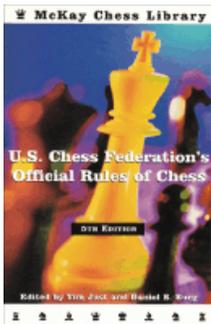




COLUMNISTS

An Arbiter's Notebook

Geurt Gijssen



CHESSTHEATRE

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Taking Notes

**Question** Dear, Mr. Gijssen. In a tournament in India, Player A gives check to Player B's king, announces "checkmate," and stops the clocks, but there is no mate. Though there is a forced mate in three moves. Player B claims to the arbiter that Player A stopped the clocks. The arbiter comes to the board and declares the game lost for Player A, because he had no valid reason for stopping the clocks. Is this decision correct? Regards, **Govind Bhake (India)**

**Answer** I refer to Article 6.12. I assume that you and the arbiter did the same:

- a. If the game needs to be interrupted, the arbiter shall stop the clocks.
- b. A player may stop the clocks only in order to seek the arbiter's assistance, for example when promotion has taken place and the piece required is not available.
- c. The arbiter shall decide when the game is to be restarted in either case.
- d. If a player stops the clocks in order to seek the arbiter's assistance, the arbiter shall determine if the player had any valid reason for doing so. If it is obvious that the player had no valid reason for stopping the clocks, the player shall be penalised according to Article 13.4.

I assume that it was a "normal" game. It is possible to interpret the stopping of the clocks by Player A as seeking the arbiter's assistance; even if it was to confirm checkmate. However, we can also consider his action improper, because it was not checkmate. From the above, we understand that "the player shall be penalised according to Article 13.4."

I do not know precisely why the arbiter declared the game lost. Perhaps the player acted similarly in previous games or perhaps he disturbed Player B in other ways while the game was in progress. If this is the case, I understand the penalty. Yet, if this was the first time in the tournament that Player A acted so, and if it was clear that he truly thought he had checkmated the opponent's king, then the penalty is too severe in my opinion.

In such cases, I would give Player B some extra time, say two minutes, for the fact that he was disturbed by the opponent's action.

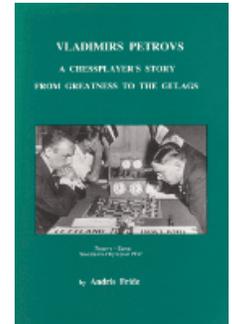
**Question** Dear, Mr. Gijssen. I sometimes see spectators at chess games standing behind or near the players writing down their opening moves. Or even players of the tournament writing down moves of other players while standing near their boards. Are there any prohibitions for players or spectators in the tournament room from writing down the moves of the games? Regards, **Jorge Bocker (Germany)**

**Answer** I refer to two Articles of the Laws of Chess:

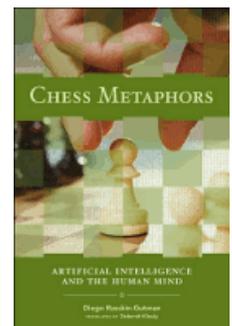
- 13.7.a Spectators and players in other games are not to speak about or otherwise interfere in a game. If necessary, the arbiter may expel offenders from the playing venue. If someone observes an irregularity, he may inform only the arbiter.
- 12.5 Players who have finished their games shall be considered to be spectators.

Only in these two Articles of the Laws of Chess are spectators mentioned. I

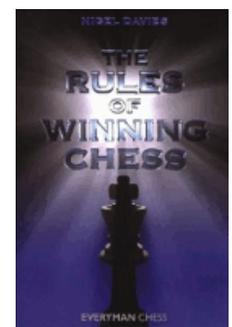
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- What could Player B do, other than point out the mistakes made by the arbiter and his opponent?

Best regards, **Johan Goormachtigh (Belgium)**

**Answer** In situations such as this, it is preferable to stop the clocks and only speak to the arbiter rather than directly to the opponent. If events happened as you state, then I do not understand why the arbiter did not penalize Player A. I refer to Article 12.8:

*Persistent refusal by a player to comply with the Laws of Chess shall be penalised by loss of the game. The arbiter shall decide the score of the opponent.*

Player A was told to record his moves three times. While he initially obliged, his behaviour continued. I may not have declared the game lost for Player A, but it is more than reasonable to grant Player B two extra minutes.

I believe I already answered your third question, herewith I answer the other two:

I don't know the regulations of the competition in which this game was played. Usually, there is a limited period of time in which an appeal can be made. This is different for each competition. In tournaments it is common for the period of time to be one or two hours after the end of the round in which the situation occurred.

It is possible that an arbiter, even when he is wrong, would feel offended if a player asked him to check the Laws of Chess. Still, it could be useful to ask the same question in a more diplomatic way. I mentioned already that stopping the clocks is preferable.

**Question** Hello. Here is a forfeit situation: In a non-zero tolerance tournament (i.e., 20 minutes of tolerance), a player arrives at the playing room, approaches their chessboard, makes a legal move, and just before touching the chess clock, the flag falls. The opponent is already there.

Does the player lose the game or was it a forfeit? Note that the player is in the playing room, but has not completed a move, as described in the FIDE Laws of Chess. This is an important clarification, since in most tournaments the forfeit and/or lost games have different consequences regarding the final rating of the players involved. Thanks. **Edwin G. Delgado (Puerto Rico)**

**Answer** I learned from Mr. Markula, chairman of the Qualification Commission – and this Commission is responsible for titles and rating calculations – that a game will be included in the rating calculations if both players have completed at least one move.

**Question** Dear, Mr. Gijssen. Is it possible to clarify the following situation: In a game with a time control of 40 moves in 2 hours and 1 hour for the remaining moves, the player of the black pieces overstepped the time limit at move 40. He pressed his clock two seconds too late. The player of the white pieces didn't notice the flag fall and thought about his forty-first move.

The arbiter was present and recorded the moves. After about ten seconds the arbiter announced quite loudly that the player of the black pieces had overstepped the time limit and declared the game lost for Black. Is this really possible? I have the opinion that the arbiter may intervene only when requested to do so. Best regards, **Frederik Van de Castele (Belgium)**

**Answer** Yes it is possible. I refer to Article 6.x 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.*

I understand the delay of the announcement quite well. The arbiter recorded the moves and wanted to be sure that the player of the black pieces really overstepped the time. Note that in Blitz and Rapid games with inadequate

supervision the situation is different; in these games, the arbiter may not announce the flag fall.

**Question** I refer to Mr. Gallenda's question from [February 2010](#).

**Question** Hi, the dispute is as follows: I was playing white in the following position when my time expired.



Your Secretary Mr. Stewart Reuben explained to me that Rule 6.9 determines that I lost the game, but he either ignored my point or did not understand it. I accept that my time expired, but my opponent does not have enough material to checkmate me. Rule 6.9 states,

*However the game is drawn, if the position is such that the opponent cannot checkmate the player's king by any series of legal moves.*

Rule 6.9 says that the opponent (the one that has still time) can make any series of legal moves until he checkmates me.

Article 3.1 says that both players must make alternate moves until the game is completed. Therefore, Rule 6.9, allowing the opponent to make any series of legal moves, is in conflict with Rule 3.1. I appreciate your comments. Thank you and regards, **Alessandro Gallenda, (England)**

**Answer** Let me try to explain what it means. In the diagram position, the player of the white pieces overstepped the time limit. Normally it means that he loses the game. But suppose, that in this case the player of the black pieces has no way to win the game by any series of legal moves; for instance, if he only has a lone king. In this case, he does not deserve to win the game and the arbiter shall declare the game drawn. This means that the arbiter must always check the final position of a game after a player has overstepped the time limit.

He has to investigate whether there is a series of legal moves that is winning for the player of the black pieces. And there are many as you can find out yourself. Therefore, the game is really lost for you (the white player).

However, the [U. S. Chess Federation's Official Rules of Chess](#), 5th Edition, page 46, rule 14E. Insufficient material to win on time. Rule 14E2. King and bishop or king and knight seems to say that the game is a draw unless a forced win can be shown. Is this a difference between USCF and FIDE rules, or do I misunderstand something? Thank You. **Bruce Elliott (USA)**

**Answer** Yes, there is a difference. From what I can see, it is the additions "*insufficient material*" and "*unless a forced win can be shown*" in the USCF Rules. The FIDE rules state, "*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.*"

The following position is an example that FIDE and USCF rules are different:



According to the FIDE rules, the game is lost for the player who oversteps the time. As far as I understand, it is a draw according to the USCF rules, because there is no forced win.

**Question** Dear, Geurt. In your [last column](#), you had the following question:

**Question** In a Blitz tournament, Player A did not notice the opponent's flag fall and continued playing. The arbiter, who was observing the game, did not indicate the flag fall, as per the rules. Suddenly, the clock went blank. The arbiter now mentioned the flag fall, but the opponent demanded more playing time. What is the verdict? Thanks and regards, **Rajarathinam (India)**

**Answer** It is always unfortunate when a clock stops running, especially in a situation as you describe. If the arbiter knows the times indicated by the clocks at the moment the clock stopped working, he can take a new clock and reinstate the remaining times. But in the event that one player has no time left, I see only one solution: to continue the game and give both players some extra time. Something such as five seconds. To start a new game is not an option in Blitz tournaments, because generally there are only very short breaks between rounds.

I was surprised by your answer. I rather expected the arbiter shall take a new clock and restore the situation before the "event" happened.

This would mean to set the time for one opponent to zero without any comment and start the clock. Once this is done the player can move on. Surely this will lead to a claim of a win on time by the opponent, but this will always happen as soon as the opponent looks upon the clock. The reason why a player looks at the clock is not important for the arbiter (as long as there is no one who broke the rules). What do you think? Best regards, **Jürgen Feiler (Germany)**

**Answer** I understand your remark, but let me explain my previous answer. Apparently, Player A did not notice the flag fall. If the arbiter restores the clocks as you suggest, the players are forced to check the correct setting of the clocks. This means that Player A gets an "advantage" from the fact that the chess clock didn't work correctly. The problem is that in Blitz games the arbiter normally is not involved in the indications on the clock and in this case he must involve himself with the consequences I mentioned in my first answer.

**Question** Dear, Mr. Gijssen. In a previous column, you mentioned that a promoted pawn, which was not changed into any piece, should be considered as "dead wood." Is it possible to capture this dead wood? **Jos van Doorn (The Netherlands)**

**Answer** I don't see any reason why one could not capture such a piece. If it cannot be captured, it could be an advantage for the player who made the illegal move. (And not changing the pawn into a piece is considered to be an illegal move.) Here is one, albeit not very convincing, example:



Because of the dead wood at c8 the player of the black pieces cannot castle on the queenside.

**Question** Dear, Mr. Gijssen. Thank you for the service you provide. I was an arbiter in an international open tournament where a special rule was included in the regulations to avoid quick-draws: only after at least two hours of play a draw by mutual agreement is possible. Players not complying with it will lose the game.

At the beginning of each round, I mentioned that according to Article 9.2 of the FIDE Laws of Chess (triple-repetition of the position is an easy way to bypass the anti-draw rule), players have to call an arbiter to secure the conditions of the draw by 9.2 and make it valid.

A grandmaster playing the tournament then told me that even without the arbiter's consent, a draw by triple-repetition of the position is still valid. I didn't agree: it may have the look of a triple-repetition, but, as it doesn't respect the command of Article. 9.2, it cannot be considered so, and it remains a draw by mutual agreement. Thus, breaching the tournament regulations if it is concluded within the first two hours of play.

Is it common for professional chess players to agree to draws by triple-repetition of the position (as considered so by the arbiters) without the arbiter's consent?

If not, what shall be the score of the game (0-0 or F-F). Surely, 0-0 in my opinion by virtue of tournament regulations, but very few pairing programs permit such a score to be set (while F-F is more often allowed), making handling of the situation complicated. **Pierre Becker (France)**

**Answer** If it was a rated tournament, then I am quite surprised about the rule you mentioned in your letter. I refer to Article 9.1 of the Laws of Chess:

*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.*

This means that suppose the tournament regulations state that the specific number of moves is thirty; the players may agree to a draw after both have completed thirty moves and if they wish to agree before they have played thirty moves, then they need the approval of the arbiter. Another possibility is that it is forbidden to agree to a draw at all during the whole game without the permission of the arbiter.

As I mentioned in a previous column, I do not like that the players need the permission of the arbiter for draw agreements.

To make it complete and to avoid misunderstandings there is a third possibility: it is still possible to agree at any moment during the game to a draw. If the tournament organiser does not want to allow for the third possibility, it must be mentioned in the tournament regulations as to how to apply Article 9.1.

In your tournament a new rule has been introduced. The permission of the arbiter is not related to the number of completed moves, but to the total time

consumed by the both players. This is not in accordance with the Laws of Chess in my opinion.

Furthermore, I disagree with you also regarding the triple-repetition rule. The only duty of the arbiter is to check whether all requirements of this rule are fulfilled. The same applies for the fifty-move rule and positions in which neither player can checkmate the opponent's king. And if all requirements are fulfilled, the draw stands in all situations. The consent of the arbiter is not required.

Finally, your last question: if the requirements for a draw are not fulfilled, the game continues and the only possible penalty is that the opponent of the player, who made a wrong claim, receives three extra minutes. Therefore, the results F-F or 0-0 are not applicable.

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