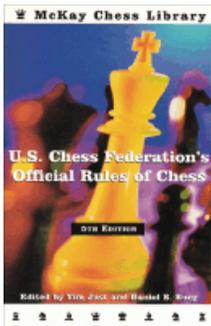




COLUMNISTS

An Arbitrator's Notebook

Geurt Gijssen



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What is a Valid Claim?

Question Dear, Geurt. I was the Arbiter in Grandmaster Group C during the Corus Chess tournament. I was able to observe the way players handled the new speed of play: 40 moves in 100', followed by 20 in 50', followed by 15', while there was an increment of 30 seconds per move starting from move one.

When not in time trouble, thirteen out of fourteen players recorded their move immediately after having made it, or after their opponent's move; one player recorded her opponent's move together with her own move, directly after having made a move herself.

However, when in time trouble, with a recording requirement till the end, this changed. Many of the players now recorded their moves the way player fourteen did from the beginning. But four players in different rounds started to blitz illegally when their opponent answered a move immediately in a legal way. Undoubtedly, this is caused by the fact that in games without increment it is allowed to blitz without recording moves when a player has less than five minutes for that part of the game. Once a player even had to stop the clock and ask for assistance. His opponent had started blitzing, triggered by an immediate answer; actually I am convinced that the player who started the blitzing was not doing this on purpose.

Players in time trouble, filled with adrenaline, are eager to make an immediate counter-move. So I would like to propose the following: require the players from the very first move to record their and the opponent's move immediately after it is made. I am sure that infringement of this rule will take place less frequently because the player in time-trouble will be ready to record a move immediately, instead of being eager to answer his opponent's move immediately as is permitted now. Another advantage is that if a player knocks down a piece, but yet presses the clock, the correction of this error will take place while the opponent is recording the move, so no intervention of the arbiter will be necessary. **Alex Roose (Netherlands Antilles)**

Answer I am uncertain whether this is a good proposal. In my opinion players should have some freedom to decide at which moment they have to record the moves. The way it is now stated in the Laws of Chess seems very reasonable to me. Nevertheless, your observation is very interesting.

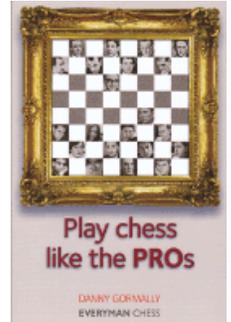
Question In a tournament, a game ended with the following problem:

The rate of play was 90 minutes for 40 moves, then 30 minutes for the remaining moves with an increment of 30 seconds from move one. I was called to arbitrate a dispute by a flagged player. It seemed that both players had played forty moves (according to their scoresheets), while the clock displayed thirty-nine moves for either player.

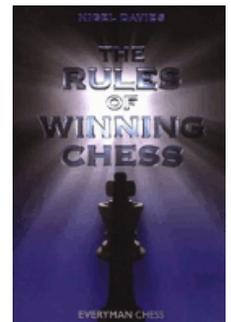
It is almost clear that they missed a clock press, so that they could ask for 30 seconds more if the game could be restarted. But one of the player's flag displayed, so after checking that the clock was functioning properly (it was), I declared the game lost on time by the flagged player. (I had no way of knowing when he played his fortieth move, before or after the flag fall, or if he would have flagged or not in case he had been awarded the missing 30 seconds.)

He wanted me to add the 30 seconds of increment for the fortieth move and restart the game, which I rejected, saying that he was responsible for pressing the clock after each move, which he failed to perform correctly. The reason may be a light pressing of the clock, though I couldn't make it happen myself.

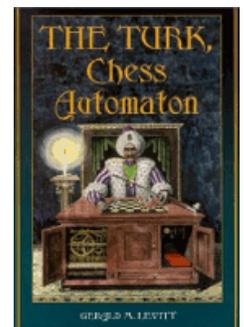
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What is your impression of this event? **Pierre Becker (France)**

Answer I remember only one tournament in which we had the same kind of problem: it was the European Championship in Ohrid 2001. I was called upon several times because of flag falls, although forty moves were played in the first period. And every time the scoresheets showed forty moves and the move counter of the clock only thirty-nine moves. When we checked the scoresheets, the figure forty was correct.

Article 6.7.a is relevant to answer your question:

During the game each player, having made his move on the chessboard, shall stop his own clock and start his opponent's clock. A player must always be allowed to stop his clock. His move is not considered to have been completed until he has done so, unless the move that was made ends the game. (See the Articles 5.1.a, 5.2.a, 5.2.b, 5.2.c and 9.6.)

The first part of the last sentence is essential. A move is completed after it is made and the player's own clock was stopped and the opponent's started. This means that the last move before the time control, in your case the fortieth, is considered to be completed after the clock has been stopped.

If both clocks showed thirty-nine moves, then the last move was played and also completed by the player of the black pieces. In that case only the flag of the player of the white pieces could fall when he was thinking about his forty-first move. I assume that they made forty moves as both scoresheets indicated. The game should continue and the arbiter has to adjust the clocks. I am afraid that I have to inform you that your decision was wrong.

Question Hi, Geurt. I am the captain of a Division Three team in Coventry, England. At a recent match, several of us were watching as the last game was being played. The player from my team, Player A, was losing in the endgame to Player B. But Player B was in time trouble, with only about one minute left, whereas Player A had about twelve minutes in Sudden Death.

At this point, Player A moved into check. Being very new to this, I spoke to the other captain, who also saw the move. He said that, although he had never seen this before, we should do nothing, it is up to the players to notice this. So we did nothing and Player B was able to win before his flag fell.

Later, I looked at the rules concerning this:

7.4. If during a game it is found that an illegal move has been made, or that pieces have been displaced from their squares, the position before the irregularity shall be re-instated. If the position immediately before the irregularity cannot be identified, the game shall continue from the last identifiable position prior to the irregularity. The clocks shall be adjusted according to Article 6.13 and, in the case of an illegal move, Article 4.3 applies to the move replacing the illegal move. The game shall then continue.

The rules do not state who finds the illegal move. Do we, as club captains, act as arbiter and should we have intervened? I've looked for some league rules on this, but haven't been able to find any league rules at all. And the advice I have received from other, more experienced members is conflicting. Any insight you could provide would be much appreciated! Kind regards, **Dave Roberts (England)**

Answer To clarify the case: I understand that Player A made an illegal move by moving his king into check. I agree with you that it is not stated in the Laws of Chess who or how the illegal move has been found. The only condition mentioned in the Laws of Chess is that the illegal move must be found *during* the game.

I understand also that the captains act as an arbiter in the English league. If I misunderstand your letter on this point, then the league rules should be changed as soon as possible. Let us assume that the captains are also arbiters. In this case they have the full right to intervene. By the way, although the

captains did not intervene at the moment the illegal move was made, it was still possible to intervene at any moment before the game was finished. After the game is finished, intervention is not possible.

Question Dear, Geurt. In a tournament, Player A is in time trouble, but he has not recorded some of his moves. Is there an obligation of the opponent (Player B) to give his scoresheet to Player A to complete his scoresheet? **Wilfredo Paulino (Dominican Republic)**

Answer I refer to the following Articles of the Laws of Chess:

Article 8.4:

If a player has less than five minutes left on his clock at some stage in a period and does not have additional time of 30 seconds or more added with each move, then for the remainder of the period he is not obliged to meet the requirements of Article 8.1. Immediately after one flag has fallen the player must update his scoresheet completely before moving a piece on the chessboard.

Article 8.5.a

If neither player is required to keep score under Article 8.4, the arbiter or an assistant should try to be present and keep score. In this case, immediately after one flag has fallen, the arbiter shall stop the clocks. Then both players shall update their scoresheets, using the arbiter's or the opponent's scoresheet.

Article 8.5.b

If only one player is not required to keep score under Article 8.4, he must, as soon as either flag has fallen, update his scoresheet completely before moving a piece on the chessboard. Provided it is the player's move, he may use his opponent's scoresheet, but must return it before making a move.

As you can see, there is a requirement of updating scoresheets after a flag fall, and only in this case may a player use the opponent's scoresheet. I do not know the time control in the tournament you mentioned. Therefore, I will discuss two options:

1. The game is played with an increment of at least thirty seconds. In this case he is obliged to complete his scoresheet on his own and if it is his move, his clock remains running.
2. The increment is less than thirty seconds. Then there are two possibilities:
 - The player has less than five minutes left. In this case, he has no obligation to record the moves.
 - The player has more than five minutes left. He has again, as in point one, the obligation to record the moves. He has to find out what was played, and the opponent has no obligation to deliver his scoresheet. And, just as in point one, if he has the move, his clock keeps running. The obligation to record the moves finishes at the moment he has less than five minutes left on his clock.

Question Player A places his king next to the king of Player B, but Player B does not claim the illegal move of Player A. Player B promotes a pawn and attacks Player A's king. Can Player A claim the victory because Player B made an illegal move? Best regards. **Wilfredo Paulino (Dominican Republic)**

Answer It is pity that you did not mention what kind of game it is. In this case, I will briefly describe the situation in a normal game, a rapid game, and a blitz game.

Normal game

I quote a part of Article 7.4:

The position immediately before the irregularity shall be reinstated.

I would like to add one word to this quote: The position immediately before the first irregularity shall be reinstated. This means if the player can make a legal move with his king, he has to make another legal move. I will also point out that Player B is free to play any move. He is not forced to play the pawn move he made before.

Rapid game

If there is adequate supervision, refer to Normal Game (above).

If there is inadequate supervision, refer to Article A.4.c of the Laws of Rapid Chess:

An illegal move is completed once the opponent's clock has been started. The opponent is then entitled to claim that the player completed an illegal move before the claimant has made his move. Only after such a claim, shall the arbiter make a ruling. However, if both Kings are in check or the promotion of a pawn is not completed, the arbiter shall intervene, if possible.

Blitz game

If there is adequate supervision, refer to normal Game (above).

If there is inadequate supervision, refer to Article B.3c:

An illegal move is completed once the opponent's clock has been started. The opponent is entitled to claim a win before he has made his own move. However, if the opponent cannot checkmate the player's king by any possible series of legal moves, then the claimant is entitled to claim a draw before he has made his own move. Once the opponent has made his own move, an illegal move cannot be corrected unless mutually agreed without intervention of an arbiter.

Question Dear, Mr. Gijssen. I took part in a Rapid Tournament in which the time control was fifteen minutes per player for the whole game. In one game, I made my move, pressed the clock and by retreating my elbow, I moved my king to an adjacent square. Is this an illegal move? My opponent later remarked that it was an illegal move in his opinion. Thanks in advance.

Antonio Amézquita (Mexico)

Answer Article 4.3 of the Laws of Chess describes the situations in which a touched piece must be moved. The first sentence of this Article is as follows:

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

I cannot believe that a player who has made a move and starts to press the clock, has the intention to deliberately touch a piece, unless he intends to cheat his opponent.

Question The following position is meant to clarify how to interpret Article 9.2. a and Article 9.2. b of the Laws of Chess in connection to the possibility of castling.



[FEN "6k1/8/8/2b5/8/8/4K2R w - - 1"]

In this position, the first time it appears in this game, White still has the possibility of castling, even though it is not possible at the moment because of the bishop on c4. White plays **1.Kd2** and loses the right to castle. The game continues **1...Ba6 2.Ke1 Bc4**. This is the second time that we have this position, but here castling is not possible. Yet, all possible moves are the same in both positions. In my opinion, all conditions of Article 9 are fulfilled. The conclusion must be the positions are the same. Is this correct? **Jacob de Boer (The Netherlands)**

Answer You refer to 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):

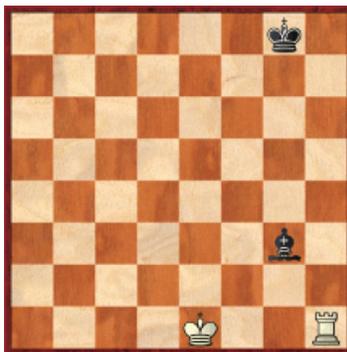
a. is about to appear, if he first writes his move on his scoresheet and declares to the arbiter his intention to make this move, or

b. has just appeared, and the player claiming the draw has the move.

Positions as in (a) and (b) are considered the same, if the same player has the move, pieces of the same kind and colour occupy the same squares, and the possible moves of all the pieces of both players are the same.

*Positions are not the same if a pawn that could have been captured en passant can no longer be captured in this manner. **When a king or a rook is forced to move, it will lose its castling rights, if any, only after it is moved.***

This situation was extensively discussed during the FIDE Congress in Dresden 2008. The final result of this discussion was the addition of the last sentence, which came into force on July 1, 2009. Perhaps I can clarify the consequences of this addition with the following position:



[FEN "6k1/8/8/8/6b1/8/4K2R w - - 1"]

White has not moved his king or rook on h1. Somebody could say that because of **1...Bg3** white lost the right to castle. But it was decided that a player shall lose the right to castle by his own move, in this position, for instance by **2.Kd2**.

Question Hi, are games played with the Sofia rules, or other rules preventing early draws, eligible for grading? I had initially thought they wouldn't be as the rules say

A member federation is free to introduce more detailed rules provided they: ... are not valid for any FIDE match, championship or qualifying event, or for a FIDE title or rating tournament.

But I understand that competitions such as the London Classic are accepted for grading purposes. **Stephen Dunning (Wales)**

Answer In the FIDE Congress Dresden 2008, the Sofia rules became legal and came into force as of July 1, 2009. I refer Article 9.1.a of the actual 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.*

I emphasize that it is an option to apply this rule, because it is still possible to offer a draw as it was possible before July 1, 2009.

If you had asked the same question in, for instance, 2006, I would have answered that it was not legal. But there are more examples. The USCF rules differ in several places from the FIDE rules, but apparently these differences are considered minor.

Question Dear, Mr. Gijssen. I am suspicious about a recent decision, because I don't understand all the conclusions made. Here is the situation: In Upper Austria, we play team matches without an arbiter and with DGT clocks. Normal play is 40 move 100 min, 50 min for the rest of the game, additional 30 seconds each move.

The following situation occurred: I (White) made my forty-first move, got up from the table to get some coffee, looked back at the board, and saw the clock of my opponent signaling -0.00 / blinking. So I claimed victory of the game.

A member of the other team assayed that after the fortieth move "it is too late" to claim a time violation, because the second part of the time control has started and he will get an additional 50 min. I answered that my clock was showing 1h 27min, so his move forty must have been out of time. I just didn't realize it immediately, but the DGT stops counting time after -0.00 is registered for one side.

The other team later protested the acceptance of this time violation. Their reasoning was that a) it was too late b) maybe the clock malfunctioned, but no evidence was found of this, or c) maybe less than forty moves were made. (I argued that calling the time violation a move earlier would still result with a -0.00 on the clock.) In the end, weeks later the judgement was 0-1. I lost because I "didn't continue the game."

Article 6 states, "the flag is considered to have fallen when a player has made a valid claim to that effect." However, I did not have success.

Here are my questions:

- What is a valid claim?
- How do you view this situation?
- Must one claim a time violation immediately after the fortieth move? Is it necessary to look at the clock on every move to instantly claim a time violation?

Many thanks in advance. **Harald Eder (Austria)**

Answer I think that this situation is very clear. You made your fortieth move and pressed the clock. Fifty minutes were added to your time and the opponent's clock started to run. Your opponent started to think about his fortieth move. Then, before he pressed his clock, his flag fell. It is irrelevant

whether his flag fell before he made his move or after he made his move. It is clear that he overstepped the time limit. He should lose the game, because he didn't complete the required number of moves (in this case forty) in the allotted time. The big advantage of the DGT clock is that the clock shows the overstepping of the time control.

For a claim to be valid, the clock of the opponent must have fallen (provided that the clock was not malfunctioning) and the required number of moves has not been completed. As far as I can see, your claim fulfilled all these requirements.

It is not necessary to watch the opponent's clock all the time. But it is probably wise to do so around the fortieth move, especially in time trouble.

It is possible to claim a flag fall beyond the fortieth move (in cases where the DGT clock is used), but it always creates controversy. By the way, with an analogue clock, a flag claim after some moves have been played is not possible in my opinion, because there is no evidence that the flag fell before the player completed his fortieth move.

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