



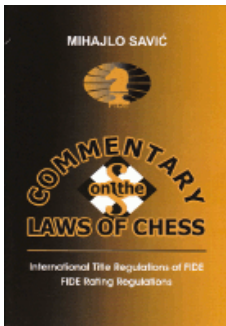
COLUMNISTS

An Arbiter's
Notebook

Geurt Gijssen



Translate this page



Are Witnesses Reliable?

Question Hi, Geurt. I appreciate your response in the [October 2012](#) column on the question of maximum result for a player if he wants to introduce digital clocks in an Article 10.2 situation. I saw the following explanation of the USCF rules which I wanted to bring to your attention:

"Insufficient Winning Chances

"When a player is low on time, but has a completely winning game, she can try to claim a draw by asserting that her opponent has insufficient winning chances. Nowadays, most Tournament Directors refrain from making such high stake decisions and instead give the players a digital clock and allow them to decide the result by using an increment or time-delay, usually five seconds. As long as the player completes each move within five seconds, she can't lose on time. The player who wanted a draw because she was low on time can win if her opponent refuses the draw and insists on playing it out with the digital clock."

This point needs to be rephrased to include drawish positions with insufficient losing chances. As per this, the player asking for a clock is implicitly making a draw offer. The opponent has the right to accept a draw without introduction of clocks. If the opponent does not agree on a draw and allows an increment clock to be introduced, the game continues normally and all results are possible.

This seems correct in my opinion. Before clocks are introduced, the implicit draw offer needs to be accepted or declined. Once clocks are introduced, all results are possible. Would this be the version FIDE will adopt? Regards,
Vivek Nambiar (India)

Answer Yes, in my opinion you are correct, because if there is a continuation with an increment, the remaining part of the game is not played under the regulations of Article 10.1:

A 'quickplay finish' is the phase of a game when all the (remaining) moves must be made in a limited time.

Games played with an increment do not have a limited time.

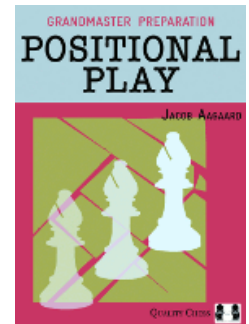
Question What if a team in an Olympiad copied its opponent's teams moves exactly? So basically the team could not lose. I guess the opposite team could try to get into time trouble shenanigans, but still it would change the nature of the play greatly. **Albert Akerman, (Sweden)**

Answer The solution of this "problem" is in your question. There will be a moment in the game that the "copiers" will be short of time. In my opinion, an arbiter has no possibilities to forbid this behaviour.

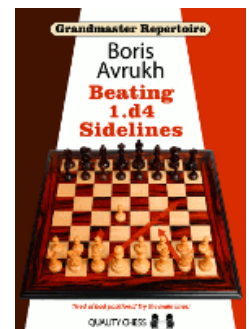
Question Dear Geurt, My opponent wanted to take my knight on c6. He first picked up my knight and then picked up his own bishop from e7 by mistake (which obviously cannot take anything on c6). Then he realised the mistake, put his bishop back on e7, picked up his queen from e8 and landed it on the c6-square (thereby completing his originally intended and fully legal move 13...Qe8xNc6).

I claimed that he had to move his bishop from e7, because he clearly picked up this piece before touching his queen. He claimed that it would be impossible to move the bishop, since he had already picked up the knight and

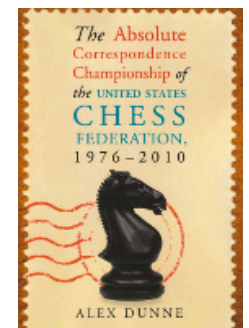
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the bishop could not legally take it. Thus, he said, that he should not be forced to move the bishop. I accepted this, whilst, however calling into question, if this interpretation of the rules of chess was correct. There were no checks involved and he was in no way forced to take my knight.

Question One Who is right?

Question Two I do not remember if I made my claim before or after he completed his move, but I certainly did it before making my own move. Would it make any difference if my claim was brought up before or after he completed his move, as long as I did it before making my own? Best regards,
Christian Lundmark Jensen (Denmark)

Answer One I refer to Article 4.3 of the Laws of Chess:

If the player having the move deliberately touches on the chessboard:

a. one or more of his own pieces, he must move the first piece touched which can be moved.

b. one or more of his opponent's pieces, he must capture the first piece touched which can be captured.

c. one piece of each colour, he must capture the opponent's piece with his piece or, if this is illegal, move or capture the first piece touched which can be moved or captured. If it is unclear, whether the player's own piece or his opponent's was touched first, the player's own piece shall be considered to have been touched before his opponent's.

The first piece touched by your opponent was the knight on c6. If this piece can be taken with a legal move, then he has to take it in accordance with Article 4.3b.

In Article 4.3c the case that pieces of both colours are touched is more precisely described. Only if it was not clear which piece he touched first (the white knight on c6 or the black bishop on e7) would he had to move the bishop, but, as you described, it was clear he touched the knight first.

Answer Two I refer to Article 4.7 of the Laws of Chess:

A player forfeits his right to a claim against his opponent's violation of Article 4 once he deliberately touches a piece.

As you can see, it is not essential whether you made a claim after he pressed his clock or before. Essential is whether you touched one of your own pieces or touched one of your opponent's pieces to capture it.

Question Sir, In a rapid tournament our player played with the black pieces. The opponent checked Black's king and Black answered by an illegal move. When White told him that his move was illegal, our player shook his head and uttered a verbal exclamation. White thought that Black resigned and started to put the pieces back in the initial position. Black told him that he did not resign. White then started to put back the pieces in the actual position of the game. But our player told White that he had lost because he put the pieces back into the initial position.

The arbiters agreed that White had lost the game, but the Appeals Committee decided that the players had to continue. Then our player said that he could not continue the game, as he did not remember the correct position. The Appeals Committee decided that the game is a draw and that this was the final decision, because there was no time to play another game. Do you think this correct? **Ahmed Badr (UAE)**

Question Dear Sir, I was the chief arbiter in the 2012 UAE Rapid Chess Cup for Teams, when the following incident occurred during time trouble between two grandmasters:



[FEN "4r2k/3q4/p5Np/4nr2/3BQ3/6P1/PP5P/4R2K"]

In this approximate position (after 1.Ng6+) it is evident that Black is losing a piece and the game. Black, unaware of the pin along a1-h8 diagonal, immediately captured Ne5xg6. Once confronted with this illegal move by his opponent, he nodded and made a gesture with his hands. He looked with sorrow to the crowd; turned back to the opponent, as if saying "it is over"; and moved the knight back to e5. His opponent actually thought Black had resigned. I am not sure, but I believe White even stopped the clocks at that moment. Anyway, White started putting the pieces back to the original squares, and Black objected because he did not yet resign! White said he thought that Black resigned, and started resetting the final position. This was duly objected by Black, who claimed a win because White's action was an act of resignation. The Assistant Arbiter announced a win for Black, and I confirmed it as being the correct decision. So the case went for an appeal.

Now, I was in the Appeals Committee when they discussed the case. There was a concern that the Laws of Chess are unclear about considering White's action a clear resignation; not if it came as a result of deception. Turning to similar cases, one member, a respected grandmaster, gave an example of an incident with World Champion Mikhail Tal, where the final position was reinstated and the game continued. Another member gave an example of the article on piece displacement: that pieces have to be corrected and the game continued. So, the majority voted for continuing the game from the final position. To be fair, despite my own judgment on this issue, I think the committee did their utmost to the best of their knowledge and judgment. They had no choice but to overrule the arbiter's decision. They ruled as follows:

- (1) Black tricked his opponent into thinking that he was resigning. He was penalised for misbehaviour by giving white two extra minutes.
- (2) White made a mistake by displacing the pieces as a result of Black's act. He was penalised by giving Black two extra minutes.
- (3) The game was to be continued from the final position.

We need your valuable comments on this incident. Isn't it time for the act of resignation to be officially defined? For example, to state that the only accepted way is to first stop the clocks, and then (a) inform the Arbiter, or (b) lay down your king, or (c) put your king outside the board, or (d) put both kings in the centre, or (e) put pieces back to the original squares. Yours, **IA Naji Alradhi (UAE)**

Answer I assume that both letters refer to the same incident. It is quite interesting to note the different views of two persons who report the same case. Even the Appeals Committee's decision, which, as I assume, was in written form, is described differently. Nevertheless, I published both letters to demonstrate how dangerous it is to rely on witnesses. I will only answer the questions of Mr. Naji Alradhi.

In normal games, scoresheets are used and a player has the possibility to resign by putting his loss on the scoresheet and to sign it. Thus, it is very clear that he resigns. In Rapid and Blitz games, scoresheets are not common. In many events the arbiters deliver small papers on which the players can write the score and have the possibility to sign for the result. If these result sheets

are signed, the result is clear.

The problem is what happens before the players sign these sheets. Unfortunately, almost all the solutions you suggested do not solve the problem. In my opinion there is only one exception: the losing player put the two kings on the correct squares in the centre. All other suggestions have their disadvantages. For example, the loser put the two kings on the wrong squares; a player stops the clocks, but needs the arbiter's assistance for something else; to lay down the king, but the player states it happened by accident.

Question Dear Mr. Gijssen, I have a question regarding the tie-break adjustment rules

F. Handling Unplayed Games

(a) For tie-break purposes, the result of an unplayed game shall be counted as a draw against the player himself. **(This system shall not apply from July 1, 2012.)**

(b) **For tie-break purposes all unplayed games in which players are indirectly involved (results by forfeit of opponents) are considered to have been drawn.** For tie-break purposes a player who has no opponent will be considered as having played against a virtual opponent who has the same number of points at the beginning of the round and who draws in all the following rounds. For the round itself the result by forfeit will be considered as a normal result.

There is nothing in the Handbook describing the **value** of an unplayed game lost directly rather than indirectly. When the official result of a game is + -, this means that Black was not present. The rules are clear on the adjustment of White's score, because White got his forfeit win indirectly. White will be considered to have drawn with the virtual opponent. But there is no rule for the value of Black's game. Black lost directly. What is the value of this game? Do we consider that Black has lost to the virtual opponent or has drawn the virtual opponent? This will be relevant only if Black is allowed back in the tournament. This will be irrelevant for Buchholz, because Black will get the virtual opponent score even if he had lost to the virtual opponent; but it will be important for Sonneborn-Berger, because a loss to the virtual opponent would give the player 0 tiebreak point, and a draw with the virtual opponent would give the player half of the virtual opponent points. **Pierre Dénomée (Canada)**

Answer I received the following answer from Mr. Wim van Beersum, the inventor of the virtual opponent:

A result by default is completely abstract, no matter the reason why it occurred. It may be that the number of players was odd or perhaps a paired player didn't show up. If a player didn't show up, it is perfectly possible that the same game is paired again in a later round.

For the score (points) a win by default (+) is 1 point and a loss by default (–) is 0 points.

For Sonneborn-Berger calculation the awarding of results by default can be different.

A loss by default for an absent player, is a loss by default directly for the absent player. This means that for calculating the absent player's Sonneborn-Berger points his result (–) is considered as a normal result (0). So the absent player gets no Sonneborn-Berger points for this game.

However, when you win a normal game in the first round, and your opponent leaves the tournament immediately thereafter, all your opponent's losses by default (losses by default indirectly) are considered to be draws for Sonneborn-Berger calculation. So this player will give you $0.5 * (N - 1)$ Sonneborn-Berger points where N is the number of played rounds.

Question Hi, Geurt. I was recently the arbiter for the Victorian State

Lightning Championships (five minutes per player) when an incident occurred during a game. As I was also trying to document the tournament, primarily for [my blog](#), I was recording the game in question on my iPhone, as well as recording other games and taking photos throughout the day. There were nineteen players and one arbiter, so it would not be considered a case of "adequate supervision." I have posted the [video of the game](#) in question on YouTube.

The incident occurs around 8:10 into the video. The black player moves his knight from e5, with the intention of moving it to c6. In the haste of playing the move when short of time, the knight in fact ends up straddling the squares b6 and c6. The white player then moves his pawn from a5 and captures the knight, moving the pawn to b6. The black player then claims that this move is illegal, as the knight was on c6.

After conferring with another IA, who was watching, and an FA who was a participant in the tournament, I came to the conclusion that the black player was the one making the illegal move claim, and although the placement of the piece may have been unclear, the fact that White had accepted the placement of the piece by not claiming an illegal move, or restarting Black's clock to adjust the placement of the knight, so I was prepared to award the game to Black. However, before making a ruling, I asked the players if they had agreed to a result and they were both happy to call the game a draw. So I ultimately decided that the game should be drawn.

The questions I have for you are as follows:

Question One Is it possible to use such video evidence when making a decision as an arbiter?

Question Two What should the correct decision be in such circumstances? What is the reasoning behind reaching such a decision?

Question Three Once the players have called for an arbiter to make a ruling, is it then acceptable for the players to reach their own agreement in terms of the game result and should I have accepted this agreement by the players?
Regards, **Kerry Stead, FIDE Arbiter (Australia)**

Answer One Let me first refer to Article 7.4 of the Laws of Chess:

If during a game it is found that an illegal move, has been completed, the position immediately before the irregularity shall be reinstated.

Although in the case you mention the position will not be reinstated, I like to refer to the first part of this Article, where it is written "if during a game it is found." It is not written how it is **found**. Therefore, I have the opinion that a video may be used to come to a correct decision.

Answer Two There are players who will purposefully put a piece between two squares so that it is unclear where the piece really stands. And they are waiting for the possibility to abuse it. I know a case where a player put a rook half on d1 and half on e1 and was using it to capture something on the d- or e-file. If a player acts in this way, he takes the risk, that the piece will be captured on d1 or e1.

By the way, I showed your video to several people. The majority opined that the knight was on b6, although I have to admit that this is also connected to the vantage from where the video was made.

Answer Three Apparently, you refer to the last sentence of Article B.3c of the Blitz Rules:

Once the opponent has made his own move, an illegal move cannot be corrected unless mutually agreed without intervention of an arbiter.

If two players in such a case reach a mutual agreement, I do not see any reason why the arbiter should decide otherwise. I base this also on the fact

that in cases with inadequate supervision, the arbiter in general does not follow the game closely.

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