



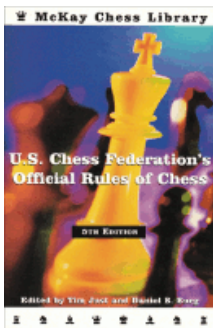
COLUMNISTS

An Arbiter's Notebook

Geurt Gijssen

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What is a Theoretical Draw?

I received two reactions to my answer to Mr. Tsjinjarjev's question in the [March column](#). I reproduce the question and answer:

Question Dear Mr. Gijssen, In a tournament I participated in the following incident occurred. Player A's (White) flag fell. After about two minutes, Player B made an illegal move that was noticed. The arbiter and the players also drew attention to the fact that the flag of Player A had fallen. The arbiter decided to add two minutes to Player A and to continue the game. Was that a correct decision? Many thanks.
Nikita Tsjinjarjev (Russia)

Answer I mentioned in a previous column that a flag in a normal game is considered to have fallen when the arbiter or a player notices this fact. The flag fall was noticed after the opponent has claimed an illegal move. The arbiter has in this case to act according to Article 7.4.b of the Laws of Chess:

The arbiter shall give two minutes extra time to his opponent in each instance; for a third illegal move by the same player, the arbiter shall declare the game lost by this 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.

If after the addition of two minutes extra thinking time, the player has still overstepped the time limit, the arbiter has to declare the game lost for this player.

Question Dear Geurt, in your March column, you answered a question from Nikita Tsjinjarjev (see above):

But what is done if this occurs in a period of quick play finish? The display of the clock will only show 0.00 after a player has overstepped the time limit.

And what to do if the game was played with a time control which includes increment + move counter? When a player has overstepped the time limit in his first period, his clock immediately stops running and during the rest of the game the display also only shows 0.00! Best regards, **Jan van den Ende (The Netherlands)**

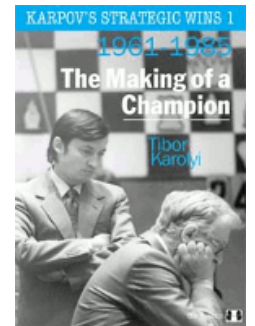
Question I have a follow up question. I asked the same question several years ago. In that case we used analog clocks. But in this case the white player had "lost on time" with more than five minutes. I ruled that white should be allowed to have two minutes to play on. In your answer you confirmed this. Now I think you would rule differently.

In my opinion this answer can't be correct for several reasons.

- You can't lose on time with minutes. It's zero.
- The digital clocks just end at zero and there shouldn't be any difference in ruling if analog clocks are used.
- There are no reasons at all for the player who has "lost on time" to claim an illegal move. If he claims this, he loses.

This can't be right to punish the one who hasn't done anything wrong and to award the one who made a mistake. In my opinion one should get two minutes to play on, from none to plus two. **Lars Dock (Sweden)**

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Answer Let me begin by discussing the question in reference to digital clocks. It is a fact that the clock of the player who overstepped the time limit shows 0.00. In this case the player who overstepped the time limit will receive two extra minutes and the game continues.

When using an analog chess clock the blocking of the clocks does not occur. The clock is still running. In principle I agree that it would be unfair to declare the game lost in the event that even after the addition of the two minutes the player has still overstepped the time limit. Therefore it is fair that he shall have two minutes until the time control.

Question I would like to know when one can claim a theoretical draw if it is obvious there is no winning progress but I am out of time. I once claimed a draw as I had rook and f-pawn, my opponent had bishop and g- and h-pawn. Obviously he can't win and neither can I. Is this correct to claim in this position? It was a rapid game with a fifteen minute time control. **Farirai Gumbe (Zimbabwe)**

Answer What is the definition of a "theoretical draw"? In my opinion it is a position that neither player can checkmate the opponent's king by any series of legal moves. I give some examples: K + B vs. K + B with bishops moving on the same color squares or K + B vs. K or K + N vs. K or K vs. K. I think that these are the only theoretical draws. And with these positions on the board the games are drawn pursuant to Article 9.6. All other positions may in principle be continued, although there are obvious positions in which it is quite unfair to continue the game. I give one example: White: king a3, pawn a4 Black: king a6, pawn a5.

Question The following is purely hypothetical and comes from a discussion about the rules between some chess players. Let's take a look at this position:



[FEN "6k1/2pp1ppp/3r4/8/8/8/6P1/1R4K1 w - - 0 1"]

Now white is a bit of a showoff, and decides he wants to let his rook slide to b8 (as in curling or shuffleboard).

So, he takes his b1 rook, lets it take up some speed, and lets go on b3, and yes the showoff has perfected his skill because the rook comes to full stop in the center of b8.

Now the discussion.

Some say: "Its checkmate; simple as that."

Others say: "The move is not made as it should. White should be warned. The rook should be placed back to b1 and white should have the move again."

I say: "White has let go of the rook on b3. This is a legal move. Therefore Rb1-b3 is a move that stands. "

That the rook later comes to a stop on b7, b8, or falls off the board seems irrelevant to me."

How would you react if the above scenario took place during a tournament?

Thank you for your columns, it is always fun to read them. With kind regards,
Siebre Westra (The Netherlands)

Answer If I had been present and had noticed that the player had released the rook on b3 from his hand, I would decide that Rb1-b3 stands. Otherwise I am afraid that I have to decide that the rook has been placed on the square where it has finished its rush, provided it is a legal move.

Question One Dear Mr Gijssen, as you know in most of the digital clocks it is clear that which player's flag has fallen first (say with a '-'). Do you use of this sign as a criterion for making a ruling ? In some cases when a flag falls the clock stops and it is in contradiction with this article: "A flag is considered to be fallen when a player claims or arbiter notices." I will be very grateful for your explanation.

Question Two This question is about putting the pieces on the borders of squares on the chess board. What would be your decision if a player releases a piece on the borders (between two or even four squares) and his opponent summons you to make a ruling ? Is the recorded move on the score sheet a good criterion for judgment or may you make a ruling solely based on the position of the piece (say more on e4 than d4 so the piece is on e4)? Thanks in advance, **FA Hadi Bakhshayesh (Iran)**

Answer One Yes, I use it. I know that in case of a flag fall, the clocks are blocked, but I do not see why it is in contradiction with the quoted article. The construction of the clock or better said, the programming of it, means that the blockade takes place at the moment the first flag falls. And in cases where the arbiter must make a ruling, the only thing he has to know which flag has fallen first.

Answer Two Provided that the recorded move is legal, I would use the information given by the recorded move.

Question Dear Mr. Gijssen, First of all I'm writing this letter to thank you. You play an important role in chess arbitrating. I respect your efforts. I have two questions:

Question One Suppose that both players are in time trouble in a normal game (Fischer modus with an increment of thirty seconds per move). The arbiter is around and is checking other boards or working on a case. One of the players doesn't write down all the moves (for example: he didn't record six moves)! The arbiter comes and observes that the score sheet is not complete and the player, whose score sheet has problems, has only fifteen seconds on his clock and has the move (the clock is counting down).

What is the best reaction of the arbiter in this case in your opinion? Force him to write all the moves in his fifteen seconds (maybe he will lose the game by falling the flag) or add two minutes to the opponent or give him simply a warning? Let him move or is before making the move the exact time to stop the clocks and do this? What if the arbiter is informed by the opponent in this case?

Question Two In FIDE Laws of Chess, there are some penalties offered. I understand them but one case is not usable according to the other rules: decreasing the opponent's time. Is that a mistake or are there cases where we can use this penalty? Yours truly, **FA Amir Erfan Hashemi (Iran)**

Answer One I answered this question already in the [March column](#).

Answer Two I am afraid you overlooked Article 13.4.c of the Laws of Chess:

*The arbiter can apply one or more of the following penalties:
c. reducing the remaining time of the offending player.*

Question I have several questions regarding the Laws of Chess. I hope you will answer these questions.

Question One In the Laws of chess we have an Article:

The game of chess is played between two opponents who move pieces alternately on a square board.

This word "alternately" confuses me. I want to know by which criterion you determine whose move it is.

Suppose two players play chess. How do you know who has the move? I think we must have a criterion for determining the turn to move.

I give you two suggestions.

1) If the clock determines the turn, then remember the scenario you have once answered before:

Player A makes a move and doesn't press his clock. Then Player B makes a move, Player A presses his clock, player B presses his clock.

You said that you don't see anything wrong in this scenario! Then I find out that in your interpretation the clock doesn't determine who has the move.

If the clock shows who has the move, then in that scenario player A has still the move as long as he has not stopped his clock and Player B has no right to move, because chess is played alternately! Therefore Player B makes an illegal move by making a move at the moment his opponent had the move. Am I wrong? In my opinion in this situation the clock apparently doesn't determine who has the move.

You were asked about that scenario. You answered. Now I give you a similar scenario and you may answer:

Suppose player A makes a move and doesn't press the clock, Player B makes a move and also doesn't press the clock and this happens seven times. Finally Player A presses his clock. Has Player B still the right to press his clock, and may they repeat it another six times without making a move? I see a bit of chaotic behavior here. What is your answer?

2) Maybe you consider that there should be adequate supervision. In this case it is easier to determine who has the move. I think this is not very realistic. For a Blitz tournament with adequate supervision with for example 300 players we need 150 arbiters. Wow!

I ask you *why* FIDE allows a player to move between the time of his opponent finishing his move and pressing his clock!? This question is the basis of my need to finding out what's the real meaning of "having the move"?

Question Two A player has in a Blitz game a clear advantage, but much less time. He stops the clocks, summons the arbiter and claims a draw. What is your decision in this situation?

I refer to Article 10.2 of the Laws of Chess:

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.

I think many arbiters like to postpone their decision. I suppose, if the arbiter has postponed his judgment, then he may award two minutes to the player B and the game continues. After two moves player A's flag falls and B has more than two minutes on his clock. Suppose the arbiter wants to look more deeply. Then my main question is: How can the arbiter make any judgment as to how the game will continue, because player A oversteps the time limit and it is in my opinion therefore impossible to continue the game?

Question Three I am not sure that you know the situation regarding arbiters in Iran. In all types of tournaments they act in a incorrect manner.

I want to ask you how I can object against some arbiters' actions? Is it possible to make a report about these arbiters? Does FIDE trust a player when he protests? There are no cameras in the playing hall. What is the right way of objecting and protesting?

Question Four What's your idea about these situations (Blitz and Rapid) in considering potential punishment?

- a. Player A moves twice on his own turn.
- b. Player B presses his clock without any move!
- c. Player C has two queens. I mean he starts with a queen instead of a bishop and his opponent has not noticed it and both players have already completed three moves.
- d. Player D moves the pawn to a8, does not replace it by a piece and presses the clock. Can his opponent claim a win?
- e. Player E knocks over one of his pieces and presses his clock.
- f. Player F captures a piece with the right hand, brings it to his left hand and puts his piece on the same square.
- g. Player G is in time trouble and suddenly he overturns three or more pieces on the board and tries to correct them. Who should check that he put the pieces on the correct squares?

Best regards, **Reza Khalil Nejad Gherkh Segher (Iran)**

Answer One The question is quite interesting. I agree with you that there is in fact no real evidence who has the move, except when all moves are recorded on video. But I also understand that it is absolutely impossible to provide this way of recording for, let us say, 99.5% of the games.

Your remark is correct that the side of the clock which is running is not decisive for who has the move. And it is as you mention, relevant being Article 6.7.a:

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)

Your question why the Laws of Chess allow that a player may make a move before the opponent has pressed his clock is simply for practical reasons: in time trouble and in Blitz games it is almost impossible to see for the arbiter what the real sequence is: making a move – pressing the clock – making a move or making a move – making a move – pressing the clock.

Furthermore I like to mention that the sequence of pressing the clock three times in a row is forbidden.

Finally I like to remark that 99.99% of the players are not looking for the tricks you mentioned.

Answer Two I assume that there is adequate supervision, because if there is inadequate supervision Article 10.2 does not apply.

In Blitz games with adequate supervision there is for each game an arbiter. This arbiter follows the game from move 1 and has nothing else to do than follow this game. Why do I mention this? It is in my opinion a big advantage that in Blitz games with adequate supervision the arbiter exactly knows what happened before a player claims a draw pursuant to Article 10.2. I refer to this Article and especially 10.2.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.

It is very important is that the arbiter witnesses that, for instance, the player did not make any effort to win this game by normal means, but is only using the opponent's lack of time. Let me give you an example, by the way, one I have already given before:



[FEN "k7/8/8/8/8/8/4KQ2 w - - 0 1"]

Suppose the following moves were played: **1.Qa6+ Kb8 2.Qb6+ Kc8 3.Qc6+ Kd8 4.Qd6+ Ke8 5.Qe6+ Kf8 6.Qf6+ Kg8 7.Qg6+ Kh8 8.Qh6+ Kg8 9.Qg6** + and after 9.Qg6 the player of the black pieces had claimed a draw. In my opinion the player of the white pieces didn't make any effort to win the game by normal means; i.e., to checkmate the black king. I don't see any reason not to declare the game drawn. Do you?

It is very difficult to give a general guideline on how to handle claims, but I have also the opinion that in case of a claim, the claimant has to take into account that the arbiter must have the opportunity to see, especially in cases where he hasn't seen what happened before, how the game develops. Therefore it is wise that in general the arbiter postpones his decision.

Answer Three As a matter of fact I do not know the situation of arbiters in your country. If you disagree with an arbiter's decision, many tournaments offer the possibility to make an appeal, for instance, by writing a protest to the Appeals Committee. If such a committee doesn't exist in a specific tournament, the board of the federation can also be informed. These are the ways for an individual player to make clear that he disagrees with an arbiter's decision.

But I am afraid that you will not be happy with my answer.

Answer Four Before I answer your question, I like to make a general remark: it is dangerous, probably even wrong, to prescribe an exact penalty for each infringement. A few penalties are exactly described in the Laws of Chess, for instance for an illegal move, wrong draw claim, or ringing mobile.

For other infringements the arbiter has also to take into consideration the circumstances surrounding the event. I give an example: in a tournament with inexperienced children I will not act in the same way as in a tournament of professionals. In children's tournaments the arbiter shall also act as a kind of teacher. With these remarks in mind I shall try to answer your questions:

a. It is obvious that the player has to take back his second move. When, in my opinion the opponent is really disturbed by the player's action and/or he lost a substantial amount of time, I would give him some extra time. If it happens several times in the same game and I have the impression that he did it on purpose, I would punish his action in the same way as an illegal move with the consequence that, if it happens for the third time, the game will be declared lost.

b. I would handle this in the same way as mentioned in point a.

c. If it happened in a normal game I would act according to Article 7.1.a:

If during a game it is found that the initial position of the pieces was incorrect, the game shall be cancelled and a new game played.

But more interesting is your question what will happen in a Blitz or Rapid game. I assume that you had in mind Article A.4.a of Rapid and Blitz rules:

Once each player has completed three moves, no claim can be made regarding incorrect piece placement, orientation of the chessboard or clock setting. In case of reverse king and queen placement castling with this king is not allowed.

My interpretation of this Article is that both players have the pieces they should have, but the pieces are incorrectly placed, for instance a knight on c1 and a bishop on b1. If a player in the initial position has two queens and it is discovered during the game, I shall handle this as in a normal game: I order the start of a new game.

d. This case is covered in Article 7.4.a:

*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.*

e. This case is covered by Article 7.3:

If a player displaces one or more pieces, he shall re-establish the correct position on his own time. If necessary, either the player or his opponent shall stop the clocks and ask for the arbiter's assistance. The arbiter may penalise the player who displaced the pieces.

It is up to the arbiter how he shall penalize the offending player.

f. Probably I am too flexible. To be honest I don't see anything wrong. He takes with his right hand a piece from the board and also with his right he places his piece on the square from where he removed the opponent's piece. What is wrong?

g. First of all the opponent should check whether the player re-installed the correct position. If he has any doubt, he should summon the arbiter.

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