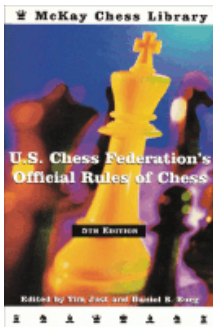




COLUMNISTS

An Arbiter's Notebook

Geurt Gijssen



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Define Same Positions

**Question** Dear, Geurt. I think something went terribly wrong in the last revision of Article 9.2, which went into force in July 2009. I suggest three alternatives to fix this problem. The crucial change was this sentence:

"Positions are not the same if a pawn that could have been captured *en passant* can no longer be captured in this manner or if the right to castle has been changed temporarily or permanently."

The problem was that no one understood when the right to castle had changed temporarily or permanently. I think I do, but there are problems with a definition if it can only be understood by a small number of arbiters. Thus, it was changed to these two sentences:

*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.*

The problem is that the semantic link was lost between the two sentences. In the previous version, you could literally say that "positions are not the same if castling rights are changed." In the new version, the first sentence talks about why positions are not the same, and the second does not. So, the second sentence becomes irrelevant to the first, indeed for the whole paragraph. It only states when castling rights are lost, but in no other part of Article 9.2 are these castling rights used.

I understand that the reason for trying to change the definition was to ensure that an arbiter or a player could just check if the castling or *en passant* rights were lost to determine whether two positions were the same. I think trying to make rules that are easy to check is a valid objective in rule making. However, I don't see why it is important to make such a "mathematical" definition of a position. If some theoretical move rights are different, then the positions must be different.

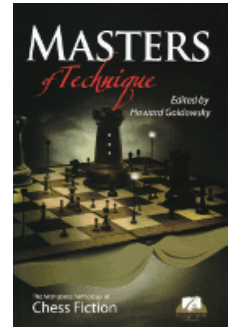
The purpose of the triple-repetition of position rule is to avoid having a player just repeat the position endlessly until reaching move forty, or to obtain an extra increment on the clock. If he does it three times, the opponent (who could perhaps not avoid the repetition) can claim a draw. So why should he be allowed to make one extra repetition just because some extra move was possible? Indeed, he probably didn't use it the first time around when he could!

**Suggestion A** My first suggestion is to simplify the comparison of positions to only concern itself with sheer diagram appearance. If the diagram is the same, with the same player to move, then the position is the same. I think players, arbiters, and chess programmers alike would be greatly relieved with this simpler rule.

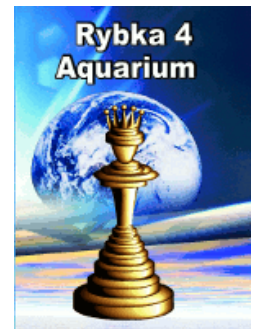
It could be stated like this: "Positions as in (a) or (b) are considered the same, if the same player has the move, pieces of the same kind and colour occupy the same squares." Possible moves in the positions are irrelevant. *En passant* and castling could or could not take place. This is much easier to check.

**Suggestion B** My next suggestion is to mend what has been done. Why not formulate the second part of the sentence the same as the first: "Positions are not the same if a pawn that could have been captured *en passant* can no longer be captured in this manner, or if a king that could have castled can no longer castle in this manner."

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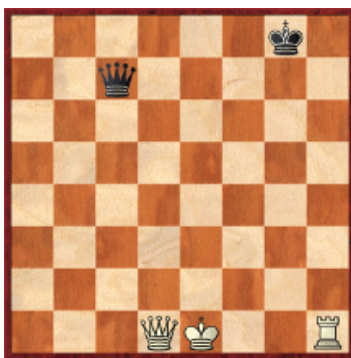
**Suggestion C** This is the one I like most. However, it may be difficult to understand unless you have a "mathematical way of thinking." Here is the full Article, using it:

"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 any possible series of legal moves from them are the same."

If the pieces are in the same places, but a different player has the move, then obviously any series of legal moves from them will be different from the first move. If *en passant* or castling was possible in the first position(s), but not in the last, trying to build the series of moves with that *en passant* or castle for the last position will fail, so the positions are not the same. Basically, try to prove that the positions are different by utilizing *en passant* or castling, or pieces that are in different squares, if you can't, the positions must be the same.

### Example



[FEN "6k1/2q5/8/8/8/8/3QK2R"]

White has castling rights since king and rook has not moved yet. Black to move plays 1...Qe5+ (I) 2.Kf1 Qf4+ 3.Ke1 Qe5+ (II) 4.Kf1 Qf4+ 5.Ke1 Qe5+ (III). It is clear that between I and II White lost castling rights. In fact, position I and II are different because you can make a series of legal moves from I with 2.Qe2 Qc7 3.0-0, which is not possible from II. In other words 4. Qe2 Qc7 5.0-0 is not legal since the king moved with 2.Kf1.

Instead, if black played 1...Qg3+ (x) 2.Kf1 Qf4+ 3.Ke1 Qg3+ (y) 4.Kf1 Qf4+ 5.Ke1 Qg3+ (z), then it is clear that it is not possible to make a series of moves that castles for White, so positions (x), (y), and (z) are the same. Yours sincerely, **Jesper Nørgaard Welen (Mexico)**

**Answer** The reason for the change in the wording was exactly because of the problem you mentioned:

*Positions are not the same if a pawn that could have been captured en passant can no longer be captured in this manner, or if the right to castle has been changed temporarily or permanently.*

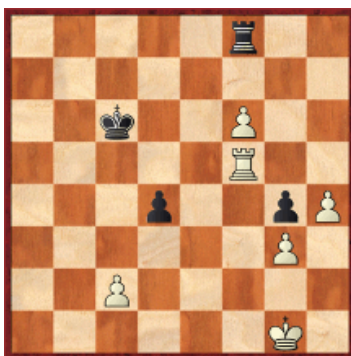
Especially the right to castle has to be changed temporarily or permanently. Yet every time we had the opportunity to change the Law, a consensus could not be reached because we could not find a good improvement. In Dresden 2005, we finally formulated the Law as it now applies.

The position you used in your question was the center of discussion. It was clear that there was a difference between the possibilities after 1...Qe5+ and 1...Qg3+. After 1...Qe5+, the right for castling could be saved by 2.Qe2, but after 1...Qg3+ this was not the case. As a matter of fact, if the white queen at d1 is replaced with a white rook at d1, we have the same situation as after 1...Qg3+.

The Rules and Tournament Regulations Committee considered the situation too complicated for players and arbiters and decided to follow one principle: the right for castling will be lost by the player's own move after he has played his king or rook, not by a move of the opponent.

I agree that Suggestion A makes everything much easier, but it would not be accepted because it is too big a change. I like suggestions B and C very much, and have a slight preference for C. I think that it completely covers what we had in mind when we discussed Article 9 in Dresden.

**Question** The time control of the tournament was fifteen minutes for the whole game without increment. In the last round I had the white pieces in the following position:



[FEN "5r2/8/2k2P2/5R2/3p2p/6P1/2P5/6K1"]

At this moment I had about four seconds, and my opponent forty seconds. I played f7, stopped the clocks, and claimed a draw. (I spent about three seconds to find how it is possible to stop it.) The following dialogue then began with the arbiter:

"What is your claim?"

"I claim a draw, because my position is absolutely winning and my opponent has no counterplay, but I do not have enough time to win it."

"Did your opponent try to use your time trouble?" "Is it important?"

"Yes, it is important. In this situation your opponent did not try to use your time trouble, so I decline your claim and add two minutes to your opponent's time."

"OK, but I will send a protest about your action to FIDE."

Who is right in this situation, the arbiter or the player? Thank you. All the best, **GM Oleg Korneev (Russia)**

**Answer** As you can see, Article 10.2.d states that the arbiter's decision is final:

*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. (See Article 6.12.b)*

*a. If the arbiter agrees the opponent is making no effort to win the game by normal means, or that it is not possible to win by normal means, then he shall declare the game drawn. Otherwise he shall postpone his decision or reject the claim.*

*b. If the arbiter postpones his decision, the opponent may be awarded two extra minutes and the game shall continue, if possible in the presence of an arbiter. The arbiter shall declare the final result later in the game or as soon as possible after a flag has fallen. He shall declare the game drawn if he agrees that the final position cannot be won by normal means, or that the opponent was not making sufficient attempts to win by normal means.*

c. *If the arbiter has rejected the claim, the opponent shall be awarded two extra minutes time.*

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

You mentioned that it was a rapid game. In my opinion, the clock plays a more important role in a rapid game than in a normal game. Even if Article 10.2.d did not exist, and according to this Article the arbiter is always right when someone claims a draw, I fully support the arbiter's decision. You play a rapid game and at the moment there is a threat that you will overstep the time, you claim a draw. By the way, the questions the arbiter asked were absolutely appropriate.

**Question** Dear Mr. Gijssen, I have questions about International Arbiter (IA) and Fide Arbiter (FA) norms.

The FIDE Handbook states for IA norm (title Regulations 4.6 d):

Experience as chief or deputy arbiter in at least four FIDE rated events such as the following:

- a. The final of the National Individual (adult) Championship (maximum two norms).
- b. All official FIDE tournaments and matches.
- c. International tournaments where FIDE title norms for players are possible.
- d. **International FIDE rated chess events with at least 100 players, at least 30% FIDE rated players, and at least 7 rounds (maximum one norm).**
- e. All official World and Continental Rapid Championships (maximum one norm).

For FA (see bold):

Experience as chief or deputy arbiter in at least three (3) FIDE Rated events (**these can be either national or international**) and attendance of at least one (1) FIDE Arbiters' Seminar and successful passing (at least 80%) an examination test set by the Arbiters' Commission. FIDE rated event valid for a norm is considered any tournament with minimum 10 players in case that it is played with Round Robin system, with minimum 6 players in case that it is played with Double Round Robin system and with minimum 20 players in case that it is played with Swiss system.

Is it possible to get an IA norm from a FIDE Rating event that is not a title norm Tournament, but just a FIDE Rating Tournament?

Is it possible to get a FA norm from a FIDE rating event that is just a FIDE Rating Tournament?

Please explain. Thank you. Regards, **Govind Bhake (India)**

**Answer** I understand your confusion. Here are some definitions:

Official FIDE tournaments and matches:

These are events organized by FIDE: Chess Olympiads, World Championship Matches and Tournaments, Candidate Tournaments, World Team Championships, Zonal Tournaments et cetera.

FIDE rated tournaments:

These are events which are sent to FIDE for rating calculations

There are two types of FIDE rated tournaments:

1. FIDE rated tournaments I which it is possible to make title norms (GM, IM WGM, WIM)
2. FIDE rated tournament in which it is not possible to make the mentioned title norms.

For the IA title experience as chief or deputy arbiter in events of the categories 1 and/or 2a is required. And also national championships for adults and international Swiss tournaments with at least 100 players (at least thirty of them must have a FIDE rating) is sufficient.

**Question** Here are two interesting situations from a recent Blitz event. The time limit is 3'+2" increment, and there is almost no supervision, certainly less than one arbiter per three games. FIDE rules apply.

**Situation 1** Black plays a check. White doesn't notice it, plays a rook move, and presses his clock. Black takes White's king. White instantly claims a win. Result?

I understand that we cannot capture the king any more, but when the arbiter intervened to uphold White's claim, Black intelligently pointed out that he had not pressed his clock yet. So his move was not complete. Thus, rather than being bound by a touch-move rule to move his rook (arbiter's suggestion), he could claim the game for White's illegal move. Has White in fact jumped the gun here and should he have waited for Black to stop his clock before summoning the arbiter and claiming? I think this has wide implications, as when players incorrectly capture a king I doubt that they ever stop their clock. Therefore, in most cases they wouldn't lose, but could instead claim a win when the arbiter arrives.

**Situation 2** Ending of R+P vs. R+P: one side gives up a rook, then has to promote the pawn to a knight to avoid mate. At this stage, the player with the rook has about one minute, and the player with the knight about ten seconds. The player with knight demonstrates that he knows how not to get mated to such an extent that the rook allows him to try again, and again, and again ... with over a minute on his clock now the knight stops the clocks and asks the arbiter (who has been watching, as this is the last game to finish in the final round on a high board) for a draw. Decision?

The arbiter actually awarded the game to rook for a "false claim," which seems strange, surely awarding the rook more time is possible, but can Black really lose by asking for a draw? **Paul Dargan (UK)**

**Answer** I refer to a part of Article B3.c of the Blitz Rules:

*Where supervision is inadequate the following shall apply:*

*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.*

You are right that it is only possible to claim an illegal move after it has been completed. You are also right that taking the opponent's king is an illegal move. And finally you are right to wait with a claim until the opponent has completed his move; i.e., has pressed the clock.

I agree with the arbiter to disallow the draw claim, but I disagree with the arbiter's decision to declare the game won for the player with the rook. For an incorrect claim, there is a penalty according to Article 9.5: he should add three minutes to the opponent's time and the game should be continued.

Once the game continues, I, as arbiter, would follow the game, count the moves, and if I saw that there was no progress, I would declare the game drawn.

**Question** Dear, Mr. Gijssen, I was playing in a CFC (Canadian) tournament

that was governed by FIDE Laws My opponent picked up his rook and released it on f8. After about two seconds, he picked up his king and placed it on g8. I stopped the clocks to summon the arbiter to inform him of my claim that he could not castle, which was agreed upon.

However, the next question was if the rook had to stay on f8 as it had already been released on the square or if he had the ability to move it to g8. I believe the FIDE rules in question are 4.4 b, 4.3 a, and 4.6. What would be your decision in this case? Does the rook have to stay on f8 or is there an option to play it to g8? Thank you. **Lee Hendon (Canada)**

**Answer** If a player has released a piece on a certain square and the move is legal, the move stands. The answer is Rf8 stands and Rg8 is not possible.

**Question** Hi Geurt, the arbiters in South Africa have been having the following discussion and we think we might have, possibly, found a "loophole" in the Laws. During a game, Player B resigns. However, Player A has no mating material on the board. What should the result of the game be if:

1. this situation was only realised some time after the game has ended (at least one round later).
2. Player B realises what's going on before both players agree on the result (shake hands).

We think, in the first instance, the result should be 1-0 to Player A (the "error" could only have been realised days after the tournament).

In the second instance, we are at a deadlock. Some arbiters quote Article 5.1b, stating that if Player B resigned (for whatever reasons), he loses and Player A receives the full point (1-0). However, some feel that the result should be ½-½ (as Player A cannot win the game any more) and there are some that feel the result should be ½-0 (A cannot win, but B resigned).

Currently, the Laws do not make provision for this. As the preface of the Laws state, all possible situations cannot be covered by the Laws and I can only assume that an arbiter should use his best judgement to determine the result of the game.

This made us think of the old rule where a player could win a game on time even if he only had a king left (no mating material) on the board, which has been changed.

Possible solution; append the following to the end of Article 5.1b: "However, the game is drawn if the position is such that at least one of the players cannot checkmate his opponent with any series of legal moves." Best regards,  
**Günther van den Bergh (South Africa)**

**Answer** In my opinion, it is very strange that a player resigns when his opponent has no mating material. I would be very curious to see the final position. If I had to refer to some Articles of the Laws of Chess, I see only two options:

Article 5.1.b:

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

And probably to your surprise, Article 6.9:

*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.*

In my opinion, to resign in a position in which your opponent cannot win is comparable to overstepping the time limit in a position in which your opponent cannot win.



I once had a question about what to do if a stalemate was overlooked, and the game continued and one of the players won the game. At the time my answer was that the signed result (1-0 or 0-1) stands in the tournament table, but for rating calculations it should be  $\frac{1}{2}$ - $\frac{1}{2}$ .

Regarding the actual game, I would decide in the same way, provided that the mistake was discovered after some days. If the resigning player discovered his mistake immediately, I, as arbiter, would declare the game drawn.

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