

Arbiting Matters Too



Newsletter of the Chess Arbiters Association

March 2019

Issue 35

EGM: The draft minutes of the EGM are given here. Thank you to those who attended and to those who sent comments. These minutes will be put before the AGM for formal acceptance. The CAA is looking for a Treasurer. If you would be willing to serve in this, or any other capacity, please contact the Secretary.

Cheating: A school chess coach in Texas has been found guilty of manipulating pupils' ratings so that they qualified for the lower sections of National Championships. It is bad enough when a player does it with his own grade, but how much worse when this unethical behaviour is encouraged amongst children. The coach has received a life ban from the USCF. A significant number of recent cases involves children. It is particularly abhorrent when the juniors have been encouraged to act in such a manner by an adult. Details on page 6.

Chess Scotland: The Chess Scotland Rules Book 2018 is being published and will shortly appear on the CS website. In addition two other CS publications are in the process of being revised and will appear shortly. These are an Arbiters' Guide and a Congress Organisers' Guide. In Scotland there is an Arbiters' Committee which meets annually. One of the decisions taken at its February meeting was, that for a CS Arbiter qualification, under certain circumstances a pass from a FIDE Arbiters Seminar, even if the 80% minimum was not reached overall. The 80% target would still have to be met but only after the exclusion of questions such as calculating FIDE title norms.

EGM

Draft Minutes of the Extraordinary General Meeting of the Chess Arbiter's Association

Horntye Park Sports Complex, Hastings, 2nd January 2019. 2.30pm

Present: Lara Barnes, (Chair); Alan Atkinson; Mike Flatt; Geoff Gammon; Neil Graham; Alan Hustwayte; Alex McFarlane; David Sedgwick.

The meeting noted and accepted, nem con, the resignation of Kevin Markey, and thanked him for his service to the Association. He would be asked to return the Association documents he had to Lara Barnes.

The meeting afforded thanks to Stewart Reuben for his attempts to resolve the matters surrounding Mr Markey's resignation.

A new treasurer would be appointed at the A.G.M., and the executive committee was authorised by the meeting to appoint an acting treasurer pro tem.

The meeting agreed that AMToo was an important publicity vehicle for the Association, and assisted in meeting the Association's commitments under the MOU with the ECF to inform arbiters of changes to the rules, etc. The present distribution pattern for the AMToo magazine was endorsed by the meeting.

Geoff Gammon offered thanks for his having being made an honorary member of the Association.

The meeting closed at 3.30pm.

You are the Arbiter - League Problems

Some situations from league matches where no arbiter was present. As always in these situations there is the caveat that only one side of the story may have been given.

It should also be noted that different leagues give team captains different powers. Sometimes they are empowered to act as arbiters but more usually their powers in this respect are limited.

Case 1:

In this case the facts do not seem to be in dispute.

A player promotes a pawn. He places an upside down rook on the board but this is then removed by his captain who replaces the rook with a queen.

The game continues and the player who promoted subsequently misses the fact that he is in check and completes a move which does not parry the check.

The opponent immediately claims the game on the grounds that two illegal moves have been played.

What should the arbiter decide? Think about it before reading on.

Case 2:

A player picks up his own queen and then an opposition pawn. He decides that this is not a good move and replaces both pieces. After further thought he makes a different move with the queen. The opponent claims that an illegal move has been played. This is denied (and backed up by his captain). It is not entirely clear but the logic used by the player to explain his actions were that he moved the first piece touched which could be moved. At this point the game was agreed drawn. What would an arbiter decide?

Case 3:

This is based on two recent fairly similar cases. Quickplay finish rules apply. A position is reached where one player stops the game by claiming a draw (correct action when no arbiter present). The position is a theoretical draw. Should the league conductor award the draw?

Answers

Case 1: The promotion was not an illegal move. However, it was against the Laws. When the rook touched the promotion square then it became the designated piece. It could not thereafter be exchanged for a queen. The captain's actions were therefore incorrect, but again not an illegal move. The rook should have been turned the right way up and the game should have continued. Everything which happened after that is meaningless. Remember the game was still in progress when the claim was made for a second illegal move. As the game had not otherwise ended the correct course of action is to return to the position before the rook was removed from the board and continue from there. Clock times would need to be looked at and the innocent player perhaps given some extra time for the disturbance.

Case 2: Firstly, if the opponent admits touching the pawn then it should be captured with the queen. The touch move rule when read properly also covers the situation here and it is quite clear that the pawn should have been captured. All clubs should have a printout of the Laws of Chess available during matches. If touching the pawn had been denied then it comes down to one player's word against another and even if the arbiter would like to believe the claimant they have to dismiss the claim.

It is also to be noted that even in the situation described by the claimant it is not an illegal move but an illegal action which has been carried out. It therefore would not count towards the 'two strikes and you're out' rule.

Case 3: Under the Laws of Chess there is no such thing as a theoretical draw. The closest the Laws come to this is a blocked position and insufficient mating material. The arbiter may award the draw if the player cannot win by normal means or is not trying to win by

normal means. The latter would normally occur when a player is simply making meaningless moves to use up the opponent's time. The phrase 'winning by normal means' is open to interpretation. Even in a theoretically drawn position the claimant must have made enough moves to show that they know the theory or allowed their opponent the opportunity to demonstrate that they do not know the winning strategies.

With increments now common in congresses both players and arbiters are less clear on how to deal with the draw claims which do occur. An important point which is often forgotten is that it is only the player on the move who can make a claim.

More League Questions

The following incident highlights why every club should have a copy of the Laws of Chess available on club nights especially those in which matches are played.

The following situation arose in a Welsh evening league match, and also a match in Australia so it is not restricted to Britain. A player touched one of his own pieces. He then touched one of the opponent's pieces. These facts are not in dispute. The player's own piece was able to capture the opponent's piece but it was not a good move. The player (in both cases) then appears to have argued that all he has to do is move the piece first touched. He does not have to capture the pawn as it was touched second and the first piece can be moved. The appropriate Laws is:

4.3.3 one or more pieces of each colour, he must capture the first touched opponent's piece with his first touched piece or, if this is illegal, move or capture the first piece touched that can be moved or captured. 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.

In both cases the correct decision was reached that the capture had to be made but in the Welsh case the opponent felt so bad about the situation that he offered a draw in what is reported as a better position. In the Australian case the opponent went on to win quickly. I also had the following question sent to me concerning a south of England league where the captains are deemed to be arbiters.

The question came from one of the captains.

My board 1 player in moving to press his clock having made his move inadvertently knocked his king off the board. He immediately replaced it. The game finished a few minutes later and he won. His opponent said he should have had 2 minutes extra because of the disturbance of knocking the king off the board.

My reaction was that if the opponent had wanted to claim he should have stopped the clock and claimed it immediately the incident took place. I would however have refused the claim on the grounds it was a trivial issue. From comments made by the opponent he seems to have successfully claimed time in other matches.

I would appreciate your comments.

My reply was:

Assuming the facts are as you say then there are two points.

From your explanation it is unclear whose clock was running when the king was knocked over and replaced.

If the player's own clock is running then I agree there should be no penalty.

However, if the clock has been pressed before the king is replaced then the player has grounds to claim that he was disturbed. There is no fixed penalty for this. Two minutes would not be unreasonable but neither would 1 minute.

The claim would need to be made immediately and before the opponent moved.

I am guessing that the incident happened when one or both players were short of time, otherwise it probably wouldn't have been mentioned by the opponent.

There are a number of Blitz tournaments around the world where if a player does not replace the piece before pressing his clock it is defined as an illegal move*. This was introduced as a result of the disturbance created when there was little time left. Some players do find this very distracting, especially if it happens more than once.

I'm not saying it was the case here but a player's chain of thought can be broken when the opponent does anything unexpected. Putting the king back on the board might have been such a distraction.

*Some even go as far as declaring it lost for the player who does this.

Problems at the 4NCL

The first 4NCL league meetings of the year saw different problems at different venues. At one of the venues there was a religious service described as being of the 'happy, clappy' variety which disturbed players in the rooms above. One group of players were moved but there was not enough space to move everyone. At another venue the playing conditions were absolutely fine but the weather wasn't. A tree fell in the wind landing on a player's car. His game was initially paused with an arbiter escorting him to his car (well you wouldn't want accusations that he used it as an excuse to check an 'engine' would you?). Unfortunately the damage was such that the player conceded the game to deal with his problem. Fortunately the car was not a write-off but it was a near thing.

One other side effect of the wind was the loss of power to the electrical sockets, though fortunately not to the lights. The hall was wired in such a way that if the emergency exit was opened then the power to everything plugged in was stopped until a trip switch was pressed. The wind blew the door so hard, moving it sufficiently, that on two occasions the power was affected. Fortunately no printing of round sheets etc. was happening at those times, nor was a desktop being used to broadcast live games.

The following weekend, at the 4NCL Congress, a player was pulled up who had stopped recording. His reply was to blame his opponent. The opponent had apparently induced this breach of the laws by recording the moves in pairs and on his time. On being told this was acceptable and that he could do the same the player replied that it was unsporting and he wouldn't do that. He was not asked if doing something 'unsporting' was worse than doing something illegal. Sometimes it is better to seem to accept ridiculous statements.

More Cheating

There are a number of players suspected of manipulating their grades to allow them to play in Majors and Minors when their real strength would restrict these players to Opens and Majors. This is called sandbagging.

There is an amazing case of this involving Henderson Middle School from El Paso, Texas. This school is the subject of a 2017 book called "The Champions Game" written by the school's chess coach.

The School's teams have had success in national tournaments in 2015 and 2016 and won two grading restricted events in 2018 which caused the trouble. It won both the K-8 U1000 and K-8 U750 National Championships. K-8 is the US term for Year 8 (2nd year in Scotland) and is effectively Under 14. The title is awarded based on the highest scoring 4 players from a school. There doesn't seem to be a restriction on the number of players a school can enter.

The problem was that until shortly before the event many of the players were too highly rated to play in those events. However, shortly before the tournament, the school played a number of matches in which it was spectacularly unsuccessful, losing almost every game. In one of these matches the Texas school had an average grade of 1047 against 650 but still lost 28-0! (The cynic in me would have expected that with players of such low ratings a few games would have ended in stalemate, with the winning player unable to obtain mate.) These matches were arranged so that each member of one team played only members of the opposing team. However, it was registered as a Swiss. This is significant

as it meant that the maximum drop in rating allowed by the USCF would have been limited to 50 points if correctly registered whereas one player dropped from 939 to 760. In this one match 6 of the 7 players who had been above 1000 dropped to below this figure and even the 7th lost all 4 games played.

In three tournaments investigated the school recorded 49 losses, 1 win and two draws (where players from the school met each other). In some other matches the score of the match ended as a tie but the Texas players either won 4-0 or lost 4-0!

The situation was so suspicious that 19 complaints were made and investigated by the USCF Ethics Committee.

Following a lengthy investigation the school was found guilty. The Coach has been banned from USCF membership for life and, as this is compulsory to compete in the US, has effectively been banned from competitive chess. 13 members (or former members) of the team were reprimanded. In addition they will not be permitted to compete in grade restricted events for a period of 5 years.

The school has been placed on probation for a period of two years. Any player from the school wishing to play in a restricted section will need to have such an entry approved in advance by the USCF Director of Events and the Scholastic Council.

The two arbiters present were found not to be guilty of any involvement, though both submitted wrong results and the wrong tournament format. One of them has had his arbiting record submitted to the Tournament Directors (TD means Arbiter - Ed) Certification Committee for review. He therefore faces the possibility of being removed from the list of arbiters. This arbiter's incorrectly reported results were not restricted to events involving the school and seem to indicate a certain level of incompetence at various events.

An historic case of cheating has re-emerged. The French Olympiad scandal, where members of the French team were being sent moves, including against England, has now reached the French courts after a period of nearly 9 years. The case against Sebastian Feller, Arnaud Hauchard and Cyril Marzolo reached the courts on Monday 25 Feb. The judgement will be delivered on 27 May. The prosecution appear to be seeking 9 month suspended sentences. The interesting thing, other than it has actually gone as far as the legal system, is that reports seem to indicate that the exact method of cheating has not been established. It has long been assumed that each player was given a code and from the captain's position behind two players the co-ordinates could be worked out.

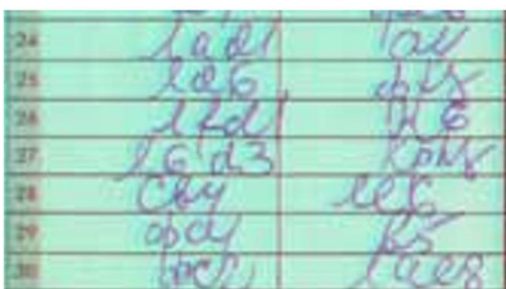
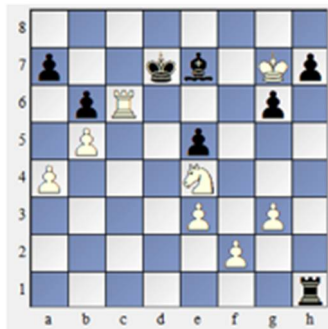
Arbiter Errors?

The 1963 World Championship match between Petrosian and Botvinnik had a controversial incident during the 5th game. The incident involved Petrosian's sealed move.

The arbiter, Harry Golombek, in the position shown looked at the scoresheet and played 41 Kf8 which is obviously an illegal move.

Petrosian protested and Kf7 was played instead. The game continued and Petrosian won.

At the end of the game Botvinnik complained to both Golombek and his colleague Gideon Ståhlberg.



Botvinnik's complaint was based on the fact that the move was unclear and therefore he should have been awarded a win.

I have not been able to find a picture of the actual scoresheet but the one illustrated does give an example of Petrosian's writing in another

game. Black's moves 25 and 27 are worth trying to decipher. They could both be read as 8s. However, move 30 shows a very clear 8. This, in fact, is the way that Petrosian wrote his sevens.

In his book "Achieving the Aim" Botvinnik claims that this game played on his mind. He claims that Golombek opened the envelope at the start of the adjourned session and having looked at the scoresheet played 41 Kf8. In Botvinnik's version of events Petrosian protested 'energetically' at which point Golombek shrugged his shoulders and made the move that Petrosian insisted on.

Botvinnik complained about this after the game had ended in his defeat and claims he should have been awarded the game. He further claims in his book that "Harry Golombek replied that the move was indeed not clear, but he was not in agreement with such an interpretation of the rules".

Article 17 Loss of the Game

17.3. Who has sealed a move the real significance of which it is impossible to establish;

Clearly it could be seen from other moves played in the game that this was the player's normal way of writing a 7 and it was therefore acceptable for the arbiter to rule it as such. It was not impossible to establish its real significance.

If Botvinnik is to be believed it took a week before he was shown a photocopy of the scoresheet. That can be considered an unnecessary long period in which other games were played. Having changed the move from Kf8 to Kf7 it would not have been unreasonable to explain to the opponent why the original 'move' was altered.

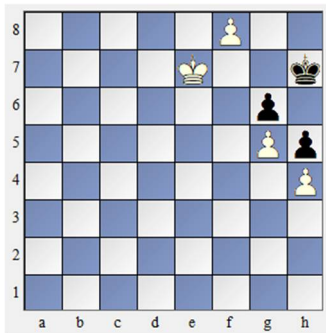
Promotion Problems

There has been a recent item about this on a Facebook Arbiters' page and I've also received some questions.

Let's look at some of the problems that arbiters encounter about this move.

The rule itself is quite simple, when a pawn reaches the opposite side of the board it must be exchanged for a piece of the same colour but not a second king!

The pawn does not have to actually move physically to the promotion square. It can simply be removed from the seventh and replaced by a piece on the eighth. This can sometime produce a complaint from the opponent that it was illegal as the pawn did not move to the promotion square. Such complaints should be rejected. The wording of the Laws was changed to confirm that.



A more common cause of complaint is where the opponent states that the player has first lifted one piece from the side of the board but has ended up promoting to another. Again this complaint should be dismissed. The piece is not active until it touches the promotion square. Now consider the position shown. White has just played f8 and pressed the clock at the same time saying "Rook please" to the opponent. What should an arbiter witnessing this do? What the player says does not matter.

He has made an illegal move. The punishment here would be that the pawn would be replaced by a queen and the game end in stalemate (there is little point under the circumstances in giving the opponent extra time!). This outcome would be the same even if this was White's second illegal move as Black would have no legal way of winning after the pawn is replaced. Some opponents may argue that the pawn should be replaced on f7 and the game declared lost for White. This argument may be considered to have some

merit, but unfortunately for the claimant that is not how arbiters have been instructed to interpret such a situation.

In the same position White states “Queen” but does not press the clock. Black puts a queen on the board and claims stalemate. Notice that White’s clock is still running. Is the claim successful? If White accepts the situation then there is no reason for the arbiter to get involved. The players have effectively agreed that the game is drawn.

But what if White immediately claims that he did not actually make the move? Firstly, if the result has been handed in or even both scoresheets signed then the draw should be given as it was agreed. However, if that stage had not been reached, then White has a legitimate, if morally incorrect, claim. Assuming both players agree on the details then the arbiter has two options

a) Technically, White has done little wrong and should be allowed to promote to another piece, perhaps with a warning about distracting other players.

b) Morally, White announcing “Queen” has caused the opponent to do something wrong. It could be argued that White is therefore bringing the game into disrepute and 0-1 is therefore a possible score. (Black can theoretically still win if White underpromotes.)

Personally, I would warn Black that his actions in promoting for the opponent has caused the problem. (This is actually a situation which occurs quite often in lower sections, though usually it does not end the game. In these cases I warn the players, usually after the game, that the player promoting has to place the piece on the board.)

I would also suggest to White that he risks losing and strongly suggest they agree a draw.

Is the situation different if White starts Black’s clock after the queen is put on the board?

In that situation the obvious question to White is to ask why he started Black’s clock without making a move. By doing so White has either accepted that the queen is on the board or has committed an illegal move by starting the clock before he completed his move. In either case the queen would replace the pawn and the game is drawn.

In a recent rapidplay I was called over to a board where an illegal move had been played. The player (A) had failed to notice that his opponent’s last move had given check. The players had replaced the position to before the illegal move which had apparently been a pawn promotion. I gave the opponent (B) an additional two minutes and stood back. The player then got out of check with his move. B, who was losing, then made a random move. A then pushed his pawn to the far side of the board and pressed his clock without exchanging the pawn for a piece. I stepped in to inform A that he had just made a second illegal move and therefore he had lost. After some discussion to confirm that this was now classed as an illegal move and as the second one he had lost A tried an unusual defence.

The defence was that he hadn't exchanged the pawn because his opponent had his hand poised ready to capture the promoted piece. His defence failed!!

When Things Go Wrong!

There are few of us who haven't experienced problems at a chess event. Many of us will have suffered power cuts or alarms going off. There have even been some events affected by rain coming through the ceiling. On one famous occasion at the Blackpool Winter Gardens there appeared to be snow falling on the boards.

All of these things are normally beyond the control of the organising team.

The 1998 US Open in Kailua-Kona, Hawaii however had a number of problems which were caused by the organisers.

The event was lucky enough to be sponsored by Saitek. A condition of the sponsorship was the Saitek digital clock available at that time would be used for the tournament. It is not unreasonable that this would be a requirement of the sponsor. FIFA has a similar arrangement with the provider of balls at the World Cup, for example. Here though the organisers chose a time control that the clocks could not deal with! A definite lack of forward planning. Because of the advertised time control the clocks required to be manually reset after move 40. The players, in general, were unable to do this. This meant that players, on reaching the time control had to put up their hands and wait on the arbiter coming to reset their clock. This, in itself would not have been the end of the world, but the clock proved to be incredibly difficult to reset in a way that allowed the next session to be entered and the arbiters struggled also. The solution was to have additional clocks set for the second session. These clocks would then be edited to include any residual time left from the previous session and given to the players. If any arbiter has experienced the problems of having to reset clocks wrongly saying that a game has been lost on time they will understand the difficulties encountered. It was not simply a case of adding on more time to what remained. What was eventually used as a solution was that arbiters would be at hand with a preset clock, basically pressing the button on a second clock as the players did so on theirs to keep them in sync and when move 40 was reached the arbiter would step in and swap over clocks.

Allowing for this problem, it could be claimed that the clocks worked throughout the event. Unfortunately the same could not be said for the pairing software that had been chosen. The initial software was abandoned and the event concluded using a rival pairing program. At least they weren't stuck with the faulty software due to a sponsorship deal.

It is reported that despite the sponsorship the event ran at a considerable loss.

The difficulties experienced might also explain why so few American tournaments supply equipment.



Defaults

From the Canadian Chess Federation Handbook. Note that the Tournament Director (TD) has discretion concerning the applicability.

418. Late Arrival Forfeits and Undeclared Dropouts. If a player either forfeits a game by arriving late or does not advise the TD that he/she has withdrawn from a tournament and subsequently loses a game by default, that game is treated like a game actually played and is rated. If the TD deems that circumstances beyond the individual's control prevented the defaulting player from attending, that player may be awarded a zero point bye or half point bye at the TDs discretion. A game is not rated when both opponents fail to appear for the game. A defaulting player will not normally be paired for subsequent rounds unless prior arrangements are made with the TD.

This handbook is particularly well known for having sections that are years out of date and this would appear to be one of those. Having said that the idea of punishing no-shows in some way has merit. With modern technology it should be expected that many players would be able to get in touch with an official at the event and explain why they will be defaulting.

CAA Officials

Chairman - Lara Barnes

Secretary – Alan Atkinson

Pro tem Treasurer – Lara Barnes

Chief Arbiter - Alex McFarlane

Information officer - Alex McFarlane

Committee - David Welch, Kevin Staveley and Mike Forster.

ECF Delegate - Mike Forster

Chess Scotland Delegate - Alex McFarlane

Welsh Chess Union - Kevin Staveley

Independent Examiner - Richard Jones

Safeguarding Officer – Lara Barnes

Items for inclusion in future issues should be sent to Alex McFarlane

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