



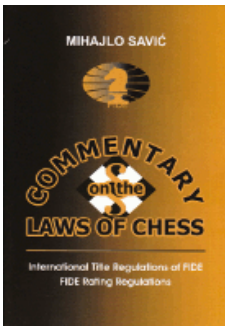
COLUMNISTS

An Arbiter's
Notebook

Geurt Gijssen



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FIDE Laws vs. USCF Laws

Question Dear Geurt, in your [October 2011](#) column you responded to a question as follows:

You wrote that you were annoyed that you could not check your opponent's scoresheet for the number of completed moves. However, there is no rule that a player has to show his scoresheet to the opponent. In my opinion, he may even hide his scoresheet from the opponent, but not from the arbiter.

However, you present your column from a FIDE-rules standpoint only. As I am sure you are aware, USCF rules are considered (by FIDE) to be a fully acceptable FIDE rules variant. Many of your readers are from the U.S. and play their tournament games under USCF rules (i.e., under a FIDE variant). Thus, your answers are incomplete if you do not take care to point out circumstances where the two sets of rules differ.

Under USCF rules, there is a rule that an opponent must present his or her scoresheet to the opponent:

15D Use of Opponent's Scoresheet for Assistance.

A player who has an incomplete scoresheet (13C7) and wishes to consult the opponent's scoresheet for assistance may ask to borrow it from the opponent under the following conditions:

15D1. Clock Times.

Both players have at least five minutes remaining in the current time control.

15D2. Borrower's Clock Runs.

The clock of the player making such a request is running and shall continue to run until the scoresheet has been returned.

15D3. Compliance.

*The opponent is urged to comply with such a request, but it is not mandatory. If the opponent denies the request, the player may stop both clocks and a director who agrees that the request is appropriate **shall instruct the opponent to lend the player the scoresheet.** The opponent may not refuse as all scoresheets belong to the organizer.*

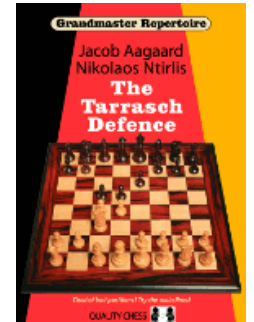
15E. Borrowing Not Needed.

A player who is able to read the opponent's scoresheet without borrowing it is free to use the information gained for assistance in keeping score.

Rule 15 goes on at some length about use of scoresheets, but one thing is clear: The overriding concern of USCF rules is that both players must stay up-to-date in their score-keeping obligations. If a player falls behind, the player may ask – and the opponent generally must comply – to see the opponent's scoresheet in order to maintain a complete score at all times.

Do not place much emphasis on the "not mandatory" portion of the USCF rule – many USCF rules are written this way (i.e., in weaker language). However,

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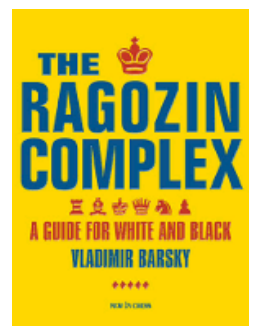


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it is clear that if an opponent initially declines an otherwise compulsory request, the requesting player simply asks the director, who then will force the opponent to comply. This is standard USCF rules praxis and any director would enforce it.

There is no reason for an opponent not to comply at once (under USCF rules), unless they enjoy being on the losing end of a spectacle.

I urge you to familiarize yourself with the USCF rulebook, so that you can give both the general FIDE rules answer, and the USCF-as-recognized-FIDE-variant answer. Your U.S.-based readers will be very confused if they rely solely on your FIDE-rules-only answers! Sincerely, **Eric C. Johnson (USA)**

Answer Let me first quote from the Introduction to the Laws of Chess:

A member federation is free to introduce more detailed rules provided they:

a. do not conflict in any way with the official FIDE Laws of Chess;

b. are limited to the territory of the federation concerned; and

c. are not valid for any FIDE match, championship or qualifying event, or for a FIDE title.

The last printed version of the USCF Rules (5th edition) was published in 2003, and the federation website offers a further thirty-four pages of changes. It is strange that the full Rules are unavailable for downloading.

Anyway, I compared, more or less at random, some of the Articles of the FIDE Laws of Chess and the USCF Laws of Chess and discovered essential differences. Here are some examples:

FIDE Article 7.4a:

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.

USCF11A:

If during a game, it is found that one of either player's last ten moves was illegal, the position shall be reinstated to what it was before the illegal move.

USCF 16D.1

If an illegal move is not corrected before the opponent of the player made the illegal move two more moves, then the illegal move stands.

FIDE Article 6.8:

A flag is considered to have fallen when the arbiter observes the fact or when either player has made a valid claim to that effect.

USCF Article 16E:

The flag is considered to have fallen when either player has made a valid claim to that effect. Only players may call flag.

FIDE Article A4a (Rapid Rules, also valid for 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.

USCF Blitz Rules 3:

3.) Before play begins, both players should inspect the position of the pieces and the setting of the clock, since once each side has completed a move the position on the board and the time on the clock remain as set.

3a) If the king and queen are set up incorrectly, it is legal to castle short on the queenside and long on the kingside.

FIDE Article 8.1

In the course of play each player is required to record his own moves and those of his opponent in the correct manner, move after move, as clearly and legibly as possible, in the algebraic notation (See Appendix C), on the scoresheet prescribed for the competition.

It is forbidden to write the moves in advance, unless the player is claiming a draw according to Article 9.2, or 9.3 or adjourning a game according to the Guidelines of Adjourned Games point 1.a.

15A. Manner of keeping score. (It was published as part of the Changed Rules)

In the course of play each player is required to record the game (both the player's and the opponent's moves), move after move, as clearly and legibly as possible, on the scoresheet prescribed for the competition. Algebraic notation is standard, but descriptive or computer notation is permitted. The player must first make the move, and then record it on the scoresheet. See also Chapter 3, Chess Notation; 13C3, Filling in moves with flag down; 13I, Refusal to obey rules and 35F6, Scorekeeping options; 43, Scoresheets.

TD TIP: While this rule brings the USCF in alignment with FIDE procedures and soothes many of the fears surrounding electronic scoresheets (see new rule 43) it is a huge change for many players. TDs are advised to first (and possibly second and third) issue warnings to players that do not comply with this revised rule before enforcing any time penalties (1C2a. prescribes adding two minutes to the opponent's unused time).

15A. (Variation I) Paper scoresheet variation.

The player using a paper scoresheet may first make the move, and then write it on the scoresheet, or vice versa. This variation does not need to be advertised in advance.

I was happy when I read that the USCF followed FIDE by introducing Rule 15A, but somewhat surprised that descriptive notation is still allowed. If I remember correctly, it was already forbidden around 1980. I was even more surprised when I read Variation 15A.

These are some examples of differences between FIDE and USCF Rules. During the Congress in Istanbul, September 2012, FIDE has the possibility to revise the Laws of Chess. It is probably a good opportunity to investigate whether it is possible to apply the same Laws of Chess from 1 July 2013. To avoid any misunderstanding, it is not my intention to disqualify the USCF Rules, but I have the opinion that it can be very confusing for international players when playing in the USA and for U.S. players when playing internationally. Giving multiple answers in my column based on the respective FIDE member federation rules could also lead to greater confusion to those who read this column.

With regard to the quote from the Introduction of the Laws of Chess at the beginning of my answer, in some cases the USCF Rules are not "more detailed," rather they even conflict with the FIDE Laws of Chess.

Question Dear Geurt, I have just finished playing in the Metro 12 International tournament (November 9-13) and this was the worst run (or not run) International tournament I have ever been in.

Here are two questions for you:

1. This international tournament had no Chief Arbiter (the arbiter of record never set foot in the tournament hall for the whole nine rounds). Many rounds had no director present, in a few the organizer (who is not an International Arbiter) substituted as "Deputy Arbiter," in most rounds the players themselves started clocks and played without supervision. Under chaotic conditions, one player achieved an IM norm. Does this norm stand, and should the whole event be FIDE rated?
2. On a more humorous note, during the last round the organizer/deputy arbiter fell asleep and commenced snoring so loudly that all players were disturbed. Given that there was no Chief Arbiter and no Player's Committee had been designated, what should have been the course of action so that players could concentrate? (In reality, an attempt to "wall him off" failed and the "snoring attack" continued through the round).

By the way, a [full account of this debacle](#) can be found on my blog. Best, **IM Timothy Taylor (USA)**

Answer From your blog I understand that you informed FIDE and the USCF about your experiences in this tournament. Therefore, I refrain from any comment at the moment.

Question Hello! In the Czech Extra league we encountered the following problem: The game was played with a time control of 90 min for 40 moves and 30 min for the remaining moves with an increment of 30 sec from move one.

The white player lost the game in forty-nine moves because his clock had the time 0:00. A few minutes later, he made a protest that the clocks were wrong, because the increment was not added in the second period.

After that, the sum of the main thinking times and the total number of increments was calculated and compared with duration of the game. This showed that the player was correct: the clocks did not add the increment in the second period.

He explained that according to item 6.2.a of the FIDE Laws he still had 4 min and 30 sec, being nine times the increment he did not receive in the second period. But can the player claim anything, when his time has expired? What do you think about it? Ing. Petr Záruba, (Czech Republic)

Answer I quote Article 6.10.b of the Laws of Chess:

If during a game it is found that the setting of either or both clocks was incorrect, either player or the arbiter shall stop the clocks immediately. The arbiter shall install the correct setting and adjust the times and move counter. He shall use his best judgement when determining the correct settings.

It is a pity for the player who lost, but his claim was too late. As this Article clearly states, only if the wrong setting is found **during the game**, does the arbiter have the possibility to make corrections. I am always surprised that there are arbiters who do not check the clocks during play. In fact, the same applies also to the players. With an increment of thirty seconds per move the calculations are very simple.

Question Chess greetings. I want to know if a claim for illegal move also implies a claim for touch-move. In other words, when I receive a claim for illegal move, must I point out that it is also touch-move or must the player claim for this? Kind regards, **Fransie Grossler (South Africa)**

Answer I quote Article 7.4.a of the Laws of Chess:

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. If the position immediately before the irregularity cannot be determined the game shall continue from the last identifiable position prior to the irregularity. The clocks shall be adjusted according to Article 6.13. The Articles 4.3 and 4.6 apply to the move replacing the illegal move. The game shall then continue from this re-instated position.

This Article references Articles 4.3 and 4.6 of the Laws of Chess: These two Articles deal with touch-move matters. If a player has made an illegal move with one of his pieces, he has to play with this piece, provided he can play a legal move. If it is clear that the first touched piece was a captured piece of his opponent, then he has to capture the opponent's piece with another piece. 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.

Suppose a player of the white pieces castled on the queenside and it was found that this was illegal (for instance, a black piece attacked the d1-square), then the player of the white pieces has to make a king move, and if it is legal, he may castle to the kingside. If the king has no legal move, the player may make any other legal move, but, and this is very important, he is not forced to play the rook on a1, because castling is considered to be a king move!

Question In reply to Valerio Boggio (Italy) concerning initial irregular piece placement you replied by agreeing a preferable rule along the lines of "In case of wrong king placement" *without mentioning any other piece? Ubi lex voluit, dixit. Ubi lex noluit, tacuit.* You would of course need to consider in addition incorrect rook placement; e.g., Rb1, Na1, Ke1. *Non solum sed etiam. E.*
Michael White (UK)

Answer Yes, you are completely right. *Non solum Rex, sed etiam Turris.* Not only the king, but also the rook. In the next version of the Laws of Chess it will be changed.

Question Dear Geurt, in a blitz game with five minutes per player, both players still have king and rook. The player of the white pieces has four seconds left, the player of the black pieces thirty seconds left. The player of the white pieces claims a draw, because the opponent is not making an effort to win the game. What is your opinion? Thanks. **Wilfredo Paulino (Dominican Republic)**

Answer It depends whether the game is with or without adequate supervision. I refer to the Rules for Rapid Chess, which also include in this case Blitz Chess. In the event of adequate supervision, the claim is possible, because the rules are the same as for "normal" chess. If the supervision is inadequate, claims based on Article 10.2 of the Laws of Chess are not possible.

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