



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.

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As the chess world focuses intently on the great tournaments and matches, such as those that have taken place at Tilburg, Reggio Emilia and the battles for the world title, one figure, that of the arbiter, has begun to take on increasing significance. From the legendary tournaments of New York 1924 and New York 1927, where Norbert Lederer and Géza Maróczy were the respective arbiters, through the last world championship matches, the role of the chess arbiter has evolved into one which requires the wisdom of Solomon and the diplomacy of Kissinger.

During a recent visit to the Netherlands, we had the great pleasure of being the house guest of Geurt Gijssen (pronounced Hurt Hyshin). Although this tall Dutchman has been the chief arbiter for many well-known and powerful tournaments, he is probably best known as being the chief arbiter for the 1987 and 1990 world championship matches. Gijssen is a man of impeccable integrity and modest to a fault. The very fact that Kasparov and Karpov have easily agreed to his being the arbiter for these two matches speaks for itself.

In the summer of 1991, at the chess school in Madrid which Kasparov helped to found, Gijssen was asked to lecture on the role of the arbiter in international chess today. As you read this, keep in mind it was designed to be presented verbally. We have also broken the lecture into two parts; it was initially given in one sitting.

The Role of the Arbiter - Part 2

Geurt Gijssen

We have had a look at a number of things with which the arbiter is concerned before the tournament. It will be obvious to everyone that his real workload is during the tournament itself. It starts right at the beginning, with the drawing of lots. In a tournament in which the players only face each other once, the draw can be extremely important. Imagine a tournament with 12 participants; this means that each participant plays 11 games. The players who draw the numbers 1 up to 6 inclusive, play 6 games with white and 5 with black, while the numbers 7 up to 12 inclusive play 5 games with white and 6 with the black pieces. Everyone prefers to play with white, so in a tournament with 12 participants everyone hopes that he will draw a number between 1 and 6. The organizers, then, must pay a great deal of attention to such a draw. In my opinion, a double draw is the best. This means a first draw to establish the order in which the players may draw their lots, followed by the actual drawing of these lots.

Recently, I was the tournament leader in two tournaments during which the lots were drawn in a novel way. Instead of the customary 12 lots for a tournament with 12 players, one of these tournaments had 20 lots and the other one even 64 lots. The advantage of this draw was that it was unsure, right to the end, which lot numbers the players actually had. In this way, the draw remained a surprise until the last player had drawn his lot.

Now something about the tournament itself. The start of a round is often difficult for an arbiter. At important tournaments, in particular, there are always a lot of photographers present, usually with a preference for cameras with flashlights. These people are allowed 5 minutes in which to do their work. And they are given every opportunity of doing so.

The first problem that may arise is that one of the players is not present at the beginning of a round, and only appears after 5 minutes, so that the photographers are unable to do their work in relation to him. Recently, I have begun to get into the habit of letting the photographers take pictures of the late-comer himself. I feel that they, the photographers, have a right to do so, but, more importantly, I feel that the sponsor has a right to this. After all, he has invested a not insubstantial sum of money in the tournament, and no matter how ideal a sponsor might be, he wants publicity for his tournament. One of the methods of getting publicity is getting a picture in the newspaper.

Another method is through television. I normally let the TV crews do their work in the playing hall for 10 minutes. It should be mentioned that these TV crews are usually very discreet and unobtrusive in their work. I normally give them 10 minutes, 5 minutes more than the photographers, because the flashlights of the photographers often cause interference to the TV picture. This, of course, often leads to protests by the photographers that TV is getting more time than they are.

Let me just mention, as an aside, that with an eye to the publicity and the interests of the sponsors, it is probably not unimportant for the players to give a press conference at the end of a round in order to explain exactly what went on in the games. I do understand that this can often be difficult for the disappointed loser, but still, why not try it? Certainly in light of the steadily increasing sums of money that are involved in chess tournaments, this wish on the part of the sponsors does not seem to me unreasonable.

Back to the duties of the arbiter during the round. It goes without saying that it is his duty to see to it that everything runs as smoothly as possible and that the players are able to play their games without being disturbed. It occurs very rarely that the players disturb each other, and when it happens it is usually unintentional, in my opinion. It is also very rare for players to complain to me about their opponents. If this does happen I always try to solve the problem as discreetly as possible, certainly not in public. And I do not normally make announcements to the press about this kind of thing. I can understand that some journalists are not very happy about this, but I keep to my opinion that what happens on the board should be the central issue.

Something that often strikes me is the fact that many of the players are not well-acquainted with the rules of the game, particularly with regard to the finer details. As a result some unpleasant situations sometimes develop. And in these situations the arbiter must take action. I will give some practical examples.

In the Interpolis Tournament of 1986, Karpov came to me during his game against Miles and claimed a draw on the grounds that with his next move the same position would have been on the board three times, a situation which is indeed, normally, a draw. What Karpov had overlooked, however, was that the first time the position was on the board, Miles had the right to castle, while the second and the third time the position appeared, Miles had forgone this right. And the rules say that not only the position on the board must be the same, there must also be the same possibilities, and this was something that Karpov had completely overlooked. In accordance with the rules, I was forced to take 5 minutes off his time. Fortunately for him, Karpov still had 9 minutes left on his clock, which meant that after the reduction he still had 4 minutes left. Should he have had less than 5 minutes left on his clock at the moment that he made the claim, he would have lost the game.

In the same tournament Beliavsky came to me, during his game against Timman, and queried whether it was possible for him to castle to the queenside in the position as it then appeared on the board. He was not sure that this was permitted. On hearing my answer that, in this position, he was permitted to castle, he immediately did so. For the experts: Beliavsky played white and a black knight was on d2.

In the rules of the game there is a rule that says that if a player has less than 5 minutes left on his clock, he no longer has the obligation to write his moves down, while his opponent, with more than 5 minutes left on his clock, does have to write his moves down.

It frequently happens that the player who has enough time left also stops writing down the moves, which is against the rules. The arbiter must then point out to the player concerned that he is obliged to write his moves down, with which request the player, usually grudgingly, complies. I can understand this player perfectly. What has happened is that a situation has developed in which the two players are playing under different rules. I have, in fact, submitted a proposal to the FIDE that this rule shall be changed in such a way that should one of the players have less than 5 minutes left, neither player needs to record the game any longer. The grandmasters whom I have told of my proposal have all been in complete agreement with me. Incidentally, a situation like this occurred during the last game of the Kasparov-Karpov match in Seville.

Another rule which leaves room for discussion is the general obligation to record the moves. In important matches and tournaments, more and more use is being made of electronic chess boards, which register the moves automatically as they are played. I feel that there can be no objection, in such cases, to doing away with the obligation. Special regulations would have to be drawn up with regard to claims about repeated positions.

In my lecture so far, I have spoken of matches and tournaments in which everyone plays everyone else. But the role of the arbiter is also very important during so-called Swiss tournaments. These are tournaments with a great many participants, 200 for example, and only a limited number of rounds, say 9 or 11 rounds. It is obvious that the pairings in a tournament like this are crucial. The arbiter must pair the players after every round on the basis of the number of points that the players have won up until that moment and the colors they have played with. The basic principle is that every player plays another player only once, that as far as possible players with the same score play each other, and that everyone alternates as much as possible between the black and white pieces.

During the later rounds, in particular, the above-mentioned stipulations, as well as a few others, give the arbiter some headaches. On top of this, master and grandmaster results can be attained in these tournaments. In consequence the arbiter is often pressed to make certain pairings in order to give certain players more opportunity of attaining such a result. This pressure is applied by both the players themselves, who wish to obtain the result, and by the sponsors, who consider it an advantage if a lot of title results are gained in their tournaments. Something that makes it all the more difficult is the fact that the rules for pairing are not unequivocal.

Another remark about Swiss tournaments: the arbiter should make sure that the players know the pairings for the next round in good time. Every night, during the GMA Qualification tournament on Mallorca, I personally brought the pairings to all the hotels at which players were staying, in order to make sure that each player had the new schedule in his possession at breakfast the next morning.

It will be obvious to everyone that during this kind of tournament a large

number of protests are usually made. A protest can be directed to the Appeals Committee, which is chosen by the players themselves, before each tournament. The common practice, however, is for the arbiter to make a short list which he shows to the players for their approval. The arbiter who knows the chess world well will propose a committee that the players will agree to.

I think that it is worth recommending that clear regulations be drawn up as to the way in which a protest may be submitted. A chairman should be appointed to accept the protests. If possible this chairman should not be one of the participants in the tournament. The way and time in which a protest should be handled must be clearly described. It should definitely not be the case that a player should have to submit a protest about the arbitration to the very arbiter whose decision he is appealing at the Appeals Committee. The jurists among you will find all this self-evident, but unfortunately, among the chess players, this is not always the case.

I have already stressed that what happens on the board should be the central issue. I should like to take you back to the second game of the Kasparov-Karpov match in Seville, in 1987. Kasparov is in acute time trouble and, in his haste, forgets to stop his clock and start that of his opponent after making his move. I noticed that Kasparov had forgotten his clock, but according to the regulations I was not allowed to remind him; after some minutes, Kasparov, to his shock, discovered his mistake and corrected it. He lost about 2 minutes. I ask myself if a change in the regulations would not be in place here?

I know that there have been more discussions about this subject in the past, specifically, during the match Botvinnik-Bronstein in Moscow, in 1951, where, as far as I know, the rule was that the arbiter was allowed to warn the players in this kind of situation. And I think that this is the best procedure. At the moment, however, the rules explicitly forbid any kind of warning.

Adjourned games cause a lot of difficulties. The adjournment itself is usually no problem, although nowadays, with all the television cameras around, one has to be a little extra careful. At first, during adjournments in world championship matches, I used to stand between the player who had to hand in his move and the camera. This did not always prove effective, however, as the stage is spied on from all sides by the cameras. During the last world championship match, I introduced the rule that the cameras be switched off. Even then the players sometimes preferred to write down their sealed move offstage. Understandable, really, as some shrewd journalists could sometimes see, by the movement of the hand, what the move being written down was. The choice of the sealed move is, after all, often a limited choice.

The problem with adjourned games is often that, once the game has been adjourned, one player will wait for a (draw) proposal from the other and vice versa. There are no rules on this point, at least, only unwritten rules. During the match in Seville there was only one instance of a problem in this respect.

In New York and Lyon clear-cut agreements were made with regard to the

period for offering a draw after the game had been adjourned, so that there were no problems in connection with this. The only problem during the last match was with the rule that should the players agree on a draw during the adjournment and afterwards it is discovered that the sealed move is an illegal one, the draw is upheld. I have drawn up a proposal which will be considered at the next FIDE congress, in which I propose that an illegal move automatically results in the loss of the game.

The number of adjourned games in the world championship matches is fairly high. This is, of course, related to the number of moves made during the first session. In tournaments sixty moves are normally made during the first session. In a world championship match this is only 40. The Expert Commission for the world championship has now proposed increasing the number of moves of the first session of a world championship to 58, specifically: forty moves in 2 hours and 15 minutes, followed by 18 moves per hour. Kasparov had said in an interview that he will contact various organizers and ask them to play according to this system. On behalf of the organizers of the Interpolis Tournament in Tilburg, I am able to inform you that, if the other participants agree, the next tournament will be played according to this system. As a result of the increase in the rate of play, the importance of the computer in adjourned game situations will be lessened considerably. For that matter, I am convinced that the role of the computer in analyzing adjourned games has, up till now, not been in any way decisive.

In order to enable the players to function optimally, food and drink is made available during the rounds. Alcoholic drinks, incidentally, are not part of the assortment. It might be amusing to relate the preferences of some of the players.

Well, Kasparov likes to eat Toblerone chocolate. Lately I have noticed that more and more players are turning to this. I am really afraid that Gary in future tournaments has to fight for "his" chocolate. The fact that Karpov likes to eat yoghurt, is a well-known fact since the Karpov-Korchnoi match in Baguio City, in 1978. Tony Miles is a milk drinker. Korchnoi likes honey in his tea and, I believe, also in his coffee. Yusupov is very easy. He brings his own tea. Salov is crazy about grapes, while Portisch likes to make his own tea during the round. As you can see everything possible is done to make conditions as pleasant as possible for the players.

During games of the world championship matches, the players each have their own restroom with monitors on which they can not only study the position of the game, but also observe the face of the opponent. In Seville there was in each room a big and a small monitor. Kasparov wanted to see Karpov's face on the big monitor and the position of the game on the small one, Karpov wanted the opposite.

During the Euwe Memorial 1990, in Rotterdam where two of the four players, namely Gurevich and Korchnoi, were furious smokers, monitors were also placed in the smokers' area. At the end of the tournament, Gurevich complained of the fact that there were no monitors in the toilets. It must be said that all

these extra facilities are greatly appreciated by the top players and that the cooperation between sponsors and players is getting better all the time, a development which can only be applauded and which serves the interest of all parties.

Finally, one more thing about the arbiter. I think that in light of the increasing, largely financial, interests involved, the role of the arbiter will not become less important. This means, in my opinion, that the FIDE, with or without the cooperation of the GMA, will have to ensure that the quality of the arbiters corps is guaranteed and that the applications for the title of international arbiter should be examined with a great deal of care.

In connection with this it would be useful to have a look how the arbiter's training courses are regulated in the various countries. I know that in a number of countries these are excellent, and that applications for the title of international arbiter are handled with great care. I also know that in other countries nothing is done about training of the arbiters and that almost anyone there who knows the rules of chess can get the title of arbiter. And on this point, I feel, there is a task reserved for the FIDE appointed Arbiters Commission.

After every World Championship match there are rumors that the players have fixed the match. I should just like to say, that, if – and I repeat if – Kasparov and Karpov had fixed the matches, they would both deserve an Oscar for their performance as the best actors of the decade. But I am absolutely sure they didn't fix the matches.

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