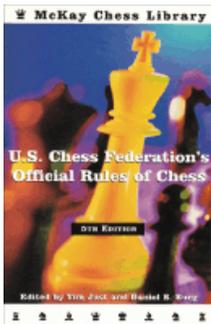




COLUMNISTS

*An Arbiter's Notebook*

Geurt Gijssen



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The Tal Memorial and Blitz Chess

In the Tal Memorial Tournament in Moscow there was a special application of Article 9.1.a:

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

The rule in this event was that the players could agree to a draw only with the permission of the arbiter. The procedure was as follows:

1. A player makes his move.
2. He offers the draw.
3. He stops his own clock and starts the opponent's.
4. The opponent takes the offer into consideration.
5. If he accepts the offer, he stops the clocks and informs the arbiter that he accepts the offer.
6. The arbiter takes a decision.

In general there were no problems. In a few cases the agreement was refused and the players continued the game.

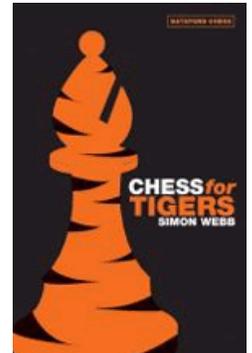
Svidler Ivanchuk, after 23....Bd8



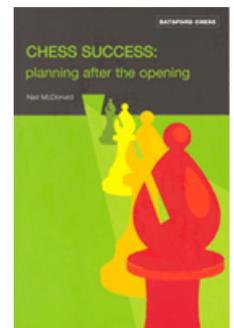
In this position, Ivanchuk offered a draw and Svidler accepted. I refused. The continuation was 24.Ng5 Rf6 25.Ne4 Re6 26.Ng5 Rf6 27.Ne4 Re6 1/2-1/2

Carlsen – Aronian, after 26...Bb4

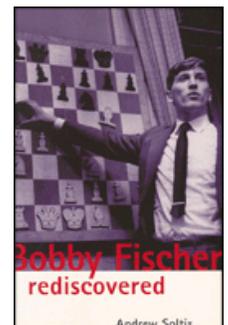
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The players agreed, but I wanted to see more moves. The continuation was **27. Ra1 Rd2+ 28.Kf1 Rxb2 29.a6 Bc5 30.Rc1 g6 31.Rxc5 Ra2 32.Rxb5 Rxa6**  
 $\frac{1}{2}-\frac{1}{2}$

**Leko – Ivanchuk**, after 27....Bh6



Ivanchuk proposed a draw. In this position, Leko had thirty minutes left and Ivanchuk sixty-eight minutes. Leko thought about the draw offer for ten minutes and informed me that he was ready to accept it. I had my doubts and told this to the players. Leko mentioned that he “lost” ten minutes. Thus, I agreed that it was unfair in this situation to force the players to continue the game.

The last game clearly demonstrates the problem I have with this rule. In my opinion it is incorrect for the arbiter to make decisions based on his judgment of the position. This shouldn't be the arbiter's task. I prefer that Article 9.1.a read as follows:

*The rules of a competition may specify that players cannot agree to a draw, whether in less than a specified number of moves or at all.*

Correct draw claims based on threefold repetition of position, the fifty-move rule, or when a position has arisen in which neither player can checkmate the opponent's king with any series of legal moves will be, of course, declared a draw.

**Question** Dear, Geurt, It seems that ninety percent of the queries to this column concern rapid and blitz games or time-trouble situations. It occurred to me that most or even all of these problems could be avoided if the games were played using computers with the type of game-playing software that can be found on many Internet sites.

This would have many advantages:

- The pieces would always be set up correctly.
- No chance to accidentally (or purposely) knock over the pieces during the game.
- No illegal moves.
- No moves out of turn.
- No touch-move or take-back controversies.
- No hogging the clock.
- No misunderstandings about offering and accepting draws or

resignation.

- Game automatically ends on three-fold repetition, flag-fall, stalemate, or mate.
- Oh yes! No need for arbiters - replaced by computer technicians.

Of course, I realize that this would not be viable in general, but in cases where an important match or championship is decided with a rapid or blitz play-off it may be useful - especially if it avoids controversies such as Krush-Zatonskih. Best regards, **Neal Turner (Finland)**

**Answer** I recently attended the World Blitz Championship in Moscow and I arbitrated the match Kasparov – Karpov in Valencia. In Moscow, twenty-two top players played 462 games in forty-two rounds with a time limit of three minutes for the whole game and an increment of two seconds per move. In Valencia, the time control in eight Blitz games was five minutes for the whole game and an increment of two seconds per move. There were no incidents at all.

The explanation is very simple: the increment! For each move a player has at least two seconds. This increment is sufficient for proper games. If there is, for instance, an endgame K + N vs. K + N, which can be won by either player, both players know very well that it is impossible to win this endgame in a normal way. They will always agree to a draw.

It is my firm opinion that so-called Armageddon games should be played with an increment.

Although there were no problems in these two events, I think that your proposal to play using computers is very useful and probably applicable in professional top events. The blindfold competitions of the Amber Tournaments are played in this way. The only difference in this case is that in your proposal the players would have the actual position on the screen instead of an empty board as in blindfold chess. We would just have to hope that no technical failures occurred.

**Question** Dear, Mr. Gijssen. I have four questions regarding blitz games:

**Question 1** The time control is five minutes per player without increment. The position on the chessboard is as follows:



The player of the white pieces has twenty seconds left on the clock and the player of the black pieces has one minute. It is White's move. Now White stops the clocks and demands a draw based on the following information: White will only move the king, so mate is impossible. Otherwise Black can use his/her time advantage and win. What is the verdict?

**Question 2** Consider the following position with White to move:



His/her move is Qxh4. After that Black immediately moves the knight on g6. Then White discovers that his/her move was illegal, so White moves the queen back to c5 and plays QxQ. After that White stops the clock and has won Black's queen.

**Question 3** Consider the following position with White to move:



White moves the queen to a7 and then Black immediately takes the pawn on b3: Rb8xb3. After that White discovers that his/her move was illegal and moves the queen back to c6. Now White makes a legal move: Qc8 mate. Are these situations legal according to the rules of chess?

**Question 4** I have seen two videos from the 2009 Blitz Chess World Championship: Carlsen vs. Svidler (round 28) and Mamedyarov vs. Ivanchuk (round 37). In both games a pawn promotion was made like this: the pawn is on the seventh rank and then the player put his new queen on the eighth rank and after that removed his pawn from the seventh rank, so the pawn never reached the eighth rank. I think this is illegal. In the chess rules we have: "when a pawn reaches the rank furthest from its starting position it must be exchanged as part of the same move on the same square for ..." Have top grandmasters made some kind of secret agreement that they can promote a pawn this way? My way is to follow the rules of chess. **Osmo Kähönen (Helsinki)**

**Answer 1** In Blitz games it is impossible to claim a draw based on Article 10.2:

*If the player, having the move, has less than two minutes left on his clock, he may claim a draw before his flag falls. He shall summon the arbiter and may stop the clocks.*

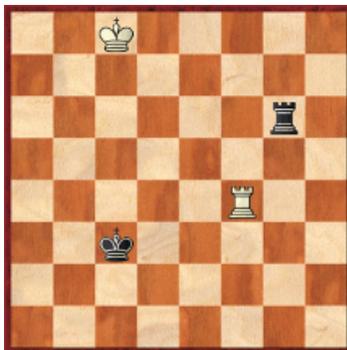
The point is that it is not a dead position, because a mate is possible. The arbiter cannot do anything. The only way to prevent this kind of situation is for the time limit to have an increment.

**Answer 2** 1.Qxh4 is an illegal move. Black could stop the clocks and claim a win. By playing 1...Ng6, he lost his right to claim a win. And by White "playing" Qh4-c5, Black could again claim a win, because this move is also illegal. It is clear that at least Black didn't know the rules. Otherwise he would have claimed a win. To be honest, it is difficult to believe that this happened in a game.

**Answer 3** This situation is the same as in Question 2. After 1.Qa7, Black could claim a win. He could do this after 2.Qa7-c6 too. See also my final remark to your previous question.

**Answer 4** You are right if we strictly follow the text of this Article, but it is generally accepted to promote in the way you describe. Also the electronic boards used in high level tournaments accept this way of promoting.

**Question** Hi, Mr. Gijssen. I have a question about blitz games. Imagine in a blitz tournament the following positions are created.



The white player has fifteen seconds and the black player has twenty-five seconds. The white player claims a draw, but the black player wants to play on because he has more time. What can the arbiter do? If it is possible, please answer as completely as possible about blitz games and Fischer mode tournaments. Thank you very much. **Mohammad Motevaseli (Iran)**

**Answer** I can only repeat my answer. According to the rules, Black has the possibility to continue the game and to win the game on time. It is probably not fair, but just in Blitz games the clock plays an important, and often decisive, role. I must reiterate that these situations are impossible when using the Fischer mode. This means that after each move one or more seconds are added to the player's remaining time.

**Question** Dear, Geurt Gijssen. I have some questions regarding time control and the possibility of a different game outcome depending on the type of clock used (analogue versus DGT). In a game at our club (105 minutes per player for the whole game) two players had only seconds left and were blitzing out the moves. No arbiter was present. At a certain moment it was noticed that both flags had fallen and the game was stopped. Is this a draw or a win for the player whose flag fell last? Article 6.11b states,

*If both flags have fallen and it is impossible to establish which flag fell first then: the game is drawn if it happens in the period of a game, in which all remaining moves must be completed.*

Since a DGT was used, there was a symbol indicating which flag had fallen first. Does this mean that this player had lost? And does this mean that if an analogue clock (without a flag symbol) was used the game would have been drawn? To me it seems a bit strange (and unfair?) that the type of clock can decide the outcome of a game.

One final question: do I understand correctly that if the time control was less than sixty minutes (rapid), the result would have been a draw (according to Appendix A.4, sub d.3), regardless of what type of clock was used? Regards,  
**Dennis Breuker (The Netherlands)**

**Answer** Your questions relate to normal games and Blitz/Rapid games. If both players have 105 minutes, the game is considered normal. Since you quote Article 6.11.b correctly, the correct answer is very easy. If both flags have fallen and it is impossible to determine which flag fell first, the game is drawn.

With the DGT clock this problem does not occur, because it indicates the first flag fall. The consequence is that the player, whose flag fell first loses the game, provided the position is such that his opponent cannot win the game because of a lack of material.

For Blitz and Rapid games the same applies as in normal games if there is adequate supervision. I refer to Article A4.d of the Laws of Chess, if the supervision is inadequate:

- *The flag is considered to have fallen when a player has made a valid claim to that effect.*
- *The arbiter shall refrain from signaling a flag fall, but he may do so if both flags have fallen.*
- *If both flags have fallen as described in (1) and (2), the arbiter shall declare the game drawn.*

Your remark that it is unfair that the outcome of a game can depend on the type of clock used in the tournament is completely correct. Therefore, it is incorrect to use two types of clocks in the same event. Even the invitation sent to the players of a tournament should mention which clocks will be used in the event.

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