



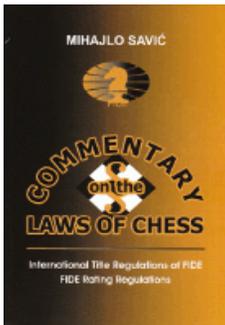
COLUMNISTS

An Arbiter's Notebook

Geurt Gijssen



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The New FIDE Laws of Chess

From September 1-9, 2012, along with the Chess Olympiad, the FIDE Congress was held in Istanbul. Once every four years the Laws of Chess may be revised, and in this Congress we again had the opportunity. In fact, some members of the Rules Commission began preparing their proposals almost a year ago. In April there was a meeting of the counsellors of the Rules Commission in Lausanne, and the secretary of the Commission had a meeting with officials from the United States Chess Federation (USCF) to discuss the differences between the FIDE Laws of Chess and the USCF Rules. The intention was to determine whether it is possible to have the same laws in the United States and the Rest of the World. This month I will try to highlight the most important decisions that were taken during the Congress. These laws take effect on July 1, 2013.

Article 3.7.e

When a pawn reaches the rank furthest from its starting position it must be exchanged as part of the same move on the same square for a new queen, rook, bishop or knight of the same colour. The player's choice is not restricted to pieces that have been captured previously. This exchange of a pawn for another piece is called 'promotion' and the effect of the new piece is immediate.

This is the actual text of Article 3.7.e. The practice how players promote is done in two different ways:

- The pawn is moved to the last rank, then removed from the board, and finally the new piece is put on the square of promotion.
- The pawn is removed from the penultimate rank and a new piece is put on the square of promotion.

There are arbiters who consider the second way of promotion illegal, and, in a Blitz game, even declare the game lost for the player who promotes a pawn in this way. In fact there is nothing wrong with this kind of promotion, because in both cases we have the same position.

I can imagine that someone will ask "And what about castling? If a player starts to move his rook and then the king, we have also reached the same position." This is true, but, for example, Rh1-f1 is also a legal move, and it is possible to confuse the opponent by playing Rf1 and after one minute or even more to play the king from e1 to g1. To avoid the situation I described above, the following sentence has been added to Article 3.7e:

The pawn can be removed from the board and the new piece be put on the appropriate square in any order.

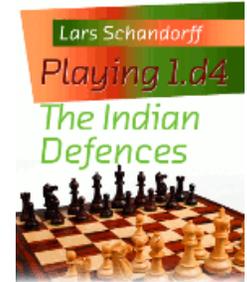
Article 5

This Article deals with the completion of the game. In the Articles about checkmate, stalemate, and positions that cannot be won by any player it was mentioned that the last move must be legal. To these Articles has been added that the last move must also be played **in accordance with the Article 4.2 – 4.6 inclusive**. These Articles describe how to move the pieces.

Article 6.2

Article 6.2 is the "old" Article 6.7. In previous columns this Article was extensively discussed. The additions are bold and italic:

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During the game each player, having made his move on the chessboard, shall stop his own clock and start his opponent's clock (that is to say, he shall "press" his clock). This "completes" the move. A move is also completed if:

(1) the move ends the game (see Articles 5.1.a, 5.2.a, 5.2.b, 5.2.c and 9.6), or

(2) the player has made his next move, in case his previous move was not completed.

*A player must be allowed to **press** his clock after making his move, even after the opponent has made his next move. The time between making the move on the chessboard and pressing the clock is regarded as part of the time allotted to the player.*

New is *a move is also completed if the player has made his next move, in case his previous move was not completed.*

Short explanation: If White made his twentieth move and Black answers immediately, then White has still the possibility to complete his twentieth by pressing his clock. However, if instead of pressing his clock, White makes his twenty-first move, then his twentieth move is considered to be completed.

Article 6.2.d

This Article is new, but does not need explanation:

Only the player whose clock is running is allowed to adjust the pieces.

In case a disabled player cannot press his clock or cannot record the moves, his clock will not be adjusted.

Article 6.7.a

Any player who arrives at the chessboard after the start of the session shall lose the game *unless the arbiter decides to postpone the start of that game due to unforeseen circumstances*. Thus the default time is 0 minutes. The rules of a competition may specify *a different default time*.

Article 7.1

If an irregularity occurs and the pieces have to be restored to a previous position, *the position 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 game shall then continue from this reinstated position. The arbiter shall use his best judgement to determine the times to be shown on the chess clock. This includes the option not to change the clock times. He shall also, if necessary, adjust the clock's move-counter.*

There was a quite long discussion about this Article in the meeting of the Rules Commission. There was a proposal that an illegal move stands if it is not found within ten moves. This is a rule that is applied in USC tournaments. Finally, the meeting decided not to accept this proposal. The new sentence was added to the "old" Article. The arbiter now has the possibility not to change the clock times. The advantage is that the schedule of the tournament can be maintained. This is especially important when two rounds on the same day shall be played.

Article 8.4

If the increment to each move is less than thirty seconds, and a player has less than five minutes left to the next time control, this player does not have to record the moves. There was a proposal that in this situation the opponent also does not have the obligation to record the moves. This is a very logical proposal. Why create a situation where two players in the same game are

playing under different conditions? Nevertheless, for practical reasons, the decision was not to change this Article.

Article 9.1.a

The rules of a competition may specify that players cannot agree a draw in less than a specified number of moves, or cannot agree a draw at all, without the permission of the arbiter.

The Rules Commission had no intention to change this Article. To be honest, I had the impression that everyone was happy with this Article, because the actual text gives each organiser the possibility to make his own choice:

- To allow draw offers at any moment during the game.
- To specify that draw offers are only possible after the players have completed a certain number of moves, for instance thirty or forty. (In the Olympiad in Istanbul it was possible to agree to a draw only after thirty completed moves.)
- All draw offers are forbidden.

But in the meeting of the General Assembly the situation was different. The delegate from France gave an emotional proposal to ban all draw offers. And he was not the only one. Nevertheless, after a long debate it was decided to keep the Article as it is.

Article 9.2

The game is drawn, upon a correct claim by a player having the move, when the same position for at least the third time (not necessarily by a repetition of moves):

a. is about to appear, if he first writes his move, which cannot be changed, on his scoresheet and declares to the arbiter his intention to make this move, or

b. has just appeared, and the player claiming the draw has the move.

There was a proposal that a player does not have to write his move first if the intended move produces the same position for the third time. After he had made his move, he should stop the chess clock (this means both clocks), call the arbiter, and claim a draw. It was decided not to change this Article.

Article 9.5

*If a player claims a draw under Article 9.2 or 9.3 **he or the arbiter shall stop the chess clock** (see Article 6.12 b). He is not allowed to withdraw his claim.*

a. If the claim is found to be correct, the game is immediately drawn.

b. If the claim is found to be incorrect, the arbiter shall add two minutes to the opponent's remaining thinking time. Then the game shall continue. If the claim was based on an intended move, this move must be made, in accordance with Articles 3 and 4.

There are two changes in this Article; both bold and italic. Some background regarding the first change: for a very long time Article 9.5 began as follows:

If a player claims a draw under Article 9.2 or 9.3 he shall stop the chess clock.

But there were arbiters who declared the claim incorrect when a player had not stopped the chess clock. Therefore, this Article was changed:

If a player claims a draw under Article 9.2 or 9.3 he may stop the chess clock.

There was a proposal to revert back to the original version with "shall," "should" or "must."

The solution was in fact very easy: The player or the arbiter shall stop the chess clock.

The second change was that instead of three minutes only two minutes shall be added in case of an incorrect claim. This means that the penalty for an incorrect claim and an illegal move are the same.

Article 10.2

If the player having the move has less than two minutes left on his clock, he may claim a draw before his flag falls. He may claim on the basis that his opponent cannot win by "normal means," and/or that his opponent has been making no effort to win by normal means. He shall summon the arbiter and he or the arbiter shall stop the chess clock (see Article 6.12 b).

Each chess player knows this Article, although I assume that the application of it is quite rare.

If a player claims under this Article, the arbiter has three possibilities:

- to accept the claim.
- to postpone the decision and perhaps decide to give the opponent two extra minutes.
- to reject the claim and give the opponent two extra minutes.

The USCF rules offer a fourth possibility and the Rules Commission agreed to include this possibility into the FIDE Laws of Chess:

The arbiter may decide that the game shall be continued using a "time delay" or "cumulative time" mode. The extra time shall be 5 seconds added for each move for both players. The clocks shall then be set with the extra time and the opponent shall be awarded two extra minutes.

The order is now:

- to accept the claim.
- to postpone the decision.
- to continue the game using an increment.
- to reject the claim.

Article 12.3.b

The General Assembly agreed that the Presidential Board will take a decision regarding this Article.

The Rules Commission proposed:

A player is forbidden from having a mobile phone and/or other electronic means of communication in the playing venue, unless permitted by the arbiter and the device is completely switched off. If it is evident that the player brought such a device into the playing venue is not completely switched off, he shall lose the game. The opponent shall win. However, if the opponent cannot win the game by any series of legal moves, his score shall be a draw.

The Presidential Board prefers:

A player is forbidden from having a mobile phone and/or other electronic means of communication in the playing venue. If it is evident that the player brought such a device into the playing venue he shall lose the game. The opponent shall win. However, if the opponent cannot win the game by any series of legal moves, his score shall be a draw.

Article 12.3.c

This is a new Article, but based on the practice in several tournaments

The rules of a competition may specify a different, less severe, penalty.

Article 12.9

This is also a new Article:

A player shall have the right to request from the arbiter an explanation of particular points in the Laws of Chess.

Article 12.10

A few words are added to this Article, but they are quite important.

Unless the rules of the competition specify otherwise, a player may appeal against any decision of the arbiter, *even if he has signed the scoresheet as required in Article 8.7.*

Article 13.2

The addition to this Article is very important.

The arbiter shall act in the best interest of the competition. He should ensure that a good playing environment is maintained and that the players are not disturbed. He shall supervise the progress of the competition. *The arbiter shall take special measures in the interests of disabled players and those who need medical attention.*

The arbiter has the possibility in some cases to decide to stop the clock of a disabled player.

Article 13.9

This Article describes the options available to the arbiter concerning penalties. A new penalty is added: *a fine announced in advance.*

Another penalty has been changed: *expulsion from the event which should only be considered in conjunction with the organiser.*

The Rules Commission has the opinion that the arbiter may only in consultation with the organiser impose this penalty.

Appendix A and B

The Presidential Board has still to decide one point about *Rapid and Blitz games.*

These games are played with adequate or inadequate supervision.

Adequate supervision for Rapid games means that one arbiter supervises no more than three games, adequate supervision for Blitz means that one arbiter supervises one game

For adequate and inadequate supervision there are different rules. In case of adequate supervision, the "normal" Competition Rules apply; for inadequate supervision the arbiter may, for instance, not declare an illegal move or a flag fall.

The Rules Commission and the Presidential Board have the opinion that during a game the same rule shall be applied, but the opinions differ for the whole event. The Rules Commission has the opinion that during an event the Rules may be changed, provided it is announced in advance. For instance, suppose there is a KO Blitz tournament with 128 players. It is very difficult to find sixty-four arbiters for such an event. This means the event will start with

inadequate supervision. After three rounds there are only sixteen players left, thus eight games. The Rules Commission prefers to start from this round with adequate supervision, but the Presidential Board prefers to apply the same rules for the entire event.

Article B2

The penalties mentioned in Articles 7.5.b and 9.5.b of the Competition Rules shall be one minute instead of two minutes.

The usual time control in a Blitz tournament is three minutes with an increment of two seconds per move from move one, or five minutes for the entire game. To add two extra minutes to the opponent's time in the case of an illegal move or an incorrect claim is disproportional.

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