



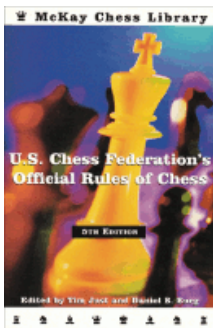
COLUMNISTS

An Arbiter's Notebook

Geurt Gijssen

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The Mexico & Yucatan Cases

Question Dear Mr. Gijssen, I am writing to you as you are probably the most authoritative person in terms of chess rules. I am an Italian entry level chess referee and also a decent chess player (FIDE 2086). Two weeks ago I took part in the International Open held in Cento (near Ferrara, Italy). Principal referee Franca Dapiran and I experienced a situation that somehow puzzled and bothered me as a player and as a referee.

Here are the facts of the case: in the last round, Sunday morning, I was paired with a strong Italian FIDE Master (300 Elo points above my rating). He did not show up in the tournament hall and so, after a hour waiting, I was given a forfeit victory. I would have liked to play the game and challenge the opponent, but I was not given the opportunity, for apparently no good reason. He did not previously inform the organization, nor justified in any way his behavior, instead, he was spotted around noon in the hotel lounge, happily talking with other people.

As a consequence, I asked for an explanation from the experienced arbiter Mr. Renzo Renier, and, much to my surprise, he told me that FIDE has no real penalties for that kind of conduct, and that it happens rather often in open tournaments (so that, for example, strong players with no more chances to win prizes, paired to weaker players, don't play the last game to avoid a possible loss of Elo points). I believe that to be truly unfair and in violation of the fundamental law of chess that calls for sportsmanship and correctness. I would really appreciate if you could give me your opinion about this problem and if something can be done to fix it. Thanks very much for your time and best regards, **Marco Campini (Italy)**

Answer I agree with you that the behavior of these players is very unfair and should be punished. But as you already mentioned, sanctions are impossible at the moment. There is nothing written in the Laws of Chess or Tournament Regulations. And to be honest, I don't see any possibility to act against these players. The only solutions that may be possible, as far I can see, is that the names of these players shall be published and organizers are encouraged not to invite or admit these players to their tournaments. But the next question will be: Who shall publish the names of these players? FIDE? ACP? Federations?

It is in the interest of all serious players to ban these players from tournaments. I am ready to bring up this matter to the FIDE board.

Question Dear Geurt, I was reading lately about "the Yucatan case " that occurred in a female U-16 qualifier in Mexico. In a Double Round Robin Tournament, between four players, two of them came in first place tied with five points in six games. The players won one game each amongst themselves. The difference is that one of them won one game from an opponent by absence.

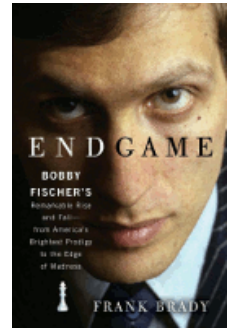
The tiebreak system was Sonneborn-Berger.

The arbiter applied FIDE Handbook Chapter C06 "FIDE Tournament Rules," "Annex to the FIDE Tournament Regulations regarding tie breaks" referring to unplayed games, and the girl who won for the absence won the tournament.

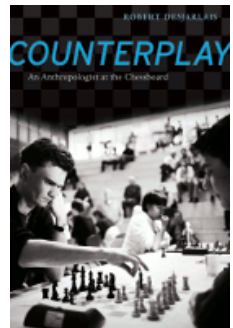
Can you clarify the following?

1. It is wrong to apply in a Round Robin tournament the "draw against the player himself" clause?

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2. It is assumed that the system is implemented in this way? Or must be made explicit before the tournament starts.
3. What if this was unclear? You must continue with a playoff system, and not use the Berger?

Thank you very much for your always clear answers. **IA Horacio Arévalo (Uruguay)**

Answer In fact, there is only one good system to break a tie: play tiebreak games. All other systems are in my opinion artificial and therefore quite dubious. Nevertheless, I also understand that it is quite difficult to organize extra games to decide the ultimate winner of an event in case of a Swiss or Round Robin Tournament.

It happens many times that it is very difficult to foresee what the consequences are of a chosen tiebreak system. And the situation you describe is a clear example. Let me explain that at the moment in the FIDE Handbook there are two systems for calculating unplayed games in the Sonneborn Berger System. One system is mentioned in the Tournament Regulations; the other one is published in the FIDE Handbook: 04. FIDE Swiss Rules:

Handling of unplayed games for calculation of Buchholz (Congress 2009)

There are two points of view:

a. for the player himself who gets a result by default or is absent

A virtual opponent of the player is used to calculate the Buchholz of the player. A virtual opponent has the same points at the beginning of the round and the result by default of a player is treated as a normal result, so a loss by default (or absence) is a win for the virtual opponent and vice versa. For each next round the virtual opponent gains half a point.

b. for the opponents in other rounds of the player who gets a result by default

For reducing the consequence for the opponents when calculating Buchholz, each result. By default of a player is counted as a half point (draw) for the Buchholz of the player's opponents.

When the Buchholz System is mentioned, this applies in my opinion also for Sonneborn Berger. I understand quite well that not everybody is aware that the second method was published in the FIDE Handbook. It seems that this system works especially at the top better than the first method.

But in the Yucatan case each system must fail. It doesn't matter which tiebreak system will be applied, it will always be unfair to the loser. The player who received a point because of the absence of her opponent cannot be blamed for this, since it is not her fault that she received a full point by forfeit. She cannot demonstrate that she is as strong as the player who shared the first place. And for the player who played all games the same applies. If there is one example that a tiebreak of playing a game or games was appropriate, then this is an excellent example.

You mentioned that the next criterion should be applied. Was there another criterion? And in case the answer is "Yes," which criterion?

Question Dear Mr. Gijssen, I'd like to know if there was any change, with the new rules, regarding what the arbiter should do if a player made (but did not complete) an illegal move, that is, that there should be no penalty for the action. Please consider the three time controls (Normal, Rapid, Blitz).

Rosario Aráoz (Uruguay)

Answer For normal games I refer to Article 7.4.a of the Laws of Chess. The first sentence of this Article is

If during a game it is found that an illegal move, including failing to

*meet the requirements of the promotion of a pawn or capturing the opponent's king, has been **completed**, the position immediately before the irregularity shall be reinstated.*

Article 7.4.b describes the punishment. As you may see, this Article mentioned that there is a punishment when an illegal move is completed. It means, as long a player did not stop his own clock and started the opponent's clock there is no punishment.

For Rapid and Blitz games with adequate supervision, the same rule applies.

If there is inadequate supervision I refer to the Rules of Blitz and 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.

And also in this type of chess the move must be completed. This means as long as a player who made an illegal move and did not stop his own clock and start the opponent's clock, there is no punishment in all types of chess.

Question Mr. Gijssen, I have a question about the threefold repetition rule. In the game **Anthony Miles – Anatoli Vaissier**, Elista 1998, the opponents agreed to a draw after **1.d4 e6 2.Nf3 f5 3.d5 ed 4.Qxd5 d6 5.Ng5 Qe7 6. Nxb7 c6 7.Qb3 Rxb7 8.Qxg8 Rh4 9.Qb3 Na6 10.Qe3 Re4 11.Qd2 Nb4 12. Qd1 Rd4 13.Nd2 f4 14.a3 Nd5 15.c3 Ne3 16.fe Qh4+ 17.g3 fg 18.Bg2 gh+**



[FEN "r1b1kb2/pp4p1/2pp4/8/3r3q/P1P1P3/
1P1NP1Bp/R1BQ1K1R w q - 0 23"]

19.Kf1 Qf6+ 20.Ke1 Qh4+ 21.Kf1 ½-½

However, suppose the game had continued 21...Qf6+ 22.Ke1. Would Black now be able to claim a draw by threefold repetition, by stating his intention to make the move 22...Qh4+?

It seems to me that by the first sentence of FIDE Rule 9.2 the claim should be valid. We have had the same position after Black's moves eighteen, twenty, and twenty-two, where each piece has the same legal moves. However, the last sentence of Rule 9.2 seems to confuse the issue. I can imagine a counter-argument that goes like this: in the initial position on move eighteen, White is *temporarily* prevented from castling by the pawn on h2, but has not *permanently* lost the right to castle. However, after **19.Kf1** he *permanently* loses the right to castle, so the position has changed. Which argument is correct? **Dana Mackenzie (USA)**

Answer I refer to Article 9.2 and I mention the **whole** Article:

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.

The question is, can we consider the first position (after **18...gxh4**) to be the same as after **20...Qxh4+** and **22...Qxh4+**?

The positions are not the same. Essential is in this case the very last sentence of Article 9.2.

The player of the white pieces lost his right to castle by **19.Kf1**, not by **18...gxh2+**. Therefore, the player of the black pieces could *not* claim a draw by announcing that he had in mind to play **22...Qh4+**.

Question One Dear Sir, please compare [FIDE Handbook, B.02](#), 8.1.a, for p=0.00,

dp= - 800 with this [link](#).

In this link $R_p = R_c + dp$; $863 = 1563 + dp \Rightarrow dp = -700$.

I'll be grateful to know your opinion about this difference!

Question Two Suppose that in a closed rated chess tournament RR(round robin), Chief Arbiter and organizer announced at technical meeting that:

None of the forfeit results will not report to FIDE as forfeit + or forfeit - and all forfeits reported to FIDE as 0-1 or 1-0.

What are the FIDE rules in this regard? Is this announcement correct?

Question Three I refer to B02.6.43 of the FIDE Handbook

In the case of a round robin tournament where one or more games are unplayed, the results of the tournament must be reported for rating as if for a Swiss system tournament.

Suppose that in a RR tournament total number of players is ten.

If one of the players has nine unplayed games(nine forfeit losses), can the organizer ignore his presence in the tournament and assume this tournament as a round robin with total number of nine players or must this tournament be reported as a Swiss system according to B02.6.43?

Question Four Player I , $R_c(\text{new})=2322$, in the example below (Article B02.8 of FIDE Handbook).

According to the explanation mentioned on B02.8, I calculate here:

Player I, A, B count as 2432

$R_{ar} = 2432 + 2432 + 2400 + 2150 + 2300 + 2300$ divided by 6

$R_{ar} = 2336$

$d_{pa} = 351 + 220 + 125 - 43 - 125 - 351$ divided by 6

$d_{pa} = 29.5$

$R_a = 2336 - 29.5 \times 9/10$

$R_a = 2309$

then

Rc new for player I is Rc new=2309.

But in the FIDE Handbook(article B02.8) => Rc(new)=2322.

Best regards, **Dr. Bahavar (Iran)**

Answer One I checked the second link and found Rp = 763 and not 863.

Answer Two I quote some Articles:

Article 5 of the Rating Regulations:

Unplayed games

Whether these 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.

Article 1.42.c of the Title Regulations:

Games as follows are not included decided by forfeit, adjudication or any means other than over the board play. Other games once started, which are forfeited for whatever reason, shall however be included. In a last round game a player must play in order to have the required number of games, but can afford to lose. Then, if the opponent forfeits, the norm shall still count.

From these two Articles it is in my opinion clear that the announcement is not correct.

Answer Three Because of the fact that the colour balance of several players will not be plus one or minus one, but in fact even plus two or minus two, it is better to report it as a Swiss Tournament. Probably it is appropriate to mention that one player forfeited all games.

Answer Four You are correct.

Question Dear Mr. Gijssen, the following situation occurred at a local chess tournament. My opponent and I were running low on time (I had two minutes left and he had seven) when I delivered a back-rank mate. My opponent threw his hands in the air and looked shocked, and then shook his head in disgust. We shook hands and I may have whispered something like "tough game." I wrote the final score of 0-1 on my scoresheet while my opponent folded his without writing anything. I asked to see it because I did not write all the final moves as I had less than five minutes left. He gave me his sheet but it was incomplete because he had also stopped writing down the moves. My opponent then got up and went outside. I stopped the clocks and started to put the pieces away. I then got up for a walk (other games were still in progress) and went outside. I saw my opponent returning with a bottle of water, saying: "It's not mate! I can block the check with my bishop. I want to continue the game!" I told him that we both believed it was mate (which he admitted) and that the game is over. It turns out that the mate was an optical illusion and he did have a legal move, but neither of us had seen it at the time.

My opponent went to the tournament director claiming that the game is still in progress because he never actually resigned (even though he thought he was checkmated). I believe my opponent had accepted defeat but then changed his mind later on. The tournament director, who did not witness the incident, gave my opponent a choice: either resume the game from the last known position from the incomplete scoresheets, or take a draw. My opponent took the draw. I had already won the game and my opponent showed poor sportsmanship. Who was right, and how would you have ruled? **Michel Legein (USA)**

Answer If I had been the arbiter in this situation, I would probably be ready to believe everything you stated, but there would be no evidence for it. I don't see any other solution than to continue the game from the last known position. This is the position in which your opponent acted in a way that you thought he resigned. If you and your opponent couldn't agree what the "final" position

was, then you had to continue the game from the last known position from the incomplete scoresheets.

The offered alternative to take a draw seems a little bit strange, because the game was still "in progress."

Question Dear Mr. Gijssen, I have a question regarding a game in a team competition between a blind Player A and a non-blind Player B (two hours for forty moves plus one hour for the rest of the game). They were using two boards according to Appendix E II of the FIDE rules. A normal digital clock was used. As there were no assistants available, the arbiter decided that Player B should tell his moves to Player A as well as the reflection time of both players, if asked by Player A. (Player A would only ask if it was his move.) For this additional obligation, Player B was awarded ten minutes of additional reflection time.

This latter decision is unprecedented in Germany, as I hear from the DBSB (German Chess Association for the Blind and Visually Impaired). Given that there are no rules covering this, would you consider that it is at the arbiter's discretion to act in the way he did (is it covered,

for example, in the Preface to the Laws of Chess)? Thank you very much and best regards. **Stephan Busemann (Germany)**

Answer When the arbiter made the decision you mentioned, he had in mind probably the following part of Article 8.1 of the Laws of Chess and its Preface:

If a player is unable to keep score, an assistant, who must be acceptable to the arbiter, may be provided by the player to write the moves. His clock shall be adjusted by the arbiter in an equitable way.

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.

I have the opinion that the arbiter's decision is quite creative, nevertheless he cannot make such a decision. He may suggest it and the opponent has to agree, because, even when the opponent does not have the move, it can disturb his concentration.

By the way, you mentioned that it was a game in a team competition. Why not have the captain of the blind team authorized to inform his player regarding the clock times?

Question Dear Mr. Geurt Gijssen, I have a question about pawn promotion and rule 3.7.e, and the behavior of players executing the promotion of a pawn.

Rule 3.7.e states

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 a new queen, rook, bishop or knight of the same colour. The player's choice is not restricted to pieces that have been captured previously. This exchange of a pawn for another piece is called 'promotion' and the effect of the new piece is immediate.

The interpretation of the rule seems to express that the rank furthest from its starting position is the eight rank and the trade of a pawn for the new queen must occur on this same square but sometimes in practice in classical chess, some players maybe with the habit of blitz games, never push the pawn to the eight rank and simple take the pawn from the seven rank and put a queen on the eight. In this way, the pawn never achieves the promotion square furthest from its starting position and it is not exchanged in the same square like rule 3.7.e illustrates. Can this be acceptable in a classical slow game? Is the rule 3.7.e clear or does it need for example an upgrade from instead of "the rank furthest from its starting position" to say "eighth rank" and the exchange of promoted piece for the pawn on the eight rank? Many thanks and greetings,

José Ribeiro (Portugal)

Answer Formally, you are absolutely right that the pawn must be moved to the furthest rank, but in fact it is generally accepted that it may be done in the "wrong" way you describe.

Question Dear Geurt, this is a question about tournament pairings.

The official pairings tables for a tournament with an even number of players give a great advantage to the lower numbered players. For example, with eight players the pairings are:

Round 1 1-8 2-7 3-6 4-5
Round 2 8-5 6-4 7-3 1-2
Round 3 2-8 3-1 4-7 5-6
Round 4 8-6 7-5 1-4 2-3
Round 5 3-8 4-2 5-1 6-7
Round 6 8-7 1-6 2-5 3-4
Round 7 4-8 5-3 6-2 7-1

The result of this type of pairing is that after two rounds, Player One has had white two times, while Player Five has had two blacks and the other players one white and one black.

After four rounds, player one and two have had white three times and one time black; players five and six have had white only one time and black three times.

After six rounds, players one, two and three have had white four times and black twice, while players five, six and seven have had white only twice and black four times.

This is rather unfair to the players who pretty much during the whole tournament have a significant disadvantage with the colors they receive.

It would be an important improvement to the pairings tables if after two rounds *all* players have had black one time and white one time, after four rounds *all* players have had black twice and white twice, and so on.

This goal of an equal number of black and white for all players after two, four, six rounds, etc can be achieved by the following simple and straightforward improvement:

The colors for the highest numbered player (in this case eight players, but it works for tournaments of all sizes) should be reversed. For example, for eight players:

Round 1 8-1 2-7 3-6 4-5
Round 2 5-8 6-4 7-3 1-2
Round 3 8-2 3-1 4-7 5-6
Round 4 6-8 7-5 1-4 2-3
Round 5 8-3 4-2 5-1 6-7
Round 6 7-8 1-6 2-5 3-4
Round 7 8-4 5-3 6-2 7-1

With this pairing, after the second, fourth and sixth rounds all players would have played the same number of games with white and black, and everybody would be happy.

Do you agree, and how could we achieve that the standard pairings tables would be changed to accommodate this improvement?! Thanks, **Henny van Oosterom (USA)**

Answer I agree with you that after an even number of rounds each player has a color balance of zero. The only drawback I see for the moment is, that in your system Player Four finishes with two games with black and Player Eight with two games with white. I am not so sure that Player Four will be very happy, actually, I am sure he is not happy at all. In the original system each

player has in rounds six and seven once black and once white.

I checked also what the consequences are of an odd number of players. It doesn't make any difference with the original tables.

The only real problem, apart from Player Four, to introduce your proposal is, as far as I can see, tradition. We have worked already more than one century with the Berger tables. It will be very hard to break this tradition. But I am ready to discuss your proposal in the Rules and Tournament Regulations Committee.

Question Dear Geurt, about forty years ago I was involved in organizing inter-schools chess.

In a match between two schools a game between A and B had to be adjourned and A was called upon to seal a move. The score sheet was placed in an envelope for safe keeping. When the two teams met to complete the adjourned games one captain pointed out that all games had been played with the wrong colors and that the completed games would stand but the unfinished games would have to be played again with correct colors.

On learning that his unfinished game had been annulled B opened the envelope as he was curious to see what move A had sealed. He discovered that A neglected to write any move on the scoresheet.

B's captain claimed the game on the grounds that A had failed to seal a move. A's captain disputed the claim on the grounds that the game had been annulled when the incorrect colors were discovered. B's captain argued that A had lost the game when he had failed to seal a move and this took place before the wrong colors were discovered.

The case went to the disputes committee. I can't remember the decision the committee finally made but I do recall it led to some very lively discussion. Of course, the relevant rules may have changed since then but I'd be interested in hearing your thoughts. Regards, **Graham Saint (Australia)**

Answer Let me start to answer to your question based on the actual rules. For this I refer to Article 7.2 of the Laws of Chess:

If a game has begun with colours reversed then it shall continue, unless the arbiter rules otherwise.

It is clear that in the situation you described the game shall continue. And I assume that forty years ago the decision would have been the same.

But there is something in your letter I do not understand. One captain claimed that the unfinished games should be played again with correct colors. Was there a decision to replay these games? I ask this question because the envelope of the sealed move was opened. And this should be done only after a decision was made. In case the decision was to continue the game, both players still have the possibility to offer a draw.

I suppose that the game continues and the envelope was opened and no scoresheet in the envelope. Then the game is won for the opponent, provided he has still the possibility to checkmate the other player's king.

Question and **Answer** From different individuals I received a question about a game played in Mexico. I understood that it was a Quickplay finish (Article 10.2) To claim a draw, the game must be played without increment and the claimant must have less than two minutes thinking time for the remaining moves. White claimed a draw just before his move **45.Be2** in the following position:



[FEN "8/2p5/1p1b3p/p1kP4/4K3/PP6/4B3/8 b - - 0 45"]

Black refused, because he thought that it wasn't a draw and that he was better. White told his opponent that his plan is to play a4. His bishop controls the queenside and his king stops the h-pawn easily.

After some further moves the position was:



[FEN "8/2p5/1p6/p1kP3p/P1B2b2/IP6/6K1/8 w - - 0 50"]

The easiest way for White was in my opinion to summon the arbiter and to inform him that he claims a draw based on Article 10.2.

The arbiter has the possibility to postpone his decision and even after a flag fall to declare the game drawn. Provided the arbiter knows the Laws of Chess, he shall declare the game drawn.

I saw some comments that Black should apologize for his behavior. I disagree.

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