



## Time Scrambles

**Question** Dear, Mr. Gijssen. I have a question regarding the interpretation of Article 6.7.a of the FIDE Laws of Chess. The following happened in a German league game. In this position after Black's twenty-eighth move, White had fifty-six minutes and Black twenty seconds left to reach move forty:



White played **29.Rxf8**



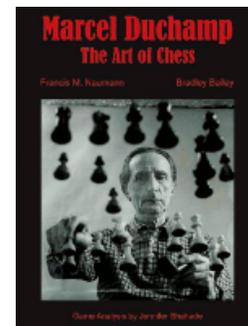
After having made his move on the board, the player of the white pieces reached to press the clock, while the player of the black pieces played **29... Kg7**, calmly waiting for White to complete his move:



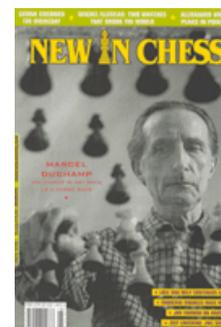
However, White complained that he must be allowed to complete his move by pressing his clock before Black was allowed to make any move on the board, while Black claimed that White had already completed his move on the board, so he should be allowed to make a move on the board as well.

To me, article 6.7.a is not entirely clear on this. It says that

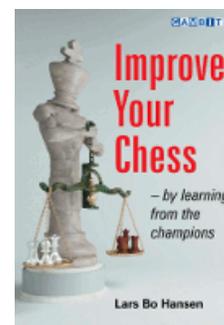
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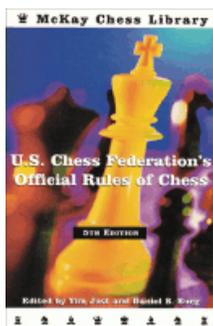


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### An Arbiter's Notebook

Geurt Gijssen



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*A player must always be allowed to stop his clock ... His move is not considered to have been completed until he has done so...*

In the given situation, it is my opinion that Black did nothing wrong, as White already completed his move on the board, while Black had no intention of hindering White from pressing the clock to complete his move.

Black, in making his own move during this process, can hardly be considered to violate White's right to "complete his move." Or am I wrong? Following White's logic, after having played 29.Rxf8 he could have waited for as long as fifty-six minutes before completing his move by pressing the clock, which is of course true. But why shouldn't Black be allowed to move in the meantime, not taking advantage of White's delay? With kind regards, **Stefan Herb (Germany)**

**Answer** Let me start with two definitions:

1. Making a move means to play a piece from one square to another square.
2. Completing a move means making a move, stopping one's own clock, and starting the opponent's.

It is a generally accepted interpretation that a player may make his move after the opponent has made (not completed) his move. Thus, before a player has pressed his clock, the opponent is allowed to make his move, *but*, after the opponent has made the move, the player still has the right to press his clock.

In my opinion, the sentence "A player must always be allowed to stop his clock" justifies the way the player of the black pieces acted.

We discussed this matter during the FIDE Congress in Dresden 2008. The question was, whether we should forbid a player to make a move before his opponent has pressed the clock. We concluded that especially in time scrabbles, blitz, and rapid games, it is very difficult to see the real sequence of what is happening. Therefore, we did not change this Article of the Laws of Chess.

**Question** Dear, Geurt. As a kibitzer, I saw the following during a Rapid tournament:

The player of the black pieces had a superior position, but his flag had fallen. When he noticed, he offered a draw and put his hand out for a handshake. He did this whilst his opponent had the move for over ten seconds. The player of the white pieces immediately took his opponent's hand, but at that very moment he established that black's flag had fallen. The game finished as a draw. Is this correct?

During the same tournament there were two boards that featured a black king with a "broken" finial (cross). These kings could be confused with a queen. However, a difference between the pieces was still noticeable. Is this allowed?

Thank you for your efforts. With kind regards, **Siebren Westra (The Netherlands)**

**Answer** I understand that the player of the black pieces clearly offered a draw, but he did so in an incorrect manner. Did the player of the white pieces accept this offer? I ask because it is unclear by what you mean when you write that *the player of the white pieces established that his opponent's flag was fallen*. Did he claim the flag fall, and at what moment did he do so?

If Black offered a draw, and they shook hands to confirm the agreement, and then White noticed the flag fall, the draw stands. For this I refer to part of Article 6.8 of the Laws of Chess:

*A flag is considered to have fallen when either player has made a valid claim to that effect.*

This means that the flag has "officially" fallen at the moment of the claim and

not at the moment it really occurred.

With regards to your second question, the most important point is that the difference between the kings and the queens was noticeable. Moreover, I am given to understand that the players did not complain. I have seen some kings without crosses used in the United Arab Emirates. I was told that they were removed because the crosses were considered to be Christian symbols. In this tournament it was easy to differentiate between a king and a queen, and no one complained.

**Question** According to an [article](#) at Chessbase, a situation could arise when one player has a forced win that is beyond the fifty-move rule. How would an arbiter react if this were to happen? One player obviously will play on because of his forced winning position! It seems that it would be fairer for the arbiter to give the player(s) some extra moves to let him demonstrate the win. Thanks for highlighting this issue on your site. Best regards, **Ingvar Gundersen (Sweden)**

**Answer** In my opinion Article 9.3 is very clear:

The game is drawn, upon a correct claim by the player having the move, if:

*a. he writes his move on his scoresheet and declares to the arbiter his intention to make this move, which shall result in the last 50 moves having been made by each player without the movement of any pawn and without any capture, or*

*b. the last 50 consecutive moves have been made by each player without the movement of any pawn and without any capture.*

There are no exceptions. The arbiter is not authorized to extend the fifty-move rule. However, the opponent must make a claim. If he does not claim, the arbiter is forbidden from interfering.

Several years ago I had a discussion with Mr. Roycroft about the fifty-move rule in which we could not reach an agreement. On behalf of the PCCC (Permanent Commission for Chess Compositions), he also suggested extending the number of moves for certain endgames. The result of our discussion was that the PCCC decided to adapt their own rule to extend the number of moves for some endgames.

**Question** In a recent tournament played at G/75 with a five second time delay, both players were down to one second and blitzing. Repeated checks were given. The position was probably repeated five times. One player said "three-fold repetition," the other kept playing. The one who kept playing overstepped the time limit and said, "OK three-fold repetition." The other player was gracious enough to accept the draw. Of course no one was keeping score, but at least six players, including the TD, were watching the game. I was one who was watching and after the player claimed three-fold repetition I held up three fingers and gave a questioning look at the TD. I said nothing. The draw stood. My question, when the player claimed three-fold repetition he did not stop the clock, had no notation, but his claim was clearly correct. Should it have been honored? What if his flag had fallen after his correct claim, would he have lost? Should the other player who was (in my mind unethically) trying to win on time in a position that was legally drawn have lost since his flag did fall? I was admonished by the TD for holding up the three fingers. I said nothing and did not intervene in any way. Was I wrong?  
**Tom Lawry (USA)**

**Answer** I refer to the first part of Article 9.2:

*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.*

I understand that Article 9.2.a cannot apply because of the time trouble, since the players did not write the moves. However, if the position was truly repeated five times, there was opportunity for a player to claim a draw based on Article 9.2.b.

I wonder why the claimant did not stop the clocks and request the arbiter to intervene and to check whether the claim was correct.

I also find the arbiter's behaviour curious. The only explanation I can think of is that the arbiter did not consider the exclamation "threefold repetition" as an official claim. In which case I am inclined to agree with the arbiter. If the player had said, for instance, "Arbiter, threefold repetition," the situation is different. If this was the reason not to intervene, then the game could not be declared drawn after the flag fall of the opponent's clock, unless it was a position covered in 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. This immediately ends the game, provided that the move producing this position was legal.*

It would seem many strange things happened in this game. After a flag fall, the losing player offered a draw and the opponent agreed. I understand that the arbiter was present, but again it is curious that he did not act. As in the answer to Mr. Siebren Westra above, I refer to Article 6.8, but there is a difference:

*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 your case the arbiter should intervene, because it was a normal game (G/75). In the case of Mr. Westra the arbiter should not intervene, because it was a Rapid game. Finally, with regard to your remark that the arbiter admonished you; this I can more or less understand. It is quite annoying for an arbiter when spectators start to make gestures.

**Question** I have a question about Article 10 of the Laws of Chess: Quickplay Finish. I saw the following: A player tried to win in a position that was in my opinion very drawish. Of course it is permitted to do so, especially because the opponent had no possibility to win. When the player who was trying to win had only three seconds left, he proposed a draw and the opponent agreed.

But what would have happened if the opponent refused the draw offer and continued the game? What should the arbiter do if the player had claimed a draw? For me, the situation is obvious if the claim was made when the player had two minutes or so of time left. But with only three seconds left on his clock, I would reject his claim. I consider a claim in this situation disrespectful.

We discussed this case in an arbiters meeting, but could not reach a consensus. What is your opinion? Best regards, **Joost Out (The Netherlands)**

**Answer** It is not important how the arbiter decides, because he is always right. I refer to Article 10.2.d of the Laws of Chess:

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

But to be serious. It depends on whether the arbiter has seen what happened in the game so far. If the opponent really did not make any effort to win the game and even cannot win at all, then it is reasonable to accept the claim. I am not surprised that a consensus could not be reached, because the article itself gives plenty of room for different interpretations and, I have to repeat, each decision must be considered correct.

**Question** Hi, Geurt. I recently played in a Quickplay tournament where the most bizarre situation occurred. I was a bishop and a pawn up in a won position with ten seconds left, when my opponent declared checkmate by Re1

+ as his flag fell. It was indeed check and believing that my opponent had swindled me and delivered checkmate, I shook my opponent's hand. As I only had ten seconds left, I had calculated that my king had no escape square and that it must indeed be checkmate.

However, I had overlooked that I could retreat my bishop to block the check, which my opponent genuinely missed too. By this time my flag had fallen as well; however, as it was a digital clock, it was clear my opponent's flag had fallen first.

A spectator then indicated to the arbiter that I could have played Bf1 to block the check; however, the arbiter took the view that because I shook my opponent's hand, and he had played Re1+ before his flag fell and declared checkmate, my opponent was awarded the win. I assume that my opponent made contact with e1 before his flag fell in order for the arbiter to make the decision that he did.

What is your view on this situation? I find it most intriguing that my opponent had a lost position, his flag had fallen first, and yet he wins the game. I must add that my opponent thought it was checkmate and in no way was he trying to trick me (we both just missed Bf1 in time trouble). Would I be correct in assuming that my opponent was only awarded the win because he said "Checkmate!" and he would have lost if he hadn't? Many thanks in advance,  
**Garry Forbes (United Kingdom)**

**Answer** One thing is very clear: you resigned before you were aware that your opponent had overstepped the time limit. This is based on two Articles of the Laws of chess:

Article 5.1.b

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

Article 6.8

*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.*

You claimed the flag fall, as far I understand, after you resigned. Resigning means the end of the game. Everything that happens afterward is irrelevant. Furthermore, I have to mention that in a Quickplay game (I assume that you mean a Rapid or a Blitz game without adequate supervision), the arbiter may not intervene.

You mentioned that it is intriguing that you lost, although you had a won position and your opponent overstepped the time limit. But you were the one who resigned. Furthermore, I would like to mention that a Rapid or a Blitz game is declared a draw when both flag have fallen, even when it is clear which flag fell first.

Finally, I would like to comment on our last question. I can only speculate what the result had been if he had not said "Checkmate." You did not see it was not mate. Would you have seen that Bf1 saved your position, if your opponent had not said that you were mated? There are situations where the remark "checkmate" can be considered disturbing. I am not sure in your case, because you state clearly that your opponent had no bad intentions.

**Question** To report a tournament to FIDE, each player needs an Identification Number (ID#). But some players do not have such a number. What is the best way to get an ID#? Secondly, is it really necessary to add the birthday of a new player? **Alex Roose (Curaçao)**

**Answer** The rating officer of a federation is authorized to give ID#s to players and arbiters of his own federation. If an arbiter submits a report with players without ID#s and not belonging to their own federation, the FIDE office provides an ID#.

The rating officer of the Dutch Federation issues ID#s only when he has received the birthday and the first name of the new player. I sincerely hope

that all rating officers do the same, because it makes identification of players in large open tournaments much easier.

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