



COLUMNISTS

An Arbiter's Notebook

Geurt Gijssen



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Fifty-move Confusion

Question Hello, Geurt. Nowadays there is no specific rule for a draw by perpetual check. Yet somehow I remember there being one; where you could claim a draw by showing the arbiter that you could keep checking whatever the opponent did against any legal move. My memory is that the rule was scrapped just a few years ago, because threefold repetition and the fifty-move rule are good enough. After a bit of Googling around, I noticed firstly that the rule was removed much earlier than I could possibly remember (in the fifties?) and secondly that nobody seems to know when exactly it happened. Do you know when the rule was removed from the Laws of Chess? Are there older versions of the Laws available online somewhere? Thank you very much, **Remco Gerlich (The Netherlands)**

Answer I am not sure whether perpetual check was ever included in the Laws of Chess. Kazic's *The Chess Competitor's Handbook*, published in 1980, does not mention it. But there is a very interesting item in this Handbook, which was dates back to 1958:

FIDE INTERPRETATION ART 12.4 (1958A) *Question: Can a player lose the game by exceeding the time-limit when the position is such that no mate is possible, whatever continuation the players may employ (this concerns Part II of the Laws)?*

Answer: The Commission declares that the Laws must be interpreted in such a way that in this case, as in the case of perpetual check, a draw cannot be decreed against the will of one of the players before the situation in Article 12.4 is attained.

Article 12.4 deals with the fifty-move rule. My understanding is that the player could not claim a draw indicating perpetual check, but he had to wait for a claim until the moment that the conditions of the fifty-move rule are fulfilled. Strange enough, in this official interpretation the triple-repetition rule is not mentioned. But I am sure that a player could also claim a draw based on this rule. If perpetual check was included in the Laws of Chess, it was prior to 1955.

By the way, recently I asked the initiator of the Sofia Rules, why he included perpetual check in these rules, he told me that he was not aware that the FIDE Laws of Chess do not mention it.

Question I regularly play in blitz tournaments, but I find that in different regions of the country the arbiters have different approaches in regards to pawn promotion. Here are two scenarios: 1. The pawn reaches the eighth rank, I place the promoted piece, and I press the clock. 2. The pawn is removed from the seventh rank, I place the promoted piece, and I press the clock. (Here the pawn is never played to the square of promotion.) Is the second method considered an illegal move? Thanks for your help. **Mauricio Rãos, (Colombia)**

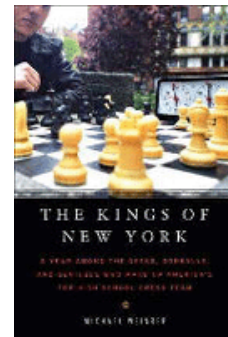
Answer Formally, the correct way of promotion is

1. Play the pawn to the eighth rank
2. Remove the pawn from the square
3. Put a new piece on the same square.

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When electronic boards were introduced in tournaments, the computer only accepted the promotion when it was done in this way. But this caused so much commotion that removing the pawn from the square on the seventh rank and placing a new piece on the eighth rank was also programmed in. In my opinion, both ways of promotion are acceptable. In your question you refer to Blitz games, but the method of promotion above applies to all kinds of chess.

Question Dear, Geurt. In a five-minute blitz tournament, Player A played an illegal move and pressed the clock. But at that time Player B's flag had already fallen. As soon as Player A completed his illegal move, both players claimed: Player A claimed a flag fall, Player B claimed an illegal move. After a discussion, Player A was declared the winner. Is this correct? Sincerely, **Fabien Krzewinski (Belgium)**

Answer Let me refer to Article 6.8 of the Laws of Chess:

A flag is considered to have fallen when the arbiter observes the fact or when either player has made a valid claim to that effect.

In Blitz games with inadequate supervision the arbiter may not call a flag fall. This means the flag is considered to have fallen when Player A makes a claim. Let us look at a number of scenarios:

First scenario

- Player B states: "I claim a win because you completed an illegal move."
- Player A, noticing the clocks, after Player B's claim: "No, no, I claim a win, because your flag is down."
- In this case I would declare Player B the winner of the game.

Second scenario

- Player A, watching the clocks, after he had completed an illegal move: "I claim a win, because your flag is down."
- Player B discovers after Player's A claim that Player A completed an illegal move: "I claim a win because you completed an illegal move."
- In this case I would declare Player A the winner of the game. Thus, the order of events is secondary to the order of the claims.

Third scenario

- Both players claim at the same moment or it is not clear to the arbiter who claimed first.
- I can imagine that some players and arbiters are inclined to give a win to Player A, because Player B's flag has fallen. But granting the claim for this reason is wrong, because the flag is considered to have fallen at the moment Player A claims.

It is important to stress that the order of events is not decisive. The arbiter may in fact accept both claims; yet to declare the result 0-0 does not seem fair. In my opinion ½-½ is fair.

Question Dear Geurt, the game Ivanchuk - Kamsky, Jermuk 2009 has given rise to a bit of discussion. Ivanchuk was down material but managed to last fifty moves. However, in the final position, he was completely lost. Something even more "crazy" happened at the Aeroflot 2008 between Nguyen - Vachier Legrave, where the Frenchman could claim a fifty-move rule draw despite there being a mate in two in the final position.

The Internet relay showed that Ivanchuk played Rd4+ in the final position, but surely one must point out fifty moves to the arbiter and not

make the move. What do arbiters think of these unfortunate ends? Is it a case of “tough luck” or is FIDE contemplating an addendum to the fifty-move rule to avoid these, albeit rare, cases? **G. Taylor (Denmark)**

Answer Bulletins are sometimes misleading. I checked the game Ivanchuk – Kamsky and also saw the move 114.Rd4+. I called the chief arbiter of the tournament and asked him whether the move 114.Rd4+ was played. He assured me that the move was not played, but that Ivanchuk indicated that he had the intention of playing this move. I usually indicate in the bulletin and in the PGN file that there was a draw claim. At the moment FIDE has no intention of changing the fifty-move rule.

Question Dear, Mr. Gijssen. I have two questions:

Question 1 We had a small Swiss System tournament in which the chief arbiter allowed the players to temporarily withdraw from some rounds. In doing so, he asked to be informed before the pairing in order to minimize the games won by forfeit. However, some players didn't follow his request. What surprised me was that the Buchholz scores of the players who didn't inform the arbiter were added up by their adjusted scores every round they left. But those who informed the arbiter beforehand were temporarily removed from the pairing list, so they didn't earn any Buchholz score in those rounds. If this is correct, why don't we allow the temporarily absent players to have their Buchholz scores added up in the same manner?

Question 2 We had a seminar on the FIDE Laws of Chess in which I received an interesting question. Suppose in a standard time control game (90 min + 30 sec), Player A was in time trouble with less than one minute, while Player B had more than 15 minutes. Player B captured a piece, and Player A, in a hurry, without waiting for Player B to press the clock, recaptured the piece immediately, with the expectation that Player B would press his clock straightaway. However, in order to keep Player A under time pressure, Player B declines to press the clock until he makes another move, thereby sacrificing his 30 second increment for his opponent's. I did not find that this violates any article in the FIDE Laws of Chess. However, this is not a good sportsmanship for any chess player. Am I missing something? Is it compulsory for players to press their own clocks or not? Best regards, **Teerapong Tovirat (Thailand)**

Answer 1 It is strange that players may temporarily withdraw from “some rounds.” I understand that it is possible to withdraw from one round, but several rounds is not normal.

I also do not understand why the players who announced in advance that they would not be in attendance were treated differently. As I understood you, the people who gave notice of their absence were treated worse than those who simply did not show up without notifying the arbiter. In the actual regulations for Swiss tournaments they are treated in the same way: the result for Buchholz calculations is considered as a draw against the player himself, but I must mention that there are many ongoing discussions about this way of calculating Buchholz scores.

Answer 2 There is nothing in the Laws of Chess that states a player must immediately press his clock after he has made his move. This means that Player B did not violate any Article of the Laws of Chess. However, how could we know that it was Player B's intention to keep Player A under pressure? Perhaps he simply forgot to press his clock. I would also like to mention that as long Player B's clock is running, Player A has some extra time to calculate his next move. I do not see any reason to blame Player B for his behavior.

Question Dear, Geurt. I found a discussion in a UseNet group about the Tkachiev incident in Kolkata that lead to Article 12.2:

Players are not allowed to leave the 'playing venue' without

permission from the arbiter. The playing venue is defined as the playing area, rest rooms, refreshment area, area set aside for smoking and other places as designated by the arbiter.

That article contains an enumeration of parts of the playing venue. While it is obvious that the playing area is a necessary part of the playing venue, this is not obvious for the rest of the list. Of course, rest rooms will exist at all tournaments, and it is too theoretical of a discussion to assume that no rest rooms are available. Also, I have never played anywhere without some kind of refreshment area in the playing venue. Sometimes, it was a strange definition (a restaurant two blocks away), but OK ... so that part of discussion might be regarded as too theoretical, too.

I don't think that "other places as designated by the arbiter" is a mandatory part of the list. I have played many tournaments without any "other places as designated by the arbiter" in the playing venue, and they were ELO-rated. The main discussion was in regards to an "area set aside for smoking." In many cases, chess clubs play their league matches in public buildings where smoking is forbidden. If the players are allowed to leave the building, then that might lead to discussions about fraud (cell phones, literature, computers). So an arbiter might decide that there is no "area set aside for smoking," and if a player thinks he must smoke during his game, he can choose between losing his game for smoking where it is forbidden and losing his game for leaving the playing venue without permission. Is an "area set aside for smoking" mandatory? Kind regards,
Christian Kuhn (Germany)

Answer Let us look at the list mentioned in Article 12.2:

- *Playing area*: this needs no discussion.
- *Rest rooms*: only the restrooms designated by the arbiter. Other restrooms are forbidden to the players as long as their games are in progress.
- *Refreshment area*: there are some tournaments with a room for drinks and snacks. The arbiter should arrange to have the room monitored so that the players do not speak with each other, or do not make phone calls, etc. I have to admit that it is quite difficult to control these rooms.
- *Smoking area*: When the rule came into force that smoking in the playing area was forbidden, a separate smoking area became mandatory. This happened around 1990 and it was even written in the Rating Regulations. From 2009 it is part of the Laws of Chess.
- *Other places as designated by the arbiter in the playing venue*: I remember two cases where I designated such a place. In one case the organizer rented a room in which a doctor could treat a player for diabetes injections during the round. In another three mothers with little babies were playing and they needed a space in which to feed the babies.

I agree that a smoking area is oftentimes problematic, especially during cold weather. In the summer it is easy to find a place outside to smoke that is close to the playing area, but during the winter it can be more difficult. Still, with the cooperation of the hotel managers or sporting center it was always possible for me to find a solution.

Question Dear, Mr. Gijssen. I would like to comment on the fourth question from the [August 2009](#) column. I understand the analogy between the position that you give and the first and second positions; because if we consider that the pawn (position one) and the knight (position two) were touched, the only legal moves result in draw. Therefore, the opponent can't win with legal moves. But, in my opinion, position one and two aren't equal to the third position; therefore, the analogy doesn't apply.

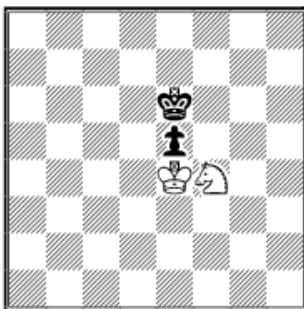
In the last position Black moves and the flag falls. I agree that White can't win with legal moves, because the only legal move is Kxe7. In the first and second positions the piece was touched, but the flag fell, and

according to Article 6.7.a the move is not considered to have been completed until the player has stopped the clock. With this in mind, in both cases the player whose flag fell loses the game. Even, in the second position, the knight was touched after the flag fell and the game was over; as a result it doesn't matter if the knight was touched or not or if this draws the game. Please, let me know your opinion. Thank you and my best regards, **Carolina Muñoz (Costa Rica)**

Answer You mention Article 6.7.a. I would like to mention Article 6.9 and especially the last part of this Article:

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.

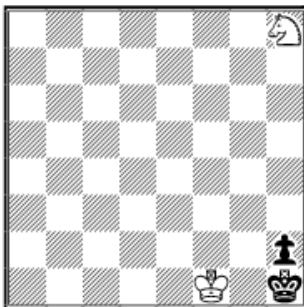
Let us consider the first position of the previous column:



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

There is no doubt that the only legal move the player of the black pieces can play is ...exf4, because he touched this piece. And there is also no doubt that the player of the white pieces cannot win the game after ...exf4. I assume you agree with me that these statements are correct. We differ only on one point: I include the move ...exf4 in the series of legal moves mentioned in Article 6.9 and you do not. I do not see any reason why this move should be excluded from the series of legal moves.

The same applies to 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?

The player of the white pieces touched the knight. He must play the only legal moves Ng6 or Nf7, and I again include these moves in the possible series of legal moves. By the way, I was aware that my answer in the previous column might elicit this kind of reaction.

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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