



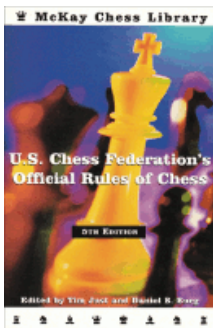
COLUMNISTS

An Arbiter's Notebook

Geurt Gijssen

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What Qualifies as a Distraction?

**Question** Dear Mr. Gijssen, In your [last column](#) you stated that: "An illegal move is completed once the opponent's clock has been started" in the Blitz and Rapid rules.

Today often digital clocks are used. When a player oversteps the time limit the clocks usually show 0.00 and this doesn't change despite his opponent pressing the clock. So it is not possible for the opponent to start the clock of a player who has overstepped the time limit. If you take the words as written in the rules you couldn't make an illegal move at that point when your opponent has overstepped the time limit with digital clocks. This is of course not the intent of the rules. Is there anything to say against the phrasing "... once the player pressed the clock"? Best regards, **Volker Kraft (Germany)**

**Answer** After I read your question, my immediate impression was that you are right. Then I attempted to think of a solution to the problem – but then also immediately realized the solution is right there, exactly as you phrase it in the last part of your question.

**Question** Hello Mr. Gijssen, Thanks for your perfect answers. First I want to know how should I pronounce your name? Then I have some new problems in Blitz. All of these situations have adequate supervision.

1. Both Players A and B are in similarly dire time trouble, say Player A has three seconds initially on the clock and Player B four seconds. It's Player B's turn. He sees that Player A's flag has fallen. He presses the clock without making a move. Then he stops the clock. Now Player B has one second on his clock and the clock has been stopped. If Player B had made a move and then pressed the clock, he probably would have lost this whole second. However he did not make a move but stopped the clock after first pressing it. What is your decision?
2. A player doesn't shake hands at the start or at the end of a game. Can the arbiter punish him?
3. Player A has in the initial position two queens and Player B has not paid attention to that. Three moves have been completed. Should the game be continued? The law says that *no claim can be made regarding incorrect piece placement*, but in this situation there is no incorrect piece placement. There is a piece in place of another piece.
4. Can one side claim a draw by threefold repetition of moves? What about threefold repetition of position? What about the fifty-move rule? How can a player prove that fifty moves have been made? Is it the arbiter's duty?
5. Mr. Gijssen, I am interested in becoming an international arbiter, but I don't know how it is possible in Iran. Is there a website to achieve an Internet certification?

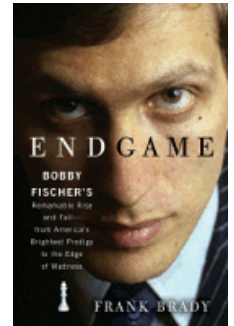
With best wishes, **Reza Khalil (Iran)**

**Answer** Ghurt Ghayshun.

You mention that there is adequate supervision. This means we apply for questions one through four the "normal" rules, except the requirement that the players have to record the moves. For each game there is an arbiter who supervises the game.

1. Let me first say, that in my opinion, Player B's behavior is very strange. When he noticed that Player A overstepped the time limit, why he didn't stop both clocks and claim the win of the game? Why didn't the

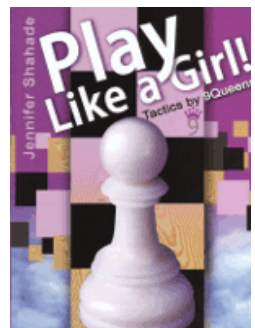
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arbiter call the flag fall? By his actions he took the risk that Player A had the possibility to claim that his flag has fallen after Player B had pressed the clock without making a move. If I had been the arbiter, I assume that I would have seen the flag fall before this incident and would have stopped the clocks.

2. I suppose it is not a FIDE event. In this case no punishment. If it is a FIDE event, then the player should be warned and if he still refuses to shake hands, the consequence can be that he loses the game.
3. You indicated that the supervision was adequate. Therefore they have to start a new game, because the normal rules of chess apply.
4. In principle it is possible to claim a draw, just as in normal games. But to **prove** that the claim is correct or incorrect is almost impossible. In tie breaks for the world championship matches an arbiter records the moves and electronic boards are used, which save the moves. In this case the claims can be checked.
5. I advise you to contact your federation. A federation has the opportunity to organize seminars. After exams and some practice you may be appointed as a National arbiter. Through another seminar, organised in cooperation with FIDE, you can get a norm for FIDE arbiter. Then, by serving successfully as an arbiter in international tournaments, you can receive the title of FIDE arbiter.

**Question** Dear Mr. Gijssen, We are a little group of Italian arbiters and we have been debating the following situation, which actually occurred in a Swiss tournament.

Players A and B are paired and the clock has been started, but Player B has not yet arrived at the chessboard (let's assume that there is a time tolerance, so the game is not yet forfeited). Before Player B's arrival, Player A's phone rings; so, as per 12.3b, Player A shall lose the game. Now we have two possible situations:

1. Player B arrives in time: now the game can start – but it's already finished, so Player B cannot move. Player B has a right to his full point, as dictated by the same 12.3b and by logic (finally, he was in his full right to be late!), but in this way he won his game before arriving to the chessboard, and that is, at least, very unusual!
2. Player B does not arrive in time; so, the game never starts (or does it?). As per 6.6a, Player B lost his game, so he should score no (zero) points – but 12.3b clearly states that Player B can win or draw, but not lose the game! How many points does Player B score?

But the main question is: has the game been played or not? Or in other words: when exactly does the game start? From Player A's point of view, the game has been played and lost by penalty – but, from Player B's point of view, the game has not been played! So the result should be 0U – 0F, where U stands for "unrated played game", while F stands for "forfeit" in the usual way – but may a result be asymmetrical?

In both situations, we have four points to decide:

- Can Player A and Player B be paired again? Does the timely arrival of Player B to the chessboard make any difference in this regard?
- Is the game valid for rating variations? We think that, as per B.02.5.1, in neither case the game should be rated, is this correct?
- In the calculations for tie-break (e.g. Buchholz), should the game be considered played or not?
- Is the game valid for title norms? As per B.01-1.42c, if the game is unplayed it is not valid for a norm, and the rating of Player B is not to be included in Player A's ARO; but if the game is played, it's a lost game and Player B's rating must be accounted for, and the same stands from Player B's point of view.

We understand that this is a very long question, but we would appreciate very much your opinion. Thank you in advance and best regards. **IA F. De Sio, L. Forlano, M. Held, FA R. Ricca (Italy)**

**Answer** Let me begin by referring to Article 5.1 of the FIDE Rating

Regulations (See FIDE Handbook):

*Whether these (unplayed games) occur because of forfeiture or any other reason, they are not counted. Any game where both players have made at least one move will be rated.*

I assume that by referring to this Article the main questions have been answered. The "game" will not be rated and therefore is not valid for a norm, because the players didn't make a move.

For the question regarding the score I want to refer first of all to the Preface of the Laws of Chess:

*The Laws of Chess cannot cover all possible situations that may arise during a game, nor can they regulate all administrative questions. Where cases are not precisely regulated by an Article of the Laws, it should be possible to reach a correct decision by studying analogous situations which are discussed in the Laws.*

It is in my opinion very logical to award the full point to the opponent if he arrives in time and to award no points in case he arrives too late.

In both cases it is an unplayed game and these two players can be paired against each other later in the tournament.

Also for Buchholz calculations you have to follow the normal regulations for an unplayed game.

**Question** Hi, A few questions about an incorrect clock setting. The time control was thirty moves in ninety minutes, and then one hour to complete the game, with a five second delay. However, the clock in question only had the five second delay for the first time control, not the second (sudden death) time control. The first player was not aware of this; it was not clear whether the second player knew this or not (it was the second player's clock, but it was not clear whether the lack of a five second delay in the second control was accidental or intentional). The game ended with the first player losing on time, still unaware of the lack of the delay and surprised that his time had drained away so quickly.

**One** After the game was over, a spectator commented on the lack of a delay and brought the situation to the attention of the arbiter. What actions, if any, would be appropriate for the arbiter?

**Two** What if, instead, the arbiter had begun observing the game as the sudden death time control approached, and happened to notice the lack of a delay prior to the end of the game. What actions, if any, would be appropriate for the arbiter to take at that moment? Thanks, **Andrew Schechter (USA)**

**Answer One** I refer to Article 6.10.b of the Laws of Chess:

*If during a game it is found that the setting of either or both clocks was incorrect, either player or the arbiter shall stop the clocks immediately. The arbiter shall install the correct setting and adjust the times and move counter. He shall use his best judgement when determining the correct settings.*

The fact that the wrong setting was discovered after the game means that the arbiter cannot do anything. The result stands.

**Answer Two** This is also mentioned in Article 6.10.b. The only problem is how to adjust the clock times. Especially with the delay mode it is a little more complicated than with the other modes. After the arbiter has fixed the correct setting, he should award to both players some extra minutes for the time they missed in the second period.

**Question** Respectfully sir, I need the clarification regarding the draw offer. According to Article 9.1 b.:

*If the rules of a competition allow a draw agreement, the following apply:*

*A player wishing to offer a draw shall do so after having made a move on the chessboard and before stopping his clock and starting the opponent's clock. An offer at any other time during play is still valid but Article 12.6 must be considered.*

Sir, I clearly understand this, but an arbiter has made the argument that a player can offer a draw at any time during the game without having made a move. Is that correct? I attempted to make it clear to him that he has misunderstood the Article as regards draw offers but he maintains his stance. Thank you. **Anand Sagar (India)**

**Answer** The arbiter was right that a draw offer at any time during the game is valid, but if a player doesn't follow the procedure established in the first part of this Article, it is incorrect and the arbiter has the possibility to punish this player. When a player does it in a game frequently, the arbiter may even exercise his option to declare the game lost for this player.

**Question** Dear Mr. Gijssen, Do the following situations qualify as "distractions" that might require intervention of an arbiter or are they just bad manners?

**Situation One** A player is sipping coffee with disgusting noises that are so loud they can be heard fifty feet away.

**Situation Two** A player is continuously aspirating loudly through his running nose.

Maybe I am very hypersensitive to these behaviours! Thank you. **Norberto Barbalace (USA)**

**Answer** Another reader wrote with a similar example: "I once had an opponent eat a large meatball sub at the board and then burp 'meatball' at me through the remainder of the game. It was disgusting."

Yes, the player has the right to summon the arbiter and to ask his assistance. I refer to the first sentence of Article 12.6 of the Laws of Chess:

*It is forbidden to distract or annoy the opponent in any manner whatsoever.*

The arbiter has in my opinion the possibility to forbid a player to eat or drink at the board, provided he is sure that it is disturbing to the opponent. He can also force the player to eat and drink outside of the playing area, provided he is sure that it disturbs not only the opponent, but other players in the playing area.

**Question** Hello Geurt, I have some questions for you.

**One** Player A checks Player B. In the heat of the moment, Player B does not see the check and completes a move by moving another piece X.

In the actual game, piece X could not cancel the check. I believed that Player B could be forced to move his king, but the arbiter indicated that Player B could reply with any legal move, cancelling the check. I was under the impression that you could force your opponent to move his king if he touched a piece that was not able to move. In the above example, he would have to break the check with his king if possible. Apparently this rule is not followed any more. Could you provide some insight as to why/when this rule was dropped ?

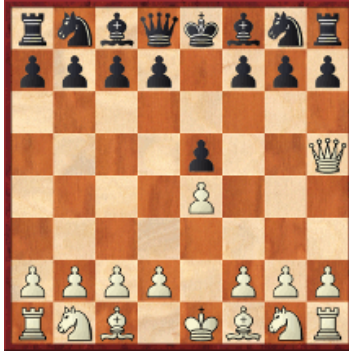
**Two** What would be the rule if piece X could break the check?

**Three** Is there any difference if Black touched piece X without completing the move (releasing it, pushing the clock )?

**Four** Is the rule the same in all forms of chess (Blitz, fixed time control, Fischer, and so on)?

Thank you. **Guido De Bouver (Belgium)**

**Answer One** You are right, there was once a rule, that, in situations you described, a player had to move his king. I am not sure when this rule was changed, but it was in the nineteenth century. At that time games were played without clocks. After the introduction of clocks time penalties were possible. The potential consequences of this rule are well-illustrated by this example:



[FEN "rnbqkbnr/pppp1ppp/8/4p2Q/4P3/8/PPPP1PPP/RNB1KBNR b KQkq - 0 2"]

Suppose, the player of the black pieces played in this position an illegal move. Then he is forced to play 2...Ke7, which will be followed by 3.Qxe5 mate.

**Answer Two** The player touched a piece and has the possibility to make a legal move with this piece. In this case he has to play this piece. Additionally his opponent receives two extra minutes.

**Answer Three** For all types of chess we have the same rule: once a piece has been touched it must be played or captured, provided a legal move can be produced by the touched piece.

**Answer Four** No, in all cases a touched piece has to play, provided he has the possibility to play a legal move. But there is one big difference in Rapid and in Blitz chess without adequate supervision. I refer to Article A.4.c of the Rapid Rules:

*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.*

And Article B.3.c of the Blitz Rules:

*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.*

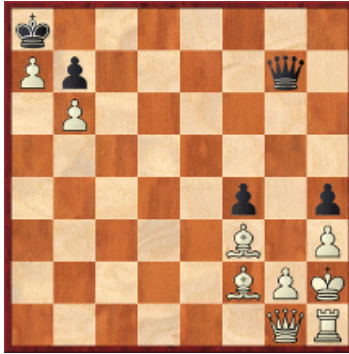
**Question** Hello Geurt Gijssen, This is regarding the question you answered from Jos Vlak [last month](#). In your answer you stated that since White can't mate by any series of legal moves the position is a draw. But I feel that the question posed to you wasn't complete. The real issue in this question is if Black's last move ...Qg3+ counts even though he wasn't able to press the clock in time. Black moved the queen to g3, left it there, and then flag was called before he pressed his clock.

I was interested in this question and asked two different International

Arbiters, each giving me a different answer. IA Shlomo Kandelshine said that since the clock wasn't pressed, Black's move doesn't count, and it's a win for White. IA Almog Burnstein said that the move was completed and the position is a draw. What do you think is the right call? Thanks, **Yuval Wyborski (Israel)**

**Answer** I would like to discuss the matter step by step, following 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.*



[FEN "k7/Pp4q1/1P6/8/5p1p/5B1P/5BPK/6QR b - - 0 1"]

Black played 1. ..Qg3+. After he had made this move, his flag has fallen.

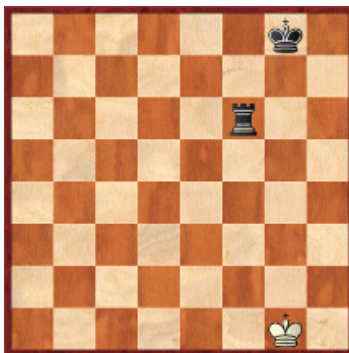
We have not to consider the exceptions mentioned in the first sentence, because it is not checkmate, nobody resigned, no stalemate, not a dead position, and no draw agreement.

Apparently Black overstepped the time limit, therefore he lost the game. Did he really lose? Article 6.9 contains a second sentence.

*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.*

And the meaning of this sentence is that the arbiter for each game that finishes by overstepping the time limit has to check that the opponent really deserves the point, meaning he has the possibility to checkmate the player's king.

I assume that if Black in the following simple position oversteps the time limit, you will agree with me, that the result will be a draw, because White has no possibility to checkmate the black king or in the words of Article 6.9: there is no series of legal moves to checkmate the black king.



[FEN "6k1/8/5r2/8/8/8/6K1 w - - 0 1"]

Let's now go back to the first position. Here I would like to ask you: "Can you produce a series of legal moves which will result in checkmating the black king?" There are in this position only two series of legal moves after 1. ..Qg3+:

- 2. Bxg3 hxg3
- 2. Bxg3 fxg3

And both series of legal moves result even in checkmating the white king. There is apparently no series of legal moves to checkmate the black king. Therefore: Draw!

If I remove, for instance, the pawn on a7, the situation is different. In this case 2...hxg3 or 2...fxg3 are not forced. Black has the possibility to play 2...Kb8. In this case I can produce a series of legal moves resulting in checkmating the black king. This means White wins.

I disagree with Mr. Kandelshine. The move is made and therefore counts. If a player, for instance, checkmates the opponent's king and after making this move his flag falls, the move counts and the checkmate stands. I refer to the first sentence of Article 6.9 (see above).

I disagree also with Mr. Burstein. The move has been made. Completing a move means making a move and pressing the clock.

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*[Yes, I have a question for Geurt!](#)*

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