



COLUMNISTS

An Arbiter's Notebook

Geurt Gijssen



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Rob Hartoch, R.I.P.

The chess world has again lost a very colorful personality: the Dutchman Rob Hartoch. Rob started his chess career as a very promising chess player. Without any support of the chess federation he came second after Kurajica in the 1965 Youth World Championships in Barcelona. And he was very proud that he won against Paul Keres in the IBM Tournament Amsterdam 1971.



Rob Hartoch

Rob was quite an active person. I saw him many times as a commentator in chess tournaments, he was a chess journalist, a very good youth trainer, and he gave simulms. He was also very popular as the initiator of "fighting with the bear," in which the opponent started with five minutes and he (the bear) with two minutes on the clock. He was member of the Arbiters' Committee of the Dutch Chess Federation and active as an arbiter in several tournaments. It was he who convinced me that Article 4.6 should again be included in the Laws of Chess.

As a young chess player he was very familiar with the Laws of Chess, which in itself was very remarkable at that time. His game against Jan Timman in the Dutch Championship of 1972 caused quite a stir.

Hartoch, Robert (2430) – Timman, Jan (2480)

NED-(2), 1972

Queen's Pawn Opening [A47]

1.d4 Nf6 2.Nf3 b6 3.g3 Bb7 4.Bg2 c5 5.0-0 cxd4 6.b3 Bxf3 7.Bxf3 Nc6 8.Bb2 e5 9.c3 e4 10.Bg2 dxc3 11.Nxc3 d5 12.f3 Bc5+ 13.Kh1 h5 14.fxe4 h4 15.Nxd5 Nh5 16.e3 Qg5 17.Nc7+ Ke7 18.Nd5+ Ke8 19.Nc7+ Ke7 20.Nd5+



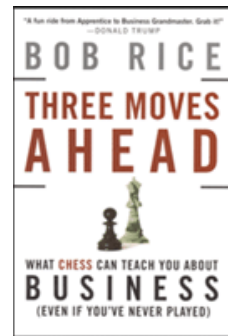
Rob was not afraid of 20...Ke8, because he knew that Timman could not claim a draw based on triple repetition of position, as when the position first appeared Timman had not lost the right to castle.

20...Ke8 21.Rf5 Nxc3+ 22.hxc3 hxc3+ 23.Kg1 Bxe3+ 24.Kf1 Qh6 25.Qg4 Bd4 26.Bxd4 Nxd4 27.Nc7+ Kf8 28.Nxa8 Qe3 29.Rd1 g6 30.Rxf7 + Kxf7 31.Qd7+ Kf8 32.Qxd4 Qf4+ 33.Ke2 Rh2 34.Qd6+ Qxd6 35.Rxd6 Rxc2+ 36.Kf3 Rxa2 37.Kxc3 Rc2 38.Rxc6 Rc3+ 39.Kf4 Rxb3 40.Nc7 a5 41.e5 a4 42.e6 Rb1 43.Nd5 Re1 44.e7+ Kf7 45.Rf6+ Kg7 1-0

Many mourners attended his funeral. May he rest in peace.

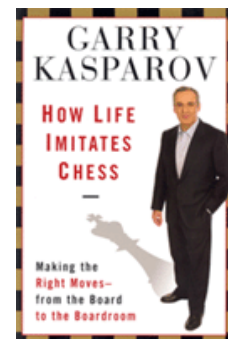
Question Hello Mr. Gijssen, what is the best tiebreak for Swiss team tournaments? Thank you, **Mohammad (Iran)**

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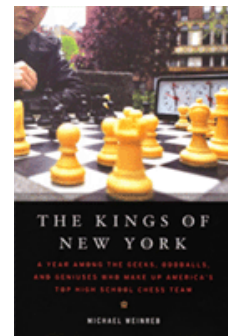
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Answer This question is very difficult to answer. It depends on the type of Swiss system that is applied. Here is the list as published in the FIDE Handbook:

(a) Match points in Team Competitions decided by game points, for example: 2 points for a won match where a team has scored more points than the opposing team. 1 point for a drawn match 0 points for a lost match

(b) Game points in Team Competitions decided by match points. The tie is broken by determining the total number of points scored.

(c) Combined match and game points The combined total of match and game points may be used.

(d) Direct Encounter If all the tied teams have met each other, then the sum of points from these encounters is used.

Question Dear Sir, with reference to the discussions in your February 2009 and March 2009 columns about starting the game with a missing king or with two queens, etc. I must draw attention to Articles 2.2 and 2.3.

Article 2.2 specifies the pieces that each player should have at the start of the game: one king, one queen, two rooks, two bishops, two knights and eight pawns. While Article 2.3 specifies how these pieces are placed on the chessboard at the start of the game. Now, we have two issues: the correct numbers of pieces and how they are placed. I think most people get confused when they come to Appendix 4 concerning Rapid Chess, where Article A4(a) states

*Once each player has completed three moves, no claim can be made regarding **incorrect piece placement**, orientation of the chessboard or clock setting.*

This article is connected to the placement of pieces (Article 2.3). It has nothing to do with the number of pieces (Article 2.2.) This means that Article 2.2 is valid all the way. Therefore, if a game was started with a missing king, etc., then – in my opinion – the whole game is invalid, no matter how many moves have passed. I hope this comment is useful.
Yours, **Naji Alradhi (UAE)**

Answer I have to admit that I never thought in this direction, but your remark is completely correct. It is in accordance with a strict interpretation of the Laws of Chess and its Appendix.

Question Dear Mr. Gijssen, regarding the Swiss pairing system “04.1. Swiss System Based on Rating.” Let us consider a situation where Player B forfeits the game to Player A. I am interested in knowing how to deal with such a game in the history of both players. As a matter of fact we have the following rules:

- **A5. Byes** Should the total number of players be (or become) odd, one player ends up unpaired. This player receives a bye: no opponent, no color, 1 point. A bye is considered to be a downfloat.
- **B.1 b)** A player who has received a point without playing, either through a bye or due to an opponent not appearing in time, shall not receive a bye.
- **B.5** No player shall receive an identical float in two consecutive rounds.
- **B.6** No player shall have an identical float as two rounds before. Player A will get 1 point, no color, and no opponent and cannot receive a bye (as defined in A5) in the following rounds.

Question 1 Is Player A also a downfloater?

Question 2 What will Player B get? I guess 0 points, no color, and no opponent. But what about his floater and/or bye history? Is Player B also a downfloater? If he has not yet received a bye (as in A5), can he get one in the following rounds?

These questions arise as I observed that some pairing programs do not consider Player A as a downfloater, while others consider Player B as a downfloater and they also prevent him from getting a 1 point Bye in case of an odd number of players in future rounds. Can you please give me your opinion on the matter? Thank you very much for your attention,
Luigi Forlano (Italy)

Answer 1 Only the player who receives a point is considered as a downfloater. The philosophy is that a downfloater has an easy game because he met a weaker player. And what is easier than to receive a full point without playing a game.

Answer 2 A player who lost the game by forfeit will not be considered as a downfloater. This is in line with what I mentioned above. Why should he have an “advantage” of a downfloat? If there is an odd number of players, he can get a bye in one of the next rounds.

Question The following is an extract from the FIDE Handbook on how ages are calculated to determine if a player may participate in a specific event or not.

F.III. Date Limit for Age in Junior Tournaments

Specification of age in Junior Tournaments

Approved by the 1973 General Assembly. Amended by the 1986 and 1994 General Assemblies.

1. For the purpose of complying with the age-limit of a junior competition, the age of a participant shall be defined by his age on 1st January of the year in which the competition is held.
2. (GA '94) For example, the specific regulations of a competition for players youth-x years of age shall state this in the following form of words: "The participant must have been born on or after 1st January 19nn." This means the participant will not have reached his xth birthday on this date.
3. The year specifying the age limit is calculated by subtracting x from the year in which the competition is held. Example: In a competition for youth-20 held in 1986, $nn=86-20=66$ "The participant must have been born on or after 1st January 1966." Example: In a competition for under-14, held in 1986, $nn=86-14=72$ "The participant must have been born on or after 1st January 1972."

My understanding is that: Point 1 uses a specific date, namely 1 Jan 19nn as a cut-off to determine the age of a player ("the age of a participant shall be defined by his age on 1st January").

Point 2 seems to contradict itself because on the one hand it says "The participant must have been born on or after 1st January 19nn." and then immediately after that "This means the participant will not have reached his xth birthday on this date."

Point 3 uses a whole year to determine the age. For example,

- Player A is born 01 Jan 1991
- Player B is born 02 Jan 1991
- Player C is born 31 Dec 1991
- Player A turns 19 on 01 Jan 2010
- Player B turns 19 on 02 Jan 2010, but is still 18 on 01 Jan 2010
- Player C turns 19 on 31 Dec 2010, but is still 18 on 01 Jan 2010

Are all three players suppose to play in 2010 as Under 20 or can players B & C still play in the Under 18 age group as they are still 18 on 1st Jan 2010? Can you please help me interpret the above rules? Regards, **Ronel Piek (South Africa)**

Answer In the FIDE Handbook point F3 you will find now the following:

1. For the purpose of complying with the age-limit of a junior or youth competition, the age of the participant shall be based on the year in which he was born

2. The year specifying the age limit is calculated by subtracting the age limit of the competition from the year in which the competition is held

The year specifying the age limit is calculated by subtracting the age limit of the competition from the year in which the competition is held.

I assume that this new text solves your problem. Still, it is probably a good idea to insert the following statement into the Regulations of a specific competition:

Only players who reach the age of 20 years or less in the year in which the tournament commences, are entitled to participate.

For another age group, for instance, under 18, you have only to change the number 20 to 18.

Question I am a designated arbiter in our small town of Bogo, Cebu, Philippines. I am not a titled or rated player, yet I have done extensive research about Swiss system format and its tiebreak system. Can you give me advice on how to acquire a FIDE Certificate or FA? Sincerely yours, **Roldan (Philippines)**

Answer The FA title can be acquired by taking a course and an exam for this title. FIDE organizes many courses worldwide. My advice is to approach your federation and ask where and when the next course will be organized. You could also take the course in another country, in which case you should approach FIDE.

Question Dear Mr. Gijssen, There was no arbiter present when the following incident occurred at our club championship. Both players were in serious time-trouble. White moved a knight from g4 to e6 – clearly, an illegal move – and released the knight. After Ng4-f6 (check) Kg8-h8 (only legal move) Qxh7 he would have mated.

Before White could press his clock, Black answered immediately and moved his rook from d8 to d1 checking his opponent's king on g1. This was a back rank mate, as White had pawns on f2, g2 and h2!

Only now did White realize the irregularity of his preceding move and he wanted to reinstate the position before Ng4-e6, whereas Black – who had not realized the illegality either – insisted upon the mate. Is this correct? Did Black “have the move” before White pressed the clock? Sincerely,
Robert Beigel (Germany)

Answer I assume that the game you described was a normal game. Important is Article 7.4.a:

If during a game it is found that an illegal move (...) has been completed, the position immediately before the irregularity shall be reinstated. (...)

Essential in this Article is the remark that the illegal move must be found during the game. And the question is: Is the illegal move found during the game?

Is the game over after ...Rd1? Let us check Article 5.1:

The game is won by the player who has checkmated his opponent's king. This immediately ends the game, provided that the move producing the checkmate position was a legal move.

If I take this Article into consideration, I have to conclude that the game is won for Black, because the final move ...Rd1 is legal and the white king is checkmated. The fact that the player of the white pieces has not stopped his clock is irrelevant.

Question Dear Geurt, My observation is that competitive chess players, particularly at lower levels are becoming less and less ethical at the board, with players exploiting any possible loopholes in the rules. Here is an example: I was incensed at observing an elderly player forgetting to press his clock while a teenage opponent gave all the appearance of thinking. The arbiter was well aware of the situation, but could/did not act. With seconds left the old man realized his error and restarted his opponent's clock whereupon the youngster replied immediately. I always whisper “clock” when my opponent leaves it running. The infamous 10.2. rule is tailor-made for unethical behavior!

Surely a good arbiter should keep a note of any unethical behavior and censure bad sportsmanship. Golf is a game of which chess players should take note. The courtesy and ethical demeanor shown by golfers, even to the extent of censuring themselves, is an example to be followed. **Nick Barnett (South Africa)**

Answer My experience is that bad behavior is not limited to young chess players. I have seen many cases where older players did not warn an opponent about pressing their clock. This behavior is ubiquitous. However, I am not as pessimistic as you appear to be; I have a positive opinion about the behavior of chess players in general.

Question Dear Geurt, regarding your answer to Michel Gatineau's question in the May 2009 column: Why will the time control – 90 minutes with 30 seconds cumulative increment for each move starting from the first move – only be valid until 2010.06.30? Based on sixty moves, this gives a four-hour session. This time control suits many tournaments, especially those played over weekends. Many thanks and best regards,
Günther van den Bergh (South Africa)

Answer As you may see all allowed time controls for *title tournaments* have at least two periods. I think this is a good measure because it allows for a period of relaxation during the game. I also like the proposed time controls because one system is applicable in each: the whole game is without increment or the whole game is with an increment from move one. The disturbing practice of having one period played without an increment and the next period played with an increment has been banned. Thus, every chess player knows that he plays the whole game according to the same rules.

For weekend tournaments, the time control you mention is still possible. The only point is, that from July 1, 2010 it is not possible to make a norm in such a tournament. *Such a tournament may be rated*, because for sixty moves each player has 120 minutes. I support the decision that title norms must be achieved in tournaments with proper time controls.

Question Recently Carlsen continued to play the endgame R+N vs. R with Ivanchuk for more than fifty moves before he offered the draw. After the game Ivanchuk wondered why the arbiter did not intervene as always happens in the Amber Tournaments. I assume that this rule is a specific rule only for Amber Tournaments. In my opinion, if I understand the Laws of Chess well, the player has to always claim a draw and the arbiter cannot intervene. And if this is the case, even the player does not have to prove that his claim is correct. The player only has to claim and the arbiter has to check the claim. Am I right? Best regards, **Peter Doggers, Editor-in-chief ChessVibes (The Netherlands)**

Answer Yes, you are right. The player has to take the initiative and make a claim. Only in case of an ending that cannot be won by either player, the arbiter may/must intervene: bishop vs. bishop (both bishop on the same colored squares), king + knight vs. king, king + bishop vs. king, king vs. king. This is the application of Article 9.6:

The game is drawn when a position is reached from which a checkmate cannot occur by any possible series of legal moves, even with the most unskilled play. This immediately ends the game, provided that the move producing this position was legal.

As you probably know there are two competitions in the Amber Tournament: a blindfold and a rapid competition. In the blindfold competition the player can see only the last played move on the screen of the laptop in front of him. Everybody else (spectators, arbiters, and operators of the transmission system) can see all moves. It is absolutely impossible for a player to see whether he can claim a draw based on the fifty-move rule. Therefore, the players suggested that something should be done and the organizers decided that at the moment fifty moves are played by each player without a pawn move or any capture a message will appear that either player may claim a draw.

Note that we do not use the rule that a player may claim that the fifty-move rule is applicable with the next played move. In the same way it was decided to inform the players that either player may claim a draw if the same position has appeared three times and the same player has the move. To avoid any confusion, the same rule applies also for the rapid competition. In the blindfold competition the message appears on the screens of both players. In the rapid competition the arbiter informs the players verbally.

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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