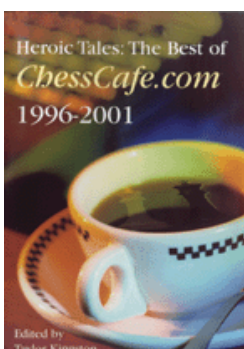




COLUMNISTS

An Arbiter's Notebook

Geurt Gijssen



CHESSTHEATRE

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Declare to Resign

Question Dear Geurt, I see in the 2009 revised Laws that Article 7.4 has been changed according to the suggestion presented to you in [April 2008](#). Now after an illegal move the situation is governed by Articles 4.3 and 4.6 instead of just 4.3. Can we consider this as an achievement from the chess composition community? Best wishes, **Roberto Osorio (Argentina)**

Answer Yes, you may consider it a result of your letter to me. So, you see, the Rules Committee does listen to the remarks we receive from chess players.

Question Dear Geurt, I need an interpretation of Article 5.1, the completion of the game:

a. 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.

b. The game is won by the player whose opponent declares he resigns. This immediately ends the game.

What does it mean "to declare to resign"? Let's examine the following: A player proposes a draw to his opponent in front of the arbiter and after this proposal the two opponents shake hands. Does it mean the end of the game? Or should the arbiter ask the players to write the result on the scoresheets and only then accept the result as final? Can a verbal declaration of resignation be accepted as a final result? Can a player ignore a clear verbal declaration and pretend that it was misunderstood?

My opinion is that the arbiter must ask both opponents to sign a complete scoresheet and only then to accept the final result of the game. Also, the arbiters must collect the scoresheets of all the games he is responsible for and attach them to the result sheet or to the protocol for a team match. In Greece we have had huge disagreements about this question. Please let me know your opinion. Thank you and my best regards, **Viron Tsorbatzoglou (Greece)**

Answer I know it sounds very bureaucratic, but to avoid all kinds of misunderstandings arbiters are advised to ask the players to confirm the result by writing the results on the scoresheets and to confirm it by signing the scoresheets. This procedure also benefits the players, and it should be done before the players begin to analyze the game.

Let me share with you one of my experiences. I saw two players analyzing their game. I went to their board and asked the result, because it was not written on the scoresheets. Each player claimed to have won. The player of the white pieces told me that White sacrificed an exchange and it looked winning; therefore, Black resigned. During the analysis White demonstrated that the sacrifice was unsound and that Black was in fact winning. The player of the black pieces said that immediately after White had sacrificed the exchange, the player of the white pieces saw his mistake and resigned.

Whom should I believe? Playing another game was no option and declaring the result 0-0 was unfair to the player who told me the truth. I saw only one option: I convinced the players to agree to a draw, although I was completely sure that the player of the white pieces told me the truth. I based my opinion on the body language of both players: the player of the white pieces was a young boy who started to cry, while his opponent remained very cool and told me that there was no proof that he was lying. I tried to find witnesses, but there were none available. The next day someone came forward and told me that the player of the black pieces had really resigned. I asked him to confirm it in written form, but he refused. Probably I should have followed my intuition.

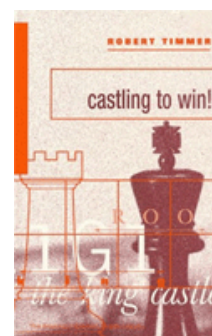
Question Hi, Mr. Gijssen. Can there be more than one legal pairing (using FIDE pairing rules) per round in a Swiss-based tournament, or is every tournament round defined by one and only one legal pairing? Also, in a second round of a Swiss-based tournament with an odd number of players (with all being FIDE-rated), what exactly determines which player gets the bye (assuming the last ten seeded players all lost)? Thank you and best regards, **Jovan Petronic (Serbia)**

Answer There are many types of Swiss Pairing systems. The pairings in a

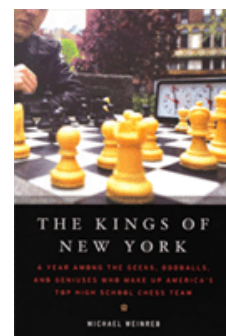
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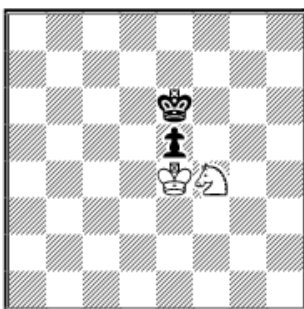
score group (this is a group of players with the same score) can be based on the ratings of the players in a score group, or the Buchholz score, or the average rating of the opponents. Also important is how the floater is chosen in case there is an odd number of players in a score group. There are systems in which the highest ranked player of a score group floats down (he will be paired against a player with a lower score). Another possibility is that the players are paired and the remaining player floats down.

But it does not matter which system is applied, one thing must be sure: the pairings must be unique. This means that it does not matter who is the arbiter or what the program is for a specific type of Swiss Pairing system, the pairings must be the same.

Regarding your second question, it must be written in the procedure of pairings of the Swiss Pairing system applied in an event.

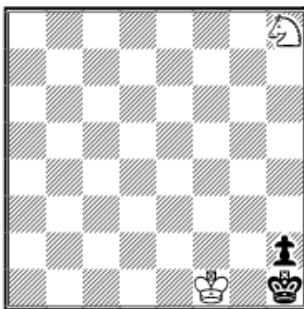
Question Dear Mr. Gijssen an interesting discussion online lead to the following questions regarding K+N vs. K+P. If the player with the pawn suffers a flag fall, he usually loses because mate is possible. However, what if

1. Black to move in the following position:



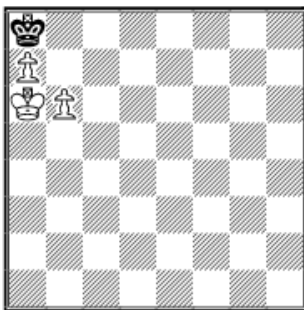
Black touches his pawn, but fails to complete his only legal move (exf4) before his flag falls and the flag fall is claimed?

2. White to move in the following position:



Black's flag has fallen. White (not aware of the flag fall) touches his knight, but realizes before making a move (which would lead to stalemate) that Black's flag has fallen?

On a related issue, what if, in the position



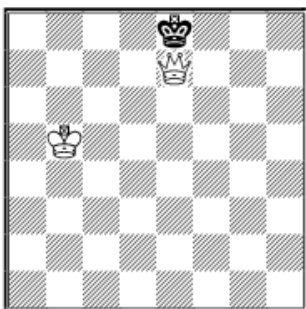
White touches his b-pawn, but fails to complete his only legal move (b6-b7) before his flag falls and the flag fall is claimed? Thank you sincerely in advance, **Mathijs Janssen (The Netherlands)**

Answer I refer to Article 6.9

Except where one of the Articles: 5.1.a, 5.1.b, 5.2.a, 5.2.b, 5.2.c applies, if a player does not complete the prescribed number of moves in the allotted time, the game is lost by the player. 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.

In my opinion position three is the simplest to answer. The player of the white pieces overstepped the time, but the position is such that the player of the black pieces, having only a bare king, can never checkmate the white king. Therefore, the draw is completely covered by Article 6.9.

Positions one and two are more complicated. The question is: Do we have to consider the position after the touched piece was played? I am inclined to say “Yes.” These two examples are of forced moves, but I would like to add another position:



It is obvious that Black has the move. In this position the player of the black pieces oversteps the time. Is it lost for him? I do not think so, because the player of the white pieces cannot win by any series of legal moves. The only legal move is forced: Kxe7 and the remaining position is a draw. I consider positions one and two analogous to this example.

Question Dear Mr. Gijssen, I am an average chess player who enjoys reading your monthly column. My question concerns the following hypothetical situation: Imagine Player A has an overwhelming position (i. e., K+R vs. K). Player B is about to give up, when he hears the melodious ring of Player A’s phone. Such a miracle sometimes happens in Chessland, doesn’t it?

Unfortunately for Player A, the arbiter isn’t deaf yet and is walking right to their chessboard with a sad smile on his face. Player A is a gentleman – let’s say this story did not happen in France! – and accepts his fate. So Player A lost his game, that’s a fact. However, according to each and every chess player or arbiter I asked, Player B should win the game! I disagree. According to the Laws of Chess (5.2): “The game is drawn when the player to move has no legal move and his king is not in check.” Player B can’t win, so I think the correct result should be: 0-½. How would you decide? Thanks for your answer. Best regards, **Olivier Le Ray (France)**

Answer I refer to Article 12.3.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.

You are right. For sure, Player A loses the game. Player B can never win the game, because a sole king is insufficient material. He does not deserve the full point and he does not deserve 0, so he receives ½. The result of the game is indeed 0-½.

Question I refer to Article 5.1 and 5.2 of the Laws of Chess:

5.1.a. 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.

5.1.b. The game is won by the player whose opponent declares he resigns. This immediately ends the game.

5.2.a. The game is drawn when the player to move has no legal move and his king is not in check. The game is said to end in ‘stalemate’. This immediately ends the game, provided that the move producing the stalemate position was legal.

5.2.b. The game is drawn when a position has arisen in which neither player can checkmate the opponent’s king with any series of legal moves. The game is said to end in a ‘dead position’. This immediately ends the game, provided that the move producing the position was legal. (See Article 9.6)

5.2.c. The game is drawn upon agreement between the two players during the game. This immediately ends the game. (See Article 9.1)

5.2.d. The game may be drawn if any identical position is about to appear or has appeared on the chessboard at least three times. (See Article 9.2)

5.2.e. The game may be drawn if each player has made at least the last 50 consecutive moves without the movement of any pawn and without any capture. (See Article 9.3)

Question 1: Why was it necessary to include the provision: “provided that the move producing the checkmate position was a legal move” in Articles 5.1a, 5.2a, and 5.2b? For example in 5.1a, if the move was illegal, then it cannot be checkmate. The illegal move has to be retracted and the player has to make a legal move.

Or was the provision included to cover the following situation: Player A played an illegal move that resulted in a checkmate. Both players did not realize that the move was illegal. They both thought it was checkmate and signed the scoresheet. Then Player B realized that the move was illegal. Or while having a quick analysis of the game, they realized that the move was illegal. Does the result stand or must the game continue from just before the illegal move was made? What if they have not yet signed the scoresheets?

Question 2: If the result stands, then why was it necessary to include the provision?

Question 3: If the result does not stand, then why was the same provision not included in Article 5.1b? What if the move that caused the player to resign was illegal?

Question 4: If the result does not stand, then why was the same provision not included in Article 5.2c? What if the move that caused the player to draw was illegal?

Many thanks. Cheers, **N.Y. Wong (Australia)**

Answer In situations of a claim via the triple repetition of position or fifty-move rule, the claim will normally be checked by the arbiter and he will discover whether the last move is legal or not.

In cases of a checkmate, the winning player may call the arbiter and the arbiter will check the position. But if he does his job well, he will check the legality of the last move. I understand that this happens very rarely, but it should be the normal procedure. If both players agree that a king is checkmated and afterwards it is found that was not the case, the result stands, unless it is stalemate. Then the draw stands. Regarding 5.2.c, a draw stands if both players agree.

Question Hi Geurt, I did a post on my [blog](#) about a question you addressed in your [July 2009](#) column:

“A game begins with a reversed white king and white queen and play continues **1.e4 e5 2.Bc4 d6 3.Kh5**, when Black responds **3...g6** mate.”

We’ve had a little back-and-forth on it and it would be interesting to get your feedback on the arguments presented thus far. There are discussions of quite a few aspects of the situation. **Leon Shernoff (USA)**

Answer I am quite happy that the two persons who posted responses on your website share my opinion. As I wrote before, I am not happy with the situation that result of the game **1.e4 e5 2.Bc4 d6 3.Kh5 g6#** stands. I will discuss it during the next FIDE congress. Article 4.3 deals with touched pieces and it begins with the following sentence:

Except as provided in Article 4.2, if the player having the move deliberately touches on the chessboard:

Essential is the word “deliberately.” In my opinion, White had in mind to play the queen to h5 and not the king. I will keep you informed.

Question Hi, Geurt. In a game played with mechanical clocks at a time limit of two hours for each player for the entire game, the player with the white pieces had around thirty minutes and his opponent only a minute. White had better chances to win in a rook ending with two pawns against rook and one pawn. I was playing my own game, but was monitoring events in the game I am asking about.

At one point the black player claimed a draw via Article 10.2, saying that White was not doing enough to win the game. The arbiter ignored the claim, without awarding two minutes to the white player, and the game continued. Finally, Black’s flag fell and Black again claimed a draw via Article 10.2.

The arbiter then asked the players how each of them would play the ending. The white player suggested that the ending was probably a draw if played correctly. But again, White has two pawns + rook against pawn + rook. If anyone can win this ending it is White. Black also gave his thoughts of how to save the ending. However, in my opinion, this is incorrect. Who cares about the thoughts of the players. The claim is about whether the player with the time advantage is making efforts to win by normal means, not if the ending is a theoretical draw.

In my view the white player was trying to win, because after the first claim he started to consume more time on his clock. In fact, he finished the game with only three minutes left. The arbiter postponed his decision until a few days later when he award a draw saying that

- The ending was a draw (according to a GM he consulted).
- Anyone in White's situation could take more time to give a false impression of trying to win.

Was the arbiter's decision right? How can an arbiter characterize the attitude of a player as to whether he is trying to win a game? I understand that sometimes a player can try to win on time, but in this case, in my opinion, White was trying to win. Best Regards, **Manuel López (México)**

Answer It is impossible for me to comment on the decision of the arbiter. I refer to Article 10.2.d:

The decision of the arbiter shall be final relating to (a), (b) and (c).

Nevertheless, I will also refer to Article 10.2.b:

If the arbiter postpones his decision, the opponent may be awarded two extra minutes and the game shall continue, if possible in the presence of an arbiter. The arbiter shall declare the final result later in the game or as soon as possible after a flag has fallen. He shall declare the game drawn if he agrees that the final position cannot be won by normal means, or that the opponent was not making sufficient attempts to win by normal means.

I will not criticize the arbiter's decision, but I disagree with the fact that he declared his decision after a few days. The rule stipulates very clearly that he has to make his decision as soon as possible. In 2007, the wording for Article 10.2b was discussed in the RTRC, and we had to choose between "immediately" and "as soon as possible." We chose the latter, but this does not mean "after a few days."

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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