sonneborn-Berger. Basically they are all nonsense anyway. We are solely talking about Swisses.”

Maybe Stewart was the only one who understood what I meant. I have my doubts about almost all tiebreak systems. In my opinion using the ratings of the players is reasonable. The average of the opponents' ratings of a player should be calculated, but with the caveat that all players need to have a reliable rating and the highest and lowest rating of the opponents of each player should be eliminated

**Question** Dear Sir, in a team chess championship, match points are used as a tie break system: if a team wins 4-0, 3½-½, 3-1 or 2½-1½, two match points are granted; in case of 2-2, one match point is granted; and if a team loses, zero match points are granted. Why not use a system that awards 5, 4, 3, 2, and 1 for a greater margin of wins, instead of awarding only two match points for any kind of win. Thank you. **Pranesh Yadav (India)**

**Answer** I have a question for you: why not use game points? For sure, this results in more score groups.

**Question** Hi, according to the tie-break rules adopted by FIDE in 2007, teams that are level on match points are sorted according to the following criterion:

a) the sum of Sonneborn-Berger points, which are calculated as follows:

The match points of each opponent, excluding the opponent who scored the lowest number of match points, multiplied by the number of game points achieved against this opponent.

This is an ambiguous approach, since most often you will encounter a situation where there is more than one team with the lowest number of match points among your opponents. Since you most likely scored differently against those with the lowest number of match points the question arises, which of these scores should you deduct from your overall Berger? Regards, **Wojtek Bartelski (Poland)**

**Answer** I asked Mr. Krause, one of the members of the Pairings Committee in Dresden, what should be done. It is quite simple. In these cases the Committee also calculated the Sonneborn-Berger Score of the teams with the same number of match points, and the team with the lowest Sonneborn-Berger Score was excluded.

**Question** Dear Sir, say in a Blitz tournament the following situations arise:

**Question 1** Player A checkmates Player B, but in time-trouble does not realize it and Player A captures Player B's queen, thereby making an illegal move. Player B then replies by capturing Player A's king. At which point Player A claims an illegal move by Player B. What should the Arbiter decide? Is it true that *mate means the end of the game*?

**Question 2** In extreme mutual time trouble Player A wants to promote a pawn to a queen. Finding no queen, he tries to pause the clock in order to call the arbiter. However, Player B interferes and the clock gets set to 0:00 for both players. How should the Arbiter handle this?

**Question 3** In Blitz, Player A makes a move and Player B immediately responds without allowing the clock to be pressed by Player A, is it in the FIDE laws of Chess that a player can only make his move when the opponent has completed his move after pressing his clock?

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

**Answer 1** Yes, checkmating a king ends the game immediately. But what to do if nobody notices it? Then the game continues and as you mentioned the last claimed illegal move is decisive, because if a player does not claim that his opponent made an illegal move, he accepts this move as legal.

**Answer 2** If a queen is not available at the moment of pawn promotion, the player has the right to stop both clocks and to ask for the arbiter's assistance. This means that Player B was absolutely wrong when he did not allow Player A to stop the clocks. The arbiter should punish Player B, and the most adequate penalty in this case is to give some extra time to Player A. If Player A notices that Player B's clock shows 0:00, Player A can claim a win.

**Answer 3** You describe the following situation: Player A makes a move and before he can stop his clock Player B makes his following move. Recently there were several examples of this kind of incident and I mentioned these cases in previous columns. I always referred to Article 6.8.a:

*During the game each player, having made his move on the chessboard, shall stop his own clock and start his opponent's clock. A player must always be allowed to stop his clock. His move is not considered to have been completed until he has done so, unless the move that was made ends the game. (See Articles 5.1, and 5.2)*

Essential is the sentence:

*A player must always be allowed to stop his clock.*

It is almost impossible to always see what is going on in Blitz games or even during time trouble in "normal" games. The solution is that Player A, even after Player B has made his move, always has the right to stop his own clock and to start the opponent's clock.

**Question** Dear Mr. Gijssen, some years ago, I was playing in a tournament in the United States when my opponent objected to my chess pieces. I was black. The pieces were the House of Staunton Zagreb '59, with finials on the kings, queens and bishops of opposite colors.



My question is simple: can the TD uphold an objection to this set? It seems rather standard for FIDE events. The rules of chess seem to indicate that he could not, but the TD told me that he would be inclined to uphold this objection, since my opponent was a far more experienced player than myself. He also objected to my clock as well, which was a Dual-timer model. So we used his Chronos. Fortunately, the board – a standard roll-up of green and buff squares – met his approval. Thanks so much, **Brenan R. Nierman (USA)**

**Answer** I understand that it is very difficult for an arbiter to decide which pieces are acceptable and which pieces are not. The FIDE Handbook describes which pieces are acceptable as follows:

### ***1 Material***

*Chess pieces should be made of wood, plastic or an imitation of these materials.*

### ***2 Height, weight, proportions***

*The king`s height should be about 9.5 cm. The diameter of the king`s base should measure 40 to 50% of its height.*

*The size of the other pieces should be proportionate to their height and form; other elements such as stability, aesthetic considerations etc., may also be taken into account. The weight of the pieces should be suitable for comfortable moving and stability.*

### ***3 Form, style of pieces***

*Recommended for use in FIDE competitions are pieces of new Staunton style. The pieces should be shaped so as to be clearly distinguishable from one another. In particular the top of the king should distinctly differ from that of the queen. The top of the bishop may bear a notch or be of a special colour clearly distinguishing it from that of the pawn.*

### ***4 Colour of the pieces***

*The dark pieces should be brown or black, or of other dark shades of these colours. The light pieces may be white or cream, or of other light colours. The natural colour of wood (walnut, maple, etc.) may also be used for this purpose. The pieces should not be shiny and should be pleasing to the eye.*

From this description everyone can check the correctness of the pieces. I would like to point out that the style is *recommended*; therefore, it is very difficult to make a complaint and the arbiter should decide.

The clocks you mentioned are not approved by FIDE, as far as I know. This means the arbiter should make the decision.

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Have a question for Geurt Gijssen? Perhaps he will reply in his next [ChessCafe.com](http://ChessCafe.com) column. Please include your name and country of residence.

***Yes, I have a question for Geurt!***

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