



## C O L U M N I S T S

*An Arbiter's  
Notebook*

Geurt Gijssen



## Those Cheating Ways

**Question** Dear Mr. Gijssen, is it true that there is a new rule forcing relatives (such as brother & sister) to play against each other in the first round at a robin-round tournament? What about cousins? I'm not joking, by the way.... It sounds relatively reasonable. Where can this and similar items be found on the official FIDE handbook website? Thanks. **J. Petronic, Serbia & Montenegro**

**Answer** In certain cases, the regulations state that the drawing of lots should be done in such a way that players of the *same federation* do not meet in the last three rounds, if possible. In such cases the restricted drawing of lots will be applied using the Varma tables, which can be modified for tournaments from 10 to 24 players and can be found in Chapter C07 of the *FIDE Handbook*.

I also found one case where it is explicitly written in the *FIDE Handbook* that players from the same federation may not meet each other in the last three rounds:

*Members of the same federation in a score group of over 50 % will be not be paired against each other in the last three rounds of a Swiss tournament in **Youth and Junior Championships** (EB '99)*

However, this rule is too strict. For example, if four players from the same country are leading a full point ahead before the start of the last round, with this rule they cannot play each other, and I really do not understand why.

When zonal and candidates tournaments were being organized, it happened that special pairings were made to avoid players of the same federation meeting each other in the last round and I know of cases where they had to play in the first round(s).

**Question** Correct me if I'm wrong, but the original rule was that a player cannot bring notes to the game to use, not that a player cannot make notes during a game. While it seems perfectly reasonable to prevent someone from writing out variations on their scoresheet, this is far from what is actually happening. I believe that this rule was revised when Fischer insisted that the

rule regarding “notes” during the game meant taking notes during the game. Players who choose to take some kind of moral high ground on this issue of writing down a move before making the move are completely unjustified, since this is far from the original intention. Ironically, about a year ago a strong grandmaster, who was in the top 10, was commenting on the amount of draws in high level chess tournaments and attributing it to the fact that most players spend more time preparing as black, so as not to lose, and not necessarily preparing to win as white. One suggestion he proposed (although ridiculously) was to allow players to bring sheets with opening preparation to the game. The USCF rules specifically allow the writing of moves before a move is completed and I’m assuming until this latest update by FIDE that this was in accordance with FIDE law. **Joshua Gutman, USA**

**Answer** I found the following in the Laws of Chess that came into force in 1993:

- (a) During play, the players are forbidden to make use of hand-written, printed or otherwise recorded matter,*
  - (b) The use of notes made during the game as an aid to memory is also forbidden, aside from the actual recording of the moves and the times on the clocks.*
- ...It is irrelevant whether the player first makes his move and then records it, or vice versa.*

The discussion about writing the move down before making it would never have started if players did not change their intended moves. I have seen scoresheets on which players changed several intended moves, and in such cases this can be said to be making notes.

**Question** Dear Mr. Gijssen, a player on board two at a recent team event, rated just over 2200 USCF, was writing down the moves, then thinking for a while, and finally moving. Furthermore, he was keeping his scoresheet between he and his board one teammate, a GM rated about 2700 USCF, easily visible to the top rated player. His opponent, a USCF expert, and his board one teammate, another GM, complained that the other team was cheating, and that the board two player would glance at his teammate for “approval” after writing his move. In the instance that prompted the claim the player wrote the move, looked to his teammate, received a look of disapproval, and the move was crossed out and a new one written down. Several people, myself included, observed this game after the claim and it appeared that there was collusion. As you know, the USCF rules do not prohibit a player from writing the move first, but now FIDE does. This was not a FIDE rated event. The TD talked to the “offending” player and asked him if he would move before writing, to which the player responded that unless all the players were told to do likewise, he was not going to comply with the request. These same accusations arose later after another match. So, how should this situation be handled? One suggestion was to have the teammates separated, but what if the

player refuses this request? Thanks. **F. Guadalupe, USA**

**Answer** I have never seen this kind of cheating, but since it is forbidden to record the moves in advance this kind of situation cannot happen in the future. In the situation you described, I would have observed the players very carefully after the protest and acted if I had any doubts. One possibility is, of course, to separate them, which cannot be refused according to Article 13.2:

*The arbiter shall act in the best interest of the competition.*

The situation you described is also a perfect argument to forbid writing the moves in advance.

**Question** Dear Geurt, in a recent age group tournament we had a situation where one player wished to play in more than one category simultaneously. The arbiter denied this and a major stir erupted, resulting in the disruption of the tournament. What is your opinion on this matter? Would simultaneous play breach Article 12.2: During play the players are forbidden to make use of any notes, sources of information, advice, or to analyze on another chessboard? **Pratap Mohan, India**

**Answer** I have never had a player want to participate in two events at the same time. However, if I were to forbid it, it wouldn't be based on Article 12.2. Nor do I have another "weapon" to forbid it with. The Laws of Chess are written for an individual game. So, the only possibility I see is for it to be clearly written in the tournament rules of an event that a player may participate in only one event.

**Question** Hello Mr. Gijssen, I was playing a tournament game at my local chess club and my opponent, when the game reached the endgame, proceeded to calculate while touching the squares with his finger to plan the path his king would take in that variation. I politely asked him to stop on the basis that it was distracting. Is there a rule against touching (counting) the squares? It seems to be a mild form of cheating. I asked the TD about it after the game, but he didn't seem to know. Kind regards, **Rafael Olaso, USA**

**Answer** Although the player probably did not intend to be distracting, this was the result. I disagree with you that it is cheating. You should stop the clocks, summon the arbiter, and inform him what was happening. Never talk to your opponent. A few years ago I gave a warning to a player who was similarly counting the squares, but not touching the board.

**Question** Respected Sir, Say Player A has 3 minutes and Player B has a few seconds left in a classical chess game. Suddenly Player A makes an illegal move, and Player B's flag falls before he can stop his clock. He then appeals to the arbiter. Should the arbiter give extra time to Player B or declare the

game lost on time by Player B. Thank you, yours faithfully, **Pranesh Yadav, India**

**Answer** According to the Preface of the Laws of Chess:

*Too detailed a rule might deprive the arbiter of his freedom of judgment and thus prevent him from finding the solution to a problem dictated by fairness, logic and special factors.*

It would be very unfair to declare the game lost for Player B. The fact that he was not able to stop the clock in due time does not change the fact that an illegal move was made. I refer to Article 7.4:

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

Finally, I would like to reiterate that what happens on the board is more important than what happens next to the board (that is, the clock!).

**Question 1** Hello Mr. Gijssen, I have a question about something that happened during a blitz tournament. I do not recall the exact position, but White picked up his a1-rook and started moving it toward his opponents rook at a5, without touching the a5-rook. Black grabbed his queen to respond ...Qxa5, before White had completed his move. Suddenly, White changed his mind and played Rb1+, while Black's hand was still holding his queen. Does Black now have to move his queen, interposing the check, and presumably losing the queen?

**Question 2** Would your answer change if Black removed his hand from the queen before White's move of Rb1+ was completed? Regards, **Alex Shternshain, Israel**

**Answer 1** Black should have to move his queen in the situation you described.

**Answer 2** Black does not have to move his queen, although his behaviour can be considered a disturbance.

**Question** Dear Mr. Gijssen, The following is an excerpt from the TD's report about a dispute from a High School League in Johannesburg:

*I happened to observe a game when, at about move 48, White claimed a win on time because Black's flag had fallen. Black acknowledged this and the players shook hands. The score sheet had not been signed. I asked the players if they had set the clocks back at move 45 and they said they had not. They asked if they were supposed to and I responded*

*that their teams had been given written instructions to that effect in round 1. I told them to set their clocks back ten minutes (i.e. Black had not in fact lost on time) and to continue playing with 10 minute set-backs every 20 moves. The Team A player said something like “We both didn’t know the procedure – shouldn’t the flag fall implication stand?” and I answered “No.” I gave the matter no further thought and the game continued ... with Black winning about 20 moves later. Team A appealed against my decision about 5 days later and the appeals committee ruled in favor of Team B, i.e. the game continued. Apparently they backed the TD’s decision and mentioned that the result card had not been signed.*

I do not agree with this at all! It is irrelevant whether the players signed the result card confirming the claim on time. Because of the TD’s interference, the players never got that far. Player B resigned the game. He may have been ill-advised to do so – but he did and the game should be over. The TD erred in interfering in the game. It could be mentioned that the players in question were not primary school children, but young men (aged around 17/18) and really should have been well aware of their rights. What is your opinion on this matter? Thank you. **Laurence Ball, South Africa**

**Answer** If I understand correctly, the time limit was, say, 1½ or 2 hours for 45 moves, and then 10 minutes for each series of 20 moves. In which case it is important to know at what moment the clocks were set 10 minutes back. Did it happen after a flag fall and the arbiter had checked that 45 moves were completed, or did it happen after 45 moves were completed? My preference is that it should happen after a flag fall, which was probably the case in this tournament.

At move 48 Black’s flag fell and White claimed a win. Articles 6.9 and 6.10 of the Laws of Chess say:

*6.9 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.*

*6.10 If a player does not complete the prescribed number of moves in the allotted time, the game is lost by the player.*

Article 6.9 clearly stipulates that the claim must be valid and it is obvious that the claim was not. Furthermore, Black made the prescribed number of moves.

Secondly, I read in the TD’s report that he observed the flag fall or at least the fact that there was a claim. Why did he not go to the board to see what was going on? If he had done so, then the problem would have been solved immediately.



There is still the question that a player resigned based on a wrong claim. A claim must be addressed to the arbiter and he then decides its validity. White did not summon the arbiter and the arbiter failed to act, even when he saw that something happened, which was a clear mistake. So, it was correct to continue the game and I support the Appeals Committee's decision. I agree the unsigned scoresheets are irrelevant, because it was clear to the arbiter and to the opponent that Black resigned.

**Question** Dear Mr. Gijssen, I would like to ask you about a strange affair I observed: A player resigned his game, but the next day claimed that the result was not valid because his scoresheet showed that he had checkmated his opponent's king. The arbiter did not accept this because both players had accepted the result. Who was correct? Thank you in advance. **Alenadro Mendoza, Perú**

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

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

*b. The game is won by the player whose opponent declares he resigns. This immediately ends the game.*

*Article 7.4a: If during a game it is found that an illegal move has been made, the position immediately before the irregularity shall be reinstated.*

*Article 8.7: At the conclusion of the game both players shall sign both scoresheets, indicating the result of the game. Even if incorrect, this result shall stand, unless the arbiter decides otherwise.*

Reading Article 8.7, one could say that it is possible for the arbiter to change the result. Let us say that the move made after the player was checkmated is considered an illegal move. In that case, Article 7.4 cannot be applied, because it was not found during the game. Therefore we turn to Article 5.1. According to this article the game is over after the opponent is checkmated. It does not have to be claimed, the game is simply over, and all that happened afterwards is apparently irrelevant.

The arbiter can apply Article 8.7 as long as the tournament is still in progress. As I mentioned in a previous Notebook, I would keep in mind whether it is a Swiss or a round robin tournament and at which stage of the tournament the correct result was discovered.

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*Have a question for Geurt Gijssen? Perhaps he will respond to it in a future*

*column. Send it to [geurtgijssen@chesscafe.com](mailto:geurtgijssen@chesscafe.com). Please include your name and country of residence.*

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