

Guidelines III

III.5 If Article III.4 does not apply and the player having the move has less than two minutes left on his clock, he may claim a draw before his flag falls. He shall summon the arbiter and may stop the chessclock (see Article 6.12.2). 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:

III.5.1 If the arbiter agrees that the opponent cannot win by normal means, or that the opponent has been making no effort to win the game by normal means, he shall declare the game drawn. Otherwise he shall postpone his decision or reject the claim.

III.5.2 If the arbiter postpones his decision, the opponent may be awarded two extra minutes and the game shall continue, if possible, in the presence of an arbiter. The arbiter shall declare the final result later in the game or as soon as possible after the flag of either player has fallen. He shall declare the game drawn if he agrees that the opponent of the player whose flag has fallen cannot win by normal means, or that he was not making sufficient attempts to win by normal means.

III.5.3 If the arbiter has rejected the claim, the opponent shall be awarded two extra minutes.

Claims for a draw in the last two minutes – how should the arbiter react?

The Draw Claim

The first thing that an arbiter must do is to make sure that the draw is claimed in accordance with the Laws of Chess.

The player making the claim must be the one who is about to move. A player may not claim when it is the opponent's move or after he has moved but not stopped his clock. If a player tries to claim at the wrong time then it is permissible to explain the correct procedure to the player but this explanation should not disturb the opponent.

There are two reasons for claiming a draw:

- The opponent has no practical winning chances
- The opponent is not trying to win by normal means (i.e. he is simply trying to run down the player's time without doing anything constructive).

The Arbiter may wish to enquire from the player as to which of these two reasons is the basis for the claim. Indeed there is an implication in 10.2.a that the Arbiter should do this.

How does the Arbiter React?

The reaction of the Arbiter will be based on the position on the board. It may also be based on the strengths of the players involved. For example at beginner level a player may not be able to mate with king and queen v king and the Arbiter in some circumstances may declare that ending drawn.

If the player claiming the draw is ahead on material the Arbiter has two options.

The first option is to award the draw immediately. Provided that the person making the claim is sufficiently ahead in material this is a perfectly reasonable decision.

The alternative is to inform the opponent that he has been offered a draw. This is true as the claim of a draw in this situation is also to be deemed an offer of a draw. Should the opponent decline the draw offer or say nothing then it is acceptable for the arbiter to order play to continue. Should the player who claimed the draw subsequently win, then that is the result that is recorded. Should the player run out of time then the arbiter may award the draw unless in the meantime the opponent has offered a draw. If the opponent offers a draw which is not accepted then the player who originally made the claim loses the protection provided by Article G.5 and should his flag fall he will be declared lost.

If the position on the board is unclear then the Arbiter should order the game to continue and should attempt to watch the remainder of the game if possible. It may be necessary to ask an assistant to supervise the progress of the game if the Arbiter has several other games to watch.

If the person making the claim is significantly behind on material and has no other compensation, for example a strong attack, then the claim should be rejected. The Arbiter may award the opponent an extra two minutes but this would normally only be done if the opponent was also short of time. The award of extra time is normally only done for a totally frivolous claim of a draw and even then the time may not be added as the time taken to reset the clock may be more advantageous to the player than the additional two minutes is to the opponent.

Making the Decision

If the claim for a draw is based on the opponent having no practical winning chances then the player making the claim must demonstrate over the board that he knows how to draw the game. If the player makes only a few moves then it would be normal to reject the claim. The exception to this is when a claim is made in the last few seconds but is made because the opponent's position has deteriorated with the last move or two. In general, the earlier a claim is made and the more moves are played after making the claim the more likely it is to succeed. When making a decision a useful rule of thumb is that if the Arbiter has to give more than a little thought to the outcome then the draw claim should be rejected.

The claim that an opponent is trying to win by time only may be much more difficult to establish. If the opponent is making any progress at all, no matter how little, then the draw claim should be rejected. The really difficult situation is where the opponent is obviously trying to win but does not demonstrate the necessary technique. Here the player must make enough moves to assure the Arbiter that he knows how to defend against all of the opponent's attempts at winning. If the player's lack of moves deprives the opponent of an opportunity to try to win then the draw claim is rejected.

There are two obvious reasons why a player may not play quickly enough to justify his case. The first is that he is uncertain of the moves to play, the second is that the position is complicated and deserves considerable thought. Both reasons weaken the claimant's case.

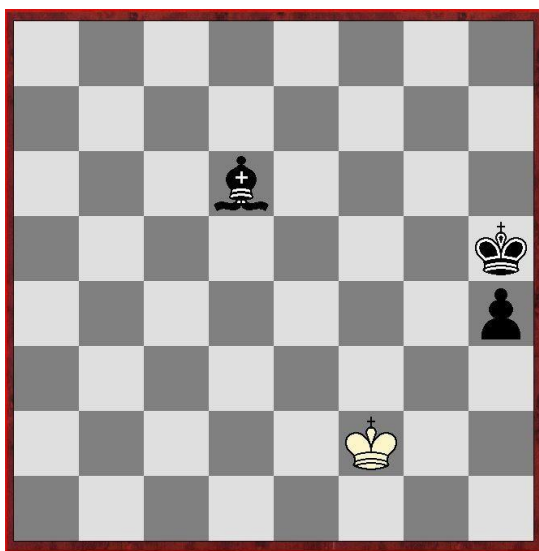
Whilst nothing can be written in tablets of stone, it is reasonable to say that if in doubt reject the claim. Bear in mind that the decision of the Arbiter should not be such as to bring the game into disrepute.

The Laws of Chess do not allow an appeal against an Arbiter's decision in this situation. It is therefore important that the Arbiter does everything possible to ensure that the result reached is correct. It is acceptable to consult with another Arbiter before making your decision or even a strong player. In both these cases this should be

done, if possible, whilst play is in progress or immediately thereafter. Where a player is involved this player should not have a vested interest in the result of the game in question.

Positions to Consider

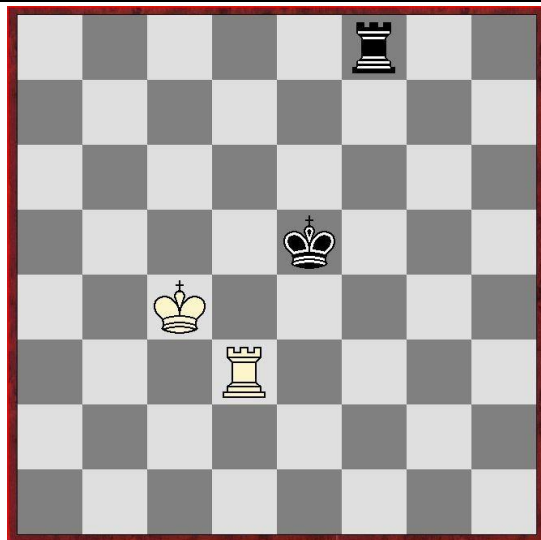
The following positions are for discussion. Different Arbiters could reach other conclusions in similar positions.

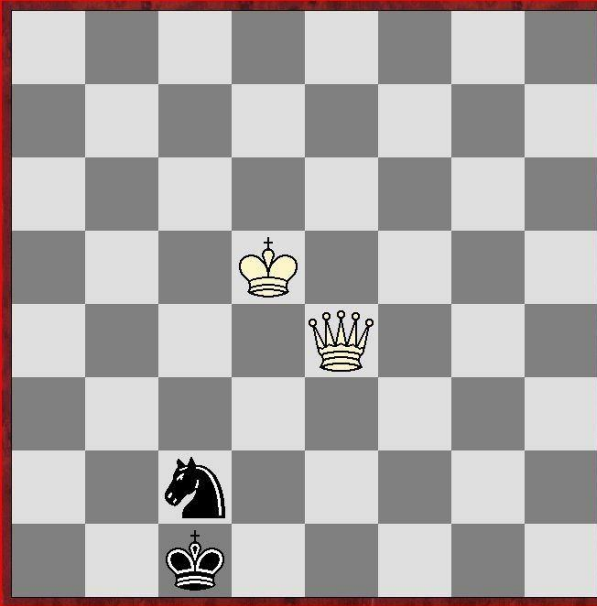


Position 1. This is a theoretical draw. However the fact that it is a draw in theory is not enough to award the draw in practice. In this position White must demonstrate that he knows to go to the h1 corner and stay near there. A few more moves should be sufficient to allow the Arbiter to award the draw.

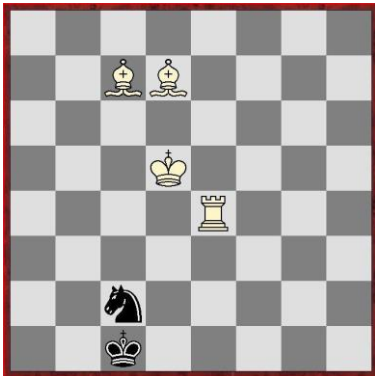
The opponent may take a little more convincing however!

Position 2. You would expect most players of any standard to agree this game drawn. However, if Black claims a draw here it is not unreasonable to ensure that he does not play 1 ... Kf4 before awarding the draw. It is reasonable in similar positions to await sufficient moves to be played to satisfy yourself that the player is not going to walk into a skewer.





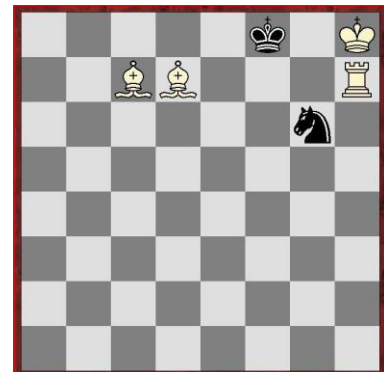
Position 3. There is no need for White to claim a draw here. No position can be set up which allows Black to get checkmate. If the White flag falls before mate occurs then the result is a draw.

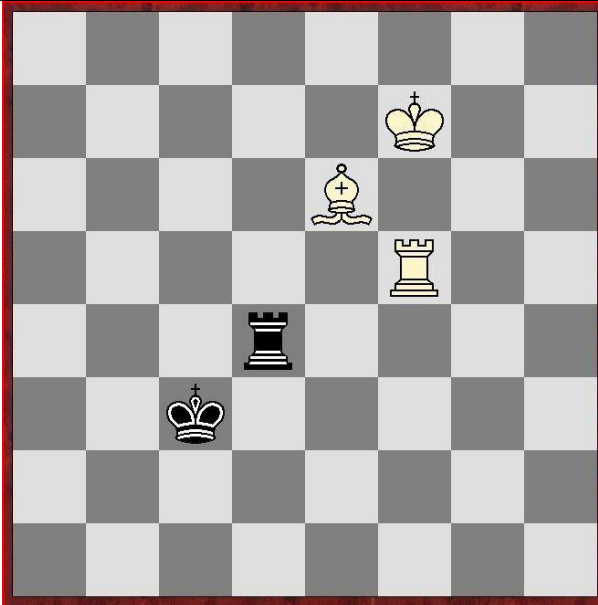


Position 3a is different in that even though White has a bigger advantage than before (R + 2B) it is possible for Black to mate so the claim of a draw should be made before the flag falls. In this situation it is reasonable to expect White to wait until the final second before claiming a draw. In such a situation giving the draw immediately is the correct decision.

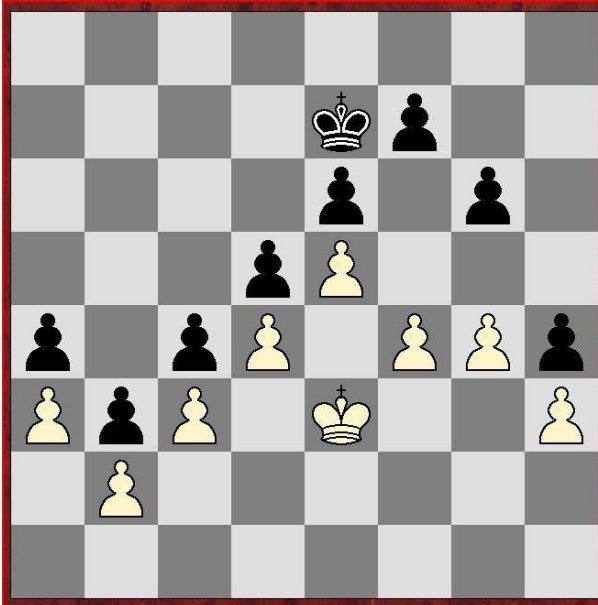
The position to the right shows a possible mate. It does not matter how unlikely this position is to occur.

The possibility that it can means that White must claim a draw before exhausting his time. If no claim has been made then White loses. Unfortunately many players see a lone knight as not being sufficient material to mate with, overlooking the part their own pieces play.





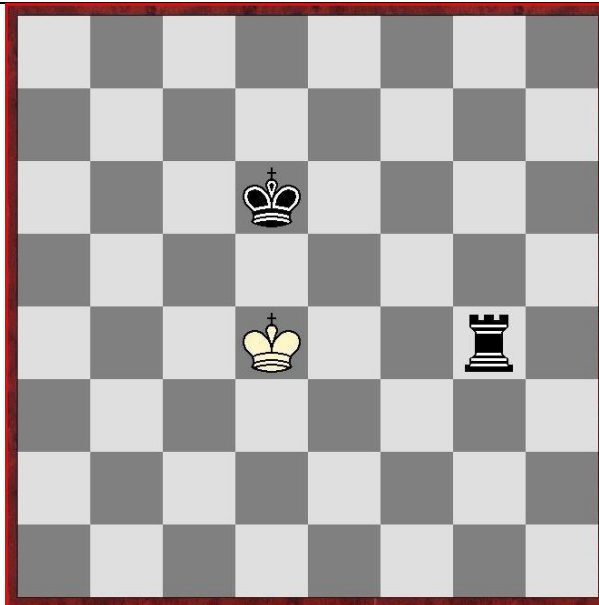
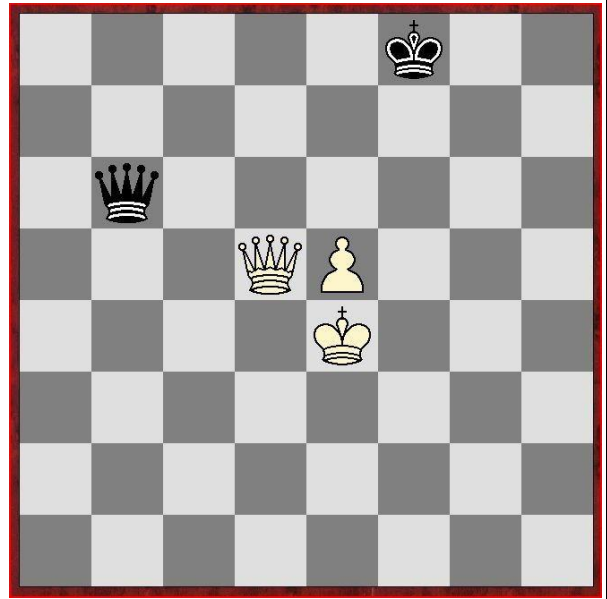
In **Position 4** Black claims a draw. Whilst White can win this it is very difficult. In this situation when the Arbiter is called in then "Play On" is the obvious decision. The Arbiter may consider it prudent to keep a count of the moves played thereafter. Obviously if more than 50 moves are played then giving a draw is the correct decision. If fewer moves are played but it is obvious that there can be no mate in the moves remaining to 50 then giving the draw is correct. If only 10 or 15 moves are played then Black has denied his opponent the opportunity to win and must therefore lose. It is also possible that White will repeat the position. Here the Arbiter may want to see the same position 4 times rather than three in order to be certain of the repetition before awarding a draw.



Position 5. Black to play claims a draw. Note that this position is not blocked. Black's h-pawn is weak. Certainly not a position to penalise Black for claiming the draw but he is certainly being optimistic. The game should be allowed to continue.

Position 6. Black claims a draw. If Black allows this ending to occur then he must be prepared to make a considerable number of moves to justify his draw claim. It is certainly in the interests of a player short of time to try to avoid endings like this.

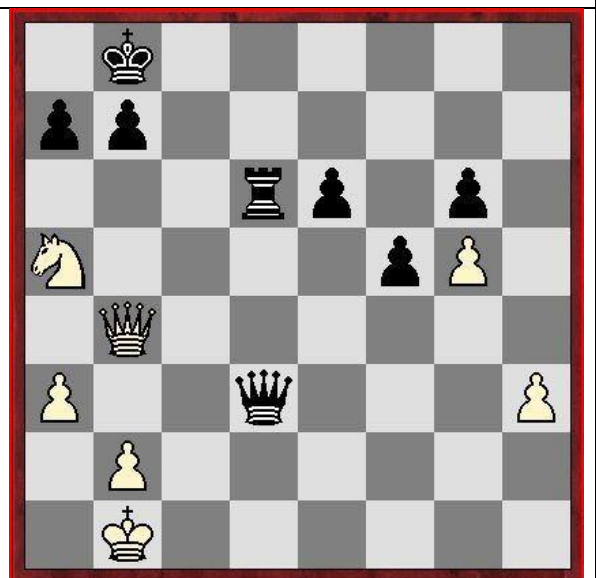
The Arbiter however must also be aware that White may try to extend the game artificially by avoiding any progress towards a (drawn) endgame, trying to keep the position alive enough in the hope of being awarded a win on time.



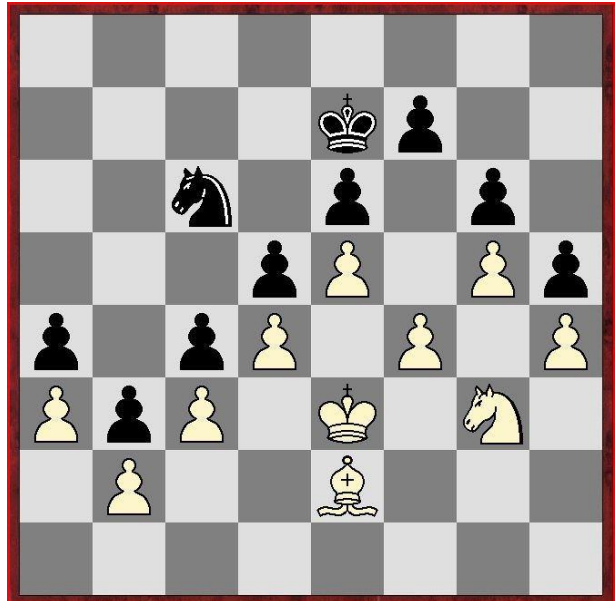
Position 7. Here White claimed a draw. The previous moves were 1 Kd3 Rg3+, 2 Kd4 Rg4+, 3 Kd3 Rg3+, 4 Kd4 Rg5+. Black has no justification for playing these moves other than to use up White's time. The Arbiter would be correct in awarding the draw in this situation.

Position 8. The following is played 1 Ka2 Qd5+, 2 Ka1 Qh1+, 3 Ka2 Qd5+. At this point White claimed that Black was not trying to win by normal means. The Arbiter ordered the game to continue which it did with 4 Ka1 Rd8 and White's flag fell.

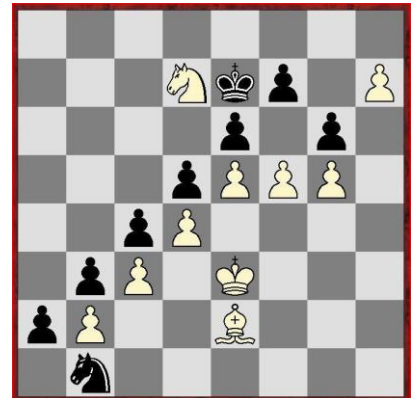
Whilst Black's moves were not the most aggressive there is a very strong argument that he was playing moves which would allow White to play weak moves e.g. If White blocked a check with the queen then the queens could be exchanged to give Black an easy win. When a claim is made the opponent does not have to play the best moves but must play moves which can be seen to seek to improve his position.



Position 9. This type of position can cause problems for the Arbiter. Both sides have winning chances. White has the option of sacrificing a piece for two pawns by capturing on h5 giving him a passed h-pawn. Black also has a sac with Na7, Nb5, Nxa3. Both players are short of time, particularly Black. Black claims that White has been making random moves with his bishop and knight and therefore is making no attempt to win by normal means. If a scoresheet is available the Arbiter may check the veracity of Black's claim. The Arbiter may also have been watching and base his decision on what he has seen. If White has played 3 or 4 'non' moves he should be given the benefit of the doubt, if a dozen or so then Black can be awarded the draw. Between these numbers the clock times and strength of the players may come into the decision making process.



In this case neither player has been recording and the Arbiter was watching another game. The Arbiter has no option but to order the game to continue. The game continues 1 ... Na7, 2 Nxh5 Nb5, 3 Nf6 Nxa3, 4 h5 Nb1, 5 h6 Kf8, 6 f5 a3. White now plays 7 Nd7+ and offers Black a draw. The game continues 7 ... Ke7, 8 h7 a2. At this point Black has declined the draw offer so has lost his protection under 10.2. In other words he now risks a loss on time. White has offered a draw but has not claimed it from the Arbiter. Even though White now has a relatively easy win following Nf6 it is a case of the player whose flag falls loses. If White claims a draw following 9 Nf6 then the opponent should be given the option of accepting and White given the draw if the flag subsequently falls. If White played 9 h8=Q and claimed the draw then it could be argued that Black now has some winning chances. The Arbiter earns his corn with this type of position.



Rules of Thumb for the Arbiter

- 1) **Always gain maximum information, usually by asking the players to play on.**
- 2) **If the opponent has prolonged the game, or could only reasonably expect to win on time alone, the draw should be awarded.**
- 3) **If the player who makes the claim has himself contributed to his own time trouble, or has been forced to spend time countering his opponent's good moves, he weakens his claim for a draw.**
- 4) **Any benefit of the doubt is given to the opponent of the claimant.**
- 5) **Don't make a decision which brings the game into disrepute.**
- 6) **If you are out of your depth, ask for advice before making a decision, because there is no appeal.**

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