



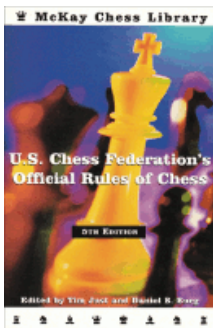
COLUMNISTS

An Arbiter's Notebook

Geurt Gijssen

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Leave the tournament? Lose points!

**Question** Dear Mr. Gijssen, a player makes a move attacking the opponent's king, offers a draw, and presses his clock. The opponent accepts the draw. After the game it is discovered that the king was not only attacked, but actually checkmated. This was not noticed by both players. What is the result of the game? Thanks and best regards, **Hans van Mulekom (The Netherlands)**

**Answer** Three Articles of the Laws of Chess are relevant:

5.1.a *The game is won by the player who has checkmated his opponent's king. This immediately ends the game, provided that the move producing the checkmate position was a legal move.*

5.2.c *The game is drawn upon agreement between the two players during the game. This immediately ends the game. (See Article 9.1)*

9.1.b *An offer at any other time during play is still valid but Article 12.6 must be considered. No conditions can be attached to the offer. In both cases the offer cannot be withdrawn and remains valid until the opponent accepts it, rejects it orally, rejects it by touching a piece with the intention of moving or capturing it, or the game is concluded in some other way.*

Relevant is in my opinion also the remark that the checkmate was discovered **after the game**. My interpretation of "after the game" is that the scoresheets were signed and had confirmed the draw. If it is a rapid or blitz game and no scoresheets were used, I assume, that there was no doubt that the players really agreed to the draw.

One can argue that after the checkmate the game is over and the agreement did not take place during the game, because the game was already over. Nevertheless I have the opinion that the draw stands.

Finally, let me explain the meaning of Article 9.1.b. Intriguing in the last sentence are the words: *or the game is concluded in some other way*.

Consider this additional example that shows a further application of the Article: suppose Player A offers a draw to Player B. Player B, whose clock is running (I suppose the way the draw was offered was correct) oversteps the time limit. In this case the game has finished "in some other way" and thus, the game is lost for Player B.

**Comment** Dear Sir, I read with interest [your answer](#) to Henny van Oosterom since I have been looking at this problem for years. I once had to talk my way into a round robin at the beginning of the second round (fortunately they had thirteen players) and later ran a number of them to select teams for my school and for blitz tournaments at the end of chess club meetings.

In the eight player example, player one still has White against player eight in the first round but the colors of all other games not involving "The Ghost" (player with highest number who doesn't move on the end who may be absent with an odd number of players) are swapped. In round one players two through four have **Black** against seven through five respectively. In the second round player one has **Black** against player two while player five started with **White** against player four in the first round so having **Black** against player eight balances things out.

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Craig Crenshaw "solved" the problem earlier but did so by swapping the pairing numbers (for eight players) one and four, two and three, and five and seven and the players meet the player numbered one **less** than their current opponent instead of one **more**. **Warren Porter (USA)**

**My Reaction** Thank you very much for your contribution.

**Question** This is GG's response to a question in the [April 2011 column](#).

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.

First, I'd like to know the identity of the US tournament director ... as the TD's reaction (that is, either resume at the last known point on the scoresheets or take a draw) is pretty inconsistent with USCF rules.

Assuming that the narrative is correct – Player A made a non-mating move but Player B thought it was mate, made a gesture, then shook hands and *got up and walked away* – the game is over.

The TD only has to know one thing – that Player B *got up and walked away*. If this happened, then clearly this is a resignation and the game is over.

Unless there was evidence of chicanery by Player A, the game is over. You don't replay such games. Geurt Gijssen himself has often stressed that if a player agrees to a result, the game is over.

The only way I can see Player B gaining any relief is if he completely denied everything (to the TD) and claimed that he was still at the board waiting to move when Player A started packing up the pieces. If he admits that he thought it was mate and/or walked away, the TD's decision is easy.

Now I grant you...there may be a brief period of time – five seconds? fifteen seconds? sixty seconds? – where a player \*at the board\* may still say "hey, something is not right here" and obtain TD assistance. But it stands to reason that if you leave the board, allow the other fellow to pack up the pieces, etc. ... you cannot make a claim of incorrect result some dozens of minutes later.

I think Geurt Gijssen may wish to reformulate his answer on this one. **Eric C. Johnson (USA)**

**Answer** Suppose you know the TD's name. Does that make you happy? Or do you have in mind taking an action against him? I don't see any reason to make any effort to find out his identity. I agree with you that his decision to continue the game or to agree that the game is drawn is not based on any Article in the Laws of Chess. He cannot take such a decision, although I understand him.

It was for me quite clear that the opponent had a completely different (most likely incorrect) view regarding what happened: *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 have to repeat: what are the possibilities for an arbiter if both players tell him a completely different version about what happened? Standing up and walking away (to the bathroom or bar?) is not a sign of resignation. You mention that it is impossible to make a claim of incorrect result some dozen of minutes later. I agree with you, but I do not have the impression that this claim was made dozens of minutes later. It is at least not mentioned in Mr. Legein's letter.

To avoid all misunderstandings: I don't want to defend the attitude of Mr. Legein's opponent. I am trying only to make you understand the difficult position of the TD in this case.

Finally, you will understand that I do not see any reason to reformulate my answer.

**Question** Dear Mr. Gijssen, Thanks again for another fascinating article, and another glimpse into the world of the arbiter. I do feel rather strongly about Marco Campini's question; although, where I sensed sympathy from you, I saw no concrete solution. It seems to me that competitors who choose to duck out of playing because they don't like the risk are, in fact, very easy to penalize. At the discretion of the tournament organizers (probably delegated to their arbiters), forfeited games should be submitted as full losses, with consequent loss of Elo points. No honest player should fear a rule like this. If you cannot play for good reason, the honest arbiter/tournament organizer should understand, and use their discretion. The worst case scenario is that a player may be forced to "waste" a few hours playing a game with someone lower-rated than himself, but the player who isn't prepared to do this shouldn't be entering open competitions anyway. There is no obligation to enter; it's a free choice. If we choose to enter, we accept a responsibility to play. In fact, for many middle-ranking players far from good clubs, the only way to get a really tough game against stronger opponents is to enter a competition. They invest time, money, and effort in attending and it brings our game into disrepute if they don't get what they paid for. The argument against counting default losses is that Elo points should reflect a player's ability, and therefore be based only on real games that were played. This is rather spurious.

- There are endless discussions about whether a loss on time is somehow less serious than a loss by mate, and I think most people agree both are equally lost, on the grounds that the clock is part of the rules of chess, and a declared feature of the game, to which players must adhere, and which dictates their play. The same goes for arriving on time and turning one's phone off.
- We already count many situations where no "real" game was played; for example expert players who choose to go for a mutual draw by merely re-enacting a set of moves that both know leads to a drawn position.
- There is no need to count the corresponding default win towards the other player's Elo score. We can penalize the offender without inflating the innocent party's score.
- There are already many situations where bad behavior can affect Elo scores. For example, the player who, during a game, behaves particularly disruptively is likely to be penalized, if nothing else by addition of time to his opponent, maybe causing him to lose, and lose rating points. There's no doubt this is fair.

The argument for counting default losses is strong. Our game is a game: it has no particular reason to exist except to make humans happier. Bringing the game into disrepute by refusing to help those below oneself is possibly the greatest offense a chess-player can commit. How many experts recommend that we should try to play those a little better than ourselves? If good players refuse to cooperate in tournaments, what hope have we got? Deliberately manipulating one's score by gamesmanship is just plain devious, and shouldn't be encouraged. Chess is, in any case, not a game for the fearful. He who fears loss doesn't deserve protection. You could say, fear of losing is just another way to lose the game, if it becomes so extreme that one refuses to play! Of course I'm sympathetic to chess professionals for whom ratings matter. But if a chess professional can't guarantee a win against another competitor, does he deserve to retain his rating? That's rather the point of ratings: you have to be

able to defend your rating, or it goes down. Best wishes, and please keep writing your wonderful articles. Whoever would have thought that rules and arbitership would ever make such a downright interesting read? **Lionel Hill (UK)**

**Answer** Thank you very much for your well-documented question. I like your argumentation very much. I sent your letter – and I am sure, that you shall agree to this – also to the chairman of the Qualification Commission, Mr. Markkula.

My personal opinion is that the player, who does not show up receives nothing, and shall lose the maximum number of rating points for this game, that being, in my opinion, the k-factor. A player who has k-factor of ten shall lose ten rating points for each game he is absent without a valid reason.

**Question** Dear Mr. Gijssen, I always read with pleasure your articles because I think they are a great didactic support for many arbiters. I am writing you because I would like to know your opinion regarding the interpretation of the article 12.3.d:

*Without the permission of the arbiter a player is forbidden to have a mobile phone or other electronic means of communication in the playing venue, unless they are completely switched off. If any such device produces a sound, the player shall lose the game.*

According to my opinion, this article undervalues a very important feature that may influence the correct progress of the game, because it doesn't clarify what happens in case the electronic device or mobile phone doesn't produce a sound.

If for example during a game a player gets a phone call on his mobile (that even if in a silent mode it should be switched off), he has already violated the article 12.3. b; if then he walks away from the playing venue (without the arbiter's permission) and answers the phone, he makes another violation, without mentioning that the subject of the phone call could be move advice, information on the game, or a game strategy! Don't you think this would be enough for the arbiter to apply article 13.4 d?

I think that it would be necessary that the Rules and Tournament Regulations Committee of FIDE clarifies in a better way what disciplinary measures have to be applied in such cases, seen that the lack of a hard measure could allow speculation in order to obtain illicit advantages.

Looking forward to your answer, and best regards, **IA Giuseppe Scoleri Cardelli (Italy)**

**Answer** I agree with you that Article 12.3.b doesn't cover the infringements you mentioned. But in my opinion Article 12.3.a does:

*During play the players are forbidden to make use of any notes, sources of information or advice, or analyse on another chessboard.*

One of the reasons that the phone may not be switched on is that phone calls are absolutely forbidden during the game. In one of the Aeroflot tournaments I saw a player whose game was still in progress calling on his phone. I declared his game lost. Some people blamed me for this penalty, but in my opinion I had no choice.

**Question** This is a question regarding a situation in a normal game where a player makes a move before his opponent has completed his move, that is, before the player has stopped his own clock and started his opponent's clock

In a game, recently played, I (white) had ten minutes left and my opponent about thirty seconds. The time control was two hours per player for the whole game.

I made my thirty-eighth move, but before I could stop my clock, my opponent made his thirty-eight move. My opponent unnecessarily pressed his clock. I

know the rules quite well and knew that I still had the right to complete my thirty-eighth move. I stopped my clock and started the opponent's clock.

I expected that he should stop his clock and should start my clock, but apparently he did not notice that I had started his clock. I thought about twenty seconds about my move and made my move. Of course, his clock was still running and it was his move. In a completely lost position he overstepped the time limit and I claimed a win.

After the game my opponent and two of his team mates blamed the time loss on me in that I had pressed the clock twice, but I thought I was right.

But afterward I thought that it had been probably better to stop the clocks and to summon the arbiter. As usual the arbiter was not present when the "incident" took place and by stopping the clocks and looking for the arbiter, I would have given my opponent more time to think about his next move. The extra two minutes that would be assigned in case the arbiter had decided that my opponent had committed an illegality, were for me not important.

The main question is: Did I act correctly by pressing the clock after my opponent had made his move? In my opinion my opponent cannot complete his move before I have completed my previous move. Am I right? **Diederik van Donk (The Netherlands)**

**Answer** I refer again to Article 6.7.a of the FIDE Laws of Chess:

*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)*

Let me answer your main question now. This Article states clearly that a player, who has made a move, has the right to stop his own clock and to start the opponent's. This is covered in the sentence: A player must always be allowed to stop his clock.

This means, that even after the opponent has made his move, the player has still the possibility to complete his move. To make it still clearer, the following sequence of events is possible:

1. Player A makes a move.
2. Player B makes a move.
3. Player A presses his clock.
4. Player B presses the clock.

And at this point Player A has to make his next move.

This situation is in fact accepted, because especially in time trouble, in rapid and blitz games, it is many times very hard to see what the exact sequence of events is.

**Question** Dear Sir, A and B are playing in a rapid game. A is in serious time trouble. He makes use of his opponent time to move his pieces. He is making his move before B is pressing his clock. What can the arbiter do? Thank you.  
**Suresh Holla (India)**

**Answer** I refer to the previous question and answer.

**Question** Dear Mr. Gijssen, Sir, I am a sixty-two year old chess enthusiast who started playing chess some ten years ago. I have recently participated in a local chess tournament consisting of a five round Swiss at the small mountain resort of Ooty, India. The top seed here shall be known as Mr. K. I met Mr. K in the third round which was drawn after a hard fought battle. After the game, Mr. K in a fit of pique tore up my score sheet into little pieces. I brought this to the notice of the Arbiter, but he took no notice of my complaint. During the fourth round, Mr. K's cell phone rang. He switched it off and continued to play. His opponent, being a gentleman, failed to object and the arbiter let that

game continue.

Final standings – I won three games and drew two, as did Mr. K. If the cumulative progressive tie-break was applied I would have won the event with thirteen points to twelve and a half. However the Buchholz system was used. Here the respective total scores of our opponents came to sixteen each. Both our strongest opponents were on four points. My weakest opponent was on two points, while Mr. K's weakest opponent was on one and a half points. So when these scores were deducted my total was half a point less than Mr. K's and he was declared the winner and myself runner-up. I find it illogical that I am penalized for defeating the stronger weakest opponent, that is, one with two points versus a player with one and a half points. Please note that Mr. K drew his fourth game and me the fifth against the same opponent (Mr. T). Likewise I won my fourth game and Mr. K his fifth again with the same opponent (Mr. M). Looking forward to your esteemed advice and clarification. **Amar (India)**

**Answer** I feel really sorry for your experiences in this tournament and I would like to make some comments:

- That your opponent destroyed your scoresheet, is something I have never seen or heard of before. You were right to inform the arbiter about this incident, but due to the fact that it happened after the game, he could not change the result. Nevertheless, it is such a huge offense that the arbiter had some possibilities to punish him. In a previous column I mentioned that expulsion a player from an event is not an option. But in this case I had applied this penalty. Of course, before an arbiter shall penalize a player in this way, he must give this player the opportunity to explain why he acted in this way, but if this explanation is not adequate, he should expel the player from the event.
- It is possible that the arbiter did not notice that a phone was making some sound. In this case he cannot come into action. I do not know the circumstances of this tournament. How big was the tournament hall? Was there a lot of noise in the tournament hall? Are you sure that the arbiter was at that moment in the playing area? You will understand that I am not ready to blame the arbiter. There are too many unanswered questions.
- If the tournament was well organized, then there were regulations. In these regulations there must be an Article regarding tie breaks.

I understand from your letter that the Buchholz system was used as first criterion. The second criterion was apparently Buchholz minus the Buchholz score of the player with the lowest score.

In the actual FIDE Handbook the following Buchholz systems are mentioned:

*The Buchholz System*

*The Buchholz System is the sum of the score of each of the opponents of a player.*

*(a1) The Median Buchholz is the Buchholz reduced by the highest and the lowest score of the opponents.*

*(a2) The Median Buchholz 2 is the Buchholz Score reduced by the two highest and the two lowest scores of the opponents.*

*(a3) The Buchholz Cut 1 is the Buchholz Score reduced by the lowest score of the opponents.*

*(a4) The Buchholz Cut 2 is the Buchholz Score reduced by the two lowest scores of the opponents.*

*(a5) The Sum of Buchholz is the sum of the Buchholz Scores of the opponents.*

The system as second criterion used in your tournament was apparently (a3). You may consider this as unfair or illogical, but, provided it was written in the



Regulations, the arbiter simply followed them and he was correct. Note that there is no order in the above mentioned tiebreak systems. An organizer has the right to apply one of them. This means that there is no obligation to first apply (a1), then (a2), etc.

My experience is that the majority of the chess players do not read the regulations in advance. But at the moment they have the feeling that the regulations are applied in an incorrect way, they start to read the regulations.

**Question** Dear Geurt, I want to know how many rounds would be the minimum for a tournament to be valid for a FIDE rating. **Wilfredo Paulino (Dominican Republic)**

**Answer** In the Rating Regulations it is not mentioned how many rounds must be played to be calculated for FIDE rating. I made a summary of the most important items for a tournament to be calculated:

*1) The tournaments to be rated must be pre-registered by the federation that will be responsible for the sending of results and rating fees. The tournament must be registered one month before the tournament starts.*

*2) For a game to be rated each player must have the following minimum periods in which to complete all the moves, assuming the game lasts sixty moves.*

*Where at least one of the players in the tournament has a rating 2200 or higher, each player must have a minimum of 120 minutes.*

*Where at least one of the players in the tournament has a rating 1600 or higher, each player must have a minimum of ninety minutes. Where all the players in the tournament are rated below 1600, each player must have a minimum of sixty minutes.*

*3) Play must take place according to the FIDE Laws of Chess. The federation may have minor deviations from the Laws of Chess, if approved by the Technical Commission.*

*4) In a round robin tournament at least one-third of the players must be rated, but if the event has less than ten players, at least four must be rated.*

*5) National Championships played as round robins shall be rated if at least three men (or two women in events exclusively for women) participants had official FIDE Ratings before the start of the tournament.*

*6) In a Swiss or team event for rated players, only games against rated opponents are counted. For an unrated player's performance to count he must play at least three games against rated opponents; score at least one point; and the rating based on the tournament result at its conclusion be above the rating floor.*

*7) Where a match is over a specific number of games, those played after one player has won shall not be rated.*

*8) Matches in which one or both of the players are unrated shall not be rated.*

There are more points to consider, but in my view these are the most relevant ones.

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