



SKITTLES ROOM

From the Archives

Hosted by
Mark Donlan



Chess Mazes
by Bruce Alberston

From the Archives...

Since it came online over eight years ago, **ChessCafe.com** has presented literally thousands of articles, reviews, columns and the like for the enjoyment of its worldwide readership. The good news is that almost all of this high quality material remains available in the [Archives](#). The bad news is that this great collection of chess literature is now so large and extensive – and growing each week – that it is becoming increasingly difficult to navigate it effectively. We decided that the occasional selection from the archives posted publicly online might be a welcomed addition to the regular fare.

Watch for an item to be posted online at least once each week, usually on Thursday or Friday. We will update the **ChessCafe** home page whenever there has been a “new” item posted here. We hope you enjoy *From the Archives*...

The **ChessCafe** is proud to welcome International Arbiter extraordinaire Geurt Gijssen (pronounced Hurt Hayshun) as a new monthly columnist. One of the most respected arbiters in the world today, Gijssen has been the Chief Arbiter in dozens of world class events, including the Kasparov-Karpov title matches in 1987 (Seville) and 1990 (New York/Lyon); Karpov-Kamsky 1996 (Elista); and the recent championship tournament in Groningen/Lausanne. From 1990-1994, he was Chairman of the FIDE Arbiters Committee and since 1994, he has been Chairman of the FIDE Rules Committee. We hope you will enjoy his essays and anecdotes from...

An Arbiter's Notebook by Geurt Gijssen

The King En Prise!

Since the tournament held at The Hague-Moscow in 1948 to determine a successor to Alekhine who had died in 1946, the world championship has always been decided by match play. It was usually a twenty-four game match, with the champion retaining the title in the event of a drawn match.

As a result of recent problems finding a sponsor for both championship matches and qualifying tournaments and matches, FIDE recently decided to combine candidates' events and the final match into one large knock-out tournament. Ninety-eight players competed in the cycle just completed. The revolutionary

format was characterized by short matches without adjournments, quicker time controls and tie-breaking rapid games (G/25) as well as blitz games (G/5:4). The Fischer time control mode was used in every stage of the games. The first part of the tournament took place in Groningen, The Netherlands, with the championship in Lausanne, Switzerland. I was the chief arbiter.

To acquaint the players with the details of the new format (in particular the new time limits) a players' meeting was held immediately prior to the first round. During this players' meeting, I was asked to clarify many points, especially what would happen if a player in a blitz game, while his king was in check, made a move that did not remove the king from check. I have also received several letters on the same topic.

These questions all concern Article C3 of the new Laws of Chess, which came into effect on July 1st, 1997. The complete text of Article C3 reads as follows:

An illegal move is completed once the opponent's clock has been started. The opponent is then entitled to claim a win before making his own move. Once the opponent has made his own move, an illegal move cannot be corrected.

In the discussion at Groningen and in the letters I received, the question always was: If a player leaves his king in check; may his opponent then capture the king?

I am also a member of FIDE's Rules Committee. In the most recent meetings of this committee, this topic was debated for quite a while. Our final decision was that the king could not be taken. It was the opinion of the majority of the Rules Committee that in blitz games the same rules that apply in "normal" and rapid games should also apply in blitz games. (A "blitz" game is considered any game that must be played to conclusion in fifteen minutes or less.) Our decision and recommendation was ultimately also accepted by the FIDE General Assembly.

I thought that this "new" rule might cause some problems, especially during the first year after the Laws came into effect, because, as many amateurs can attest, it has not been unusual to allow the capture of a king not removed from check in blitz games. However, I am sure that the problem will be solved very quickly, if at the start of events, all chief arbiters in tournaments where blitz games may occur announce that capturing the king is not permitted. This should, within a year, much like the change in the castling rule, which now requires the king to be touched and moved first. Now nobody moves the rook first and then the king when castling.

It is both worthwhile and interesting to review what should happen when a player's king is in check, but the move then made does not remove the king from the check. The correct procedure when a player leaves his king in check is:

- The opponent (the one able to “capture” his opponent’s king) stops the clocks;
- The arbiter is summoned;
- The situation is explained;
- The win claim is made; and
- If the arbiter determines that the claim is valid, the win is awarded to the claimant.

What happens if a king is actually captured, however, was not discussed by the Rules Committee. I have spoken about this with several arbiters.

One had a very creative solution. He did not like to declare the game won for the player who captured his opponent’s king, because the capture itself could be considered an illegal move. He announces before the start of each event that the game must be continued with only one king on the board (!). Several very curious situations may then arise. First, it is clear that the player without a king cannot lose by mate. Second, only the player without a king may lose is by overstepping the time limit. According to my colleague, however, the allowing of the capture of the king should not last long. However, in my opinion, this “solution” is too radical.

Another arbiter was of the opinion that the capture of the king should not be strictly forbidden, but should only be evidence of the illegal move. It is my opinion that this will cause problems as soon as the “kingless” player might claim a win. A solution for the time being is probably that the game is lost for the player who left his king in check and that the opponent gets only a half point.

It is my opinion that the current rule, as implemented by the FIDE Rules Committee, is the best, using the procedure I described above. Then it is very clear how and what happens; the arbiter’s decision is relatively easy. Of course, any organizer of a private tournament may have his “own” rules, and there may be nothing wrong with that, provided all the rules are fully explained first, but I think it is more pleasant for chessplayers to always play in blitz tournaments according to the same standard rules.

The moral of the story: Do not take your opponent’s king!

Have an interesting question for Mr. Gijssen? Perhaps he will respond to it in a future column. Send it to geurtgijssen@chesscafe.com. Please include your name and country of residence.

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