



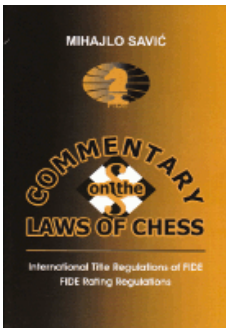
COLUMNISTS

An Arbiter's Notebook

Geurt Gijssen



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When are Ratings Unpublished and Draw Offers Too Many?

Question One Dear Geurt, I organized a closed nine round international master tournament and forgot to mention the default time when I sent the information for tournament registration. Later, I informed the participants that we would play with a default time of sixty minutes in order not to run the risk of a defaulted game, resulting in both players losing their chances for a title norm. None of the participants objected to this. However, an arbiter told me that I could not set a different default time after the registration when I had implicitly set the default time to zero minutes. Is it really too late to amend (actually, to clarify) a rule with all the players' consent a week before a tournament?

Question Two I arranged to have an international arbiter who cannot be present for all rounds for a tournament, with another arbiter to substitute. This substitute is missing one norm to become an international arbiter. However, I have been told this was unacceptable (because of a 2008 change in the requirements for the titles neither I nor my arbiters were aware of) and that I had to find a way that there would be an international arbiter present during all rounds. Otherwise, eventual title norms would not be accepted. This forces me to pay a few hundred euro out of pocket to cover the extra costs. What if an international arbiter is ill on one day and no replacement can be found at such short notice?

Question Three I informed the participants that forgetting to switch off a cell phone would not lead to immediate forfeit. My replacement arbiter told me that a mobile phone noise must be sanctioned by loss of the game in all cases. I argued that the rule stipulates that the arbiter can allow any player to bring a cell phone and have it switched on. Thus, a cell phone noise could be sanctioned as a disturbance of the opponent with a warning. Except, of course, there is a hint that the cell phone was on in order to cheat. Is there no way in the Laws of Chess to deal with mobile phones, which are so much part of daily life, with common sense?

Question Four Do you agree that there is a tendency for chess arbiters to want to assert their power rather than focus on creating or assuring optimal conditions for players to concentrate on their games? **Stefan Löffler (Germany)**

Answer One It is a good habit to inform the players in advance about the conditions of a tournament. After receiving the invitation and the conditions, a player decides whether he will participate or not. Therefore, it is not fair to change the conditions just before the start of an event. If there is a proposal for a change, all participants have to agree. This is the general rule organizers have to follow.

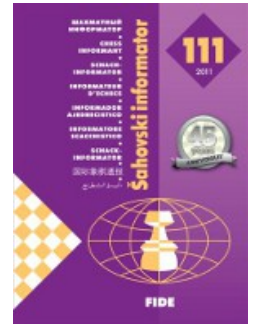
Regarding your case, all players agreed. Your proposal to change the default time is not against the rules.

Answer Two I refer to Article 1.17 of the requirements of titles:

The tournament shall be conducted by an International Arbiter, failing that, by a FIDE Arbiter.

In your question you mentioned that the second arbiter missed one norm for the title of international arbiter. This means that he is already a FIDE arbiter (FA). According to the quoted Article, a FIDE arbiter may conduct a rated tournament.

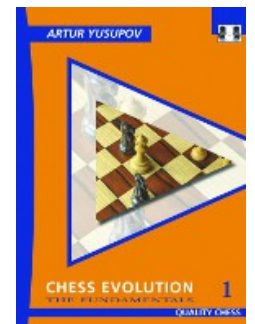
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Answer Three I refer to Article 12.3 of the Laws of Chess:

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.

Some comments to this Article follow. First, it is the arbiter and not the organizer who decides whether a player may have a switched off mobile in the playing venue.

My second remark is that the rule is clear. Any sound produced by a mobile means that the owner of the mobile loses the game.

And third, it should be a habit that each arbiter before each round announces that mobiles must be completely switched off. This should avoid most problems. By the way, more and more people are in favour of changing this Article so that it is forbidden for players to have any electronic device in the playing venue.

Answer Four I disagree with you. There have always been a few arbiters who like to throw around their power. But, in general, arbiters do their job with professional modesty. As with all human beings, there are differing personalities. The same applies for chess players and journalists.

Question A few years ago I was playing a game with a friend on a fishing trip. It was a friendly game, but we were playing touch move. I touched a rook, removed my hand, and executed castling involving the rook, but did so by first moving the king and then moving the rook. My friend objected, claiming that once I touched the rook, my opportunity to castle was gone. I pointed out that my obligation to move the rook was satisfied pointing out that my rook was no longer where it used to be. It was moved and I was the one who moved it. Who's right? **Paul Kinion (USA)**

Answer I refer to Article 4.4.b:

If a player having the move deliberately touches a rook and then his king he is not allowed to castle on that side on that move and the situation shall be governed by Article 4.3.a.

And the text of Article 4.3.a is

If the player having the move deliberately touches on the chessboard one or more of his own pieces, he must move the first piece touched which can be moved.

Based on these two Articles, there is an obligation to move the king first and then the rook in executing castling. In case the rook has been touched first, the rook must be played and castling with this rook is not possible.

However, you mentioned that it was a few years ago that you played this game. If it was about thirty years ago, then it was still possible to castle after you touched the rook first. In this case the arbiter had to give a warning to the castling player. One of my colleagues, the late IA Hennie Folkers of the Netherlands, gave this warning always as follows: "I give you an official warning and inform you that you should not do it again in this game."

Question I recently won the President's Invitational in Jamaica, which was to be FIDE rated. The Jamaican national chess federation (JCF), through its president, announced the event as being FIDE rated.

The Arbiter has not submitted it to FIDE for rating, citing the cost and the lack of other FIDE rated players in the event. I have an inactive FIDE rating, and ten of the players have played FIDE rated players in the past, and have a FIDE provisional rating.

Specifically, having not played in a chess tournament for close to three years,

I accepted the invitation to the President's Invitational because I was assured that it would be FIDE rated, and it afford me an opportunity to once again become an active FIDE rated player.

One of the afforded privileges of membership of a national chess federation is to have your games rated both locally and by the world governing body, FIDE.

As for the costs of having events FIDE rated, no additional costs should be incurred by players who duly paid their national chess federation membership fee, and also duly paid the required entry fee for the announced FIDE rated event. It is the responsibility of the national body to charge an appropriate entry fee for events sufficient to absorb whatever costs FIDE charges to rate events.

FIDE refers to "published" and "unpublished" ratings. Pursuant to FIDE, a "published" rating is achieved by players who have played more than nine rated games against FIDE "rated" players, and an "unpublished" rating is afforded to players who have played less than nine rated games. I submit that the term "rated" for FIDE purposes, includes both "published" and "unpublished" ratings.

Now, the event arbiter has interpreted the term "rated" narrowly, to mean only, as he termed it, "established" rated players, even though FIDE speaks only of two types of rated players, "published" and unpublished."

There are 110 FIDE rated Jamaican players with both "published" and "unpublished" ratings.

In the event in question, the President's Invitational, from the most recent FIDE rating list, eleven of the twelve participants are FIDE rated; one "published" and ten "unpublished."

As a matter of simple logic, and the mere employment of a common sense application of the very FIDE Rule used by the event Arbiter, it does appear that the 2011 President's Invitational has all the attributes of a FIDE rated event, and should have been submitted by the event arbiter as a matter of duty.

My questions are as follows:

- Can the President's Invitational be FIDE rated despite so few "published" FIDE rated players?
- Does the Arbiter has a duty to submit the results to FIDE and let them decide?
- Is the event FIDE arbiter guilty of misconduct in not submitting the event to FIDE to be rated?

Bertram Scott (Jamaica)

Answer I sent your letter (including the cross table) to Mr. Markkula, Chairman of the Qualification Commission. This is his reaction:

"There is no such thing as an 'unpublished rating,' the ratings meant in the regulations are ratings that can be found as a reply to a query from the FIDE database, or in the list that can be downloaded from the web. The tournament described will not be rated."

Question Dear Mr. Gijssen, I believe that the FIDE Rule 6.9 criteria for awarding a draw when a player's flag has fallen are far too strict. This rule says, "the game is drawn, if the position is such that the opponent [of a player whose flag has fallen] cannot checkmate the player's king by any possible series of legal moves."

This "any possible series of legal moves" clause is far too strict and leads to absurd scenarios. For example, Player A can claim a win on the grounds that Player B will lose if Player B deliberately moves the king to the corner of the board, then under-promotes to a knight, and uses the under-promoted knight to block Player B's own king, allowing Player A to checkmate! Surely, this is ridiculous.

There are many ways this rule could be changed to be more in accord with common sense. I would like to hear your opinion of this revision that I would like to suggest.

"The game is drawn, if the position is such that the opponent [of a player whose flag has fallen] cannot checkmate the player's king without the player under-promoting a pawn."

This also seems in fitting with the former "most unskillful play" wording of the previous FIDE rules. "Unskillful play" would seem to mean allowing one's pieces to be taken, but not deliberately moving into a helpmate position. Thank you, **Paul Epstein (UK)**

Answer Let me quote Article 6.9:

*If a player does not complete the prescribed number of moves in the allotted time, the game is lost by the **player**. However, the game is drawn, if the position is such that the **opponent** cannot checkmate the player's king by any possible series of legal moves.*

In this Article a player is mentioned and also an opponent. The **player** oversteps the time limit. Normally this player will lose the game and the opponent will be the winner. This is stated in the first sentence of this Article.

But, suppose that the opponent does not have sufficient material to checkmate the player's king; for instance, he has only a king himself. In this particular situation the game should be declared a draw.

I would like to comment on your example. At the moment a player's flag falls, the arbiter has to check whether there is a possibility for the opponent to checkmate the player's king. In this case, the arbiter has to check all possibilities, including minor promotions.

Once I had to declare a game lost for a player in the following situation:



[FEN "8/8/P7/2r1p1/8/4n1k1/8/4K3 b - - 0 1"]

In this position the player of the black pieces overstepped the time limit and lost the game. Readers are invited to find out in which game this happened. Recently, I received a table which shows the situations in which cases the arbiter has to declare a draw in case of a flag fall. I quote from the letter I received from **Jesper Norgaard (Mexico)**:

"I have the opinion that for an inexperienced arbiter including a complete list in the Laws of Chess would be a good idea. I believe the following list is complete:

Player oversteps time limit

1. K + any force
2. K + opposite color B/N/P + optionally any force
3. K + at least one piece of Q(s), R(s), same color B(s)
4. K + R/B/N/P + optionally any force
5. K + Q(s)
6. K + optionally any force

Opponent's flag is still up

1. Lone K
2. K + B(s) of same color
3. K + B(s) of same color
4. K + N
5. K + N
6. K + any other force than cases 2 or 4

Result

1. ½-½
2. Opponent wins
3. ½-½
4. Opponent wins
5. ½-½
6. Opponent wins

Full explanation of abbreviations:

– "any force" means one or several extra piece(s) and/or one or several extra pawn(s).

– "optionally any force" means the above but possibly no extra pieces or pawns.

– "opposite color B(s)" means at least one bishop, possibly several bishops, that all move on the opposite colored squares than the opponent's bishop.

– "same color B(s)" means at least one bishop, possibly several bishops, that all move on the same colored squares as the opponent's bishop.

– "B(s) of same color square compared to each other" means at least one bishop, possibly several bishops, that all move on the same colored squares.

– "at least one piece of Q(s), R(s), same colored B(s)" means at least one queen, or one rook, or one bishop, same color as the bishop(s) of opponent, where there might be several from each group, examples include one rook or two queens + one rook + one same color bishop or two rooks or one same colored bishop."

Question Dear Mr. Gijssen, I have some questions for you:

Question One Situations often arise where overwhelmed players get stuck trying to remember all details of proper draw offers in a tournament. Is it correct for them to ask arbiters for assistance regarding interpretation of chess rules or tournament regulations during a game? Can players use the FIDE Handbook?

Question Two I am not surprised that different FIDE approved chess pairing programs produce different pairings. I think the explanation is that the Dutch algorithm is not fully determined. But what really surprised me is that last Chess Master 5.5 (build 18) ignores Absolute Pairing Criteria B1.b.

By the way, Swiss Master (build 15) and Swiss Manager managed this situation without such a violation. Could you comment on this please? Best regards, **FA Yuriy Gnyp (Ukraine)**

Answer One In my opinion, the Laws of Chess must be always present in the playing area; for example, on the table of the arbiter. Each player always has permission to read them.

If a FIDE Handbook is available, the player has, in my opinion, the same rights to this material.

Answer Two After I had received your letter, I contacted the Dutch Chess Federation and the programmer. I was told that in all programs (also in Swiss

Master 5.5 (build 15) it is possible that the same person receives a bye for the second time. But this happens only in the event that all players of the tournament had already received a bye. It is not likely that this ever will happen, but the option is present.

Apparently, when Swiss Master 5.5 (build 18) was developed, a bug occurred. I am happy to inform you that the program is now functioning properly. It will be checked and ready for downloading not later than October 24. The version is Swiss Master 5.5 (build 21).

Question Dear Mr. Gijssen, according to Article 12.6:

It is forbidden to distract or annoy the opponent in any manner whatsoever. This includes unreasonable claims, unreasonable offers of a draw.

A) How should 'unreasonable offers of a draw' be interpreted?

Between decent players, it is good practice not to offer a draw when you have any reason to believe your opponent is playing for a win. When your opponent refuses the draw offer, you don't offer it again during the game, unless he later has offered a draw himself and you refused.

Of course there is a gray area between 'good practice' and 'unreasonable,' but some players have a broad notion of what is reasonable: offering draws after every five to ten moves for example. A common argument is 'that the position has changed', but that is as unclear as the concept of 'unreasonable.'

I consider multiple draw offers very annoying and I suspect that this also is the intent – what else can be the intention when you have made clear you are not interested in a draw? I can imagine only one potential situation: your opponent is in a must win situation and goes too far, and you don't want to profit from that.

B) Why aren't consecutive draw offers explicitly forbidden?

C) Can a single draw offer be seen as unreasonable, as Article 12.6 suggests? For instance, you have a completely winning position but only one or two seconds for your last move. Your opponent offers a draw in the correct manner, but this is just enough distraction for you to overstep your time. **Frits Fritschy (The Netherlands)**

Answer I agree with you that the word or notion of "unreasonable" is very vague, but it is very difficult to find a word that covers the meaning of this Article. Are disturbing, inconvenient, annoying, bothering, and distracting good alternative(s)? Probably one of them is. But you are right, it is not only a gray area, but also applicable in a number of different situations and settings.

There are situations that one player is quite disturbed (let me use this word) by repeated draw offers and the other one in more or less the same situation not at all. It is very specific to the person.

Nevertheless, there are some possibilities to avoid some situations. Let me give an example. A player offered you in a quite short period a draw twice and you refused. In my opinion you have the possibility to inform your opponent through the arbiter that you don't want any more draw offers.

You mention in C) that the opponent offers a draw in a correct way. This means that his clock is running. I am afraid that it is very difficult for an arbiter to judge whether such a situation is unreasonable.

Probably your question can be considered as a pleading to abolish draw offers!

My final remark is that if the arbiter shares your opinion that the draw offer(s) is (are) unreasonable, he should apply Article 12.7:

Infraction of any part of Articles 12.1 to 12.6 shall lead to penalties in accordance with Article 13.4.

I received the following letter with some comments regarding the previous questions regarding Article 10.2 in [AN#161](#):

Dear Mr. Gijssen, regarding the discussion of Article 10.2, the proposal by IA Krause and the reactions by Mr. Thomas and Mr. Welen, I would like to add my response. 1. I think there is no need to change Article 10.2.

As is stated in Mr. Krause's proposal and the responses, it is possible and quite likely for an educated person to understand the wording of Article 10.2 correctly. If there is indeed a problem with too many arbiters misunderstand the rules, we need better trained arbiters (which means of course, better training for arbiters), not different rules. 2. 10.2 is probably the most complicated part of the rules of chess. The proposals made by Mr. Krause, Mr. Thomas, and Mr. Welen to amend it would result in an even more complicated rule. This is certainly not helpful. 3. With regard to the last sentence in Mr. Krause's proposal ("if we delete Article 10.2 now") I disagree.

It is not the arbiters' task to "educate" players and tournament organizers about which time control is best (that is, best from the arbiter's point of view) and to discourage all other modes of play.

If players and tournament organizers prefer to play with time controls that in some cases lead to a chaotic situation, we will have to put up with it. As Mr. Welen states, Article 10.2 is claimed only in seldom circumstances. With more tournaments played with an increment time control, Article 10.2 will eventually die a peaceful death when it is not needed any more. Until then we will have to put up with it. Yours, **Ch. Hollender (Germany)**

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