

Laws of chess

Casi bizzarri

In questo documento vengono descritti una serie di casi decisamente bizzarri, riportati dall'AI Guert Gijssen nella sua rubrica su Chesscafe (<http://www.chesscafe.com>).

I casi sono tutti ante-2005, quindi sono tutti visti con le Laws of Chess in vigore dal 2001 al 2005, ma, tranne qualche differenza formale nella formulazione di alcuni articoli riportati, sono tutti ancora pienamente validi.

A cura di Maurizio Mascheroni

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Caso 1

Giocatore che reclama la patta per l'art.10 e contemporaneamente gli cade la bandierina (forse)

Question: In a rapid game (20/20), both players (A&B) were *very* short of time. I saw (from across the playing hall) that something was going on (was about to happen) and started walking toward the players. The clock was placed on the side of the table I was approaching and thus could not see its face. As I reached the table, Player B stopped the clock (on his time/on his move) and claimed a draw according to 10.2. When stopping the clock, player B's hand covered

the face of the clocks as well. Then suddenly player A argued (actually he shouted) that the position was not drawn and started the clocks again. I then immediately stopped both clocks.

Now, player A saw that player B's flag was down and claimed a win on time also arguing that player B deliberately covered the face of the clock to "hide" the fact that his flag has fallen. At this point, both players were shouting at each other and while this was going on, a couple of spectators started to gather.

Now, players A&B were both on their feet and I was sure they were about to hit each other. After much dialog from my side, I managed to calm down both players. I then gave both players a warning regarding bad behaviour and stated that I would not tolerate any further inappropriate behaviour and would not hesitate to expel them both from the event. My decision (on the game) was to declare it drawn because there was no proof that B's flag fell - player A started it again and

because of this, B's flag could have fallen. Both players accepted the decision. Was this the correct one? *Günther van den Bergh (South Africa)*

Answer: The situation you described is quite funny. In situations such as this it is very difficult to apply the Laws of Chess. It is my opinion that you showed excellent judgment. I am convinced that a lot of arbiters disagree with me, but I stand by my opinion: excellent decision.

Caso 2

Giocatori che si odiano

Question A few months ago, I was playing a tournament game against a local IM whom I had played many times before. I found a nice Rook sacrifice that gave me good winning chances, but no clear win against the best defence. The IM had three possible defences: Kg2-f1, Kg2-h2, and Kg2-h1. He played Kf1, released his hand from the King, and then realizing he had blundered into a forced mate, retracted his move and placed the King on h2, again completing the "move" by releasing the piece. I stopped the clocks and sought the tournament director. When we returned, the white King had mysteriously returned to its original square, g2. The IM claimed that he had never released the King. As no witnesses came forward to corroborate my story, the game continued. The tournament director started White's clock, and White played Kg2-h1!! Ironically, the best defence was Kh2, and I won in a few moves. The following week, I was paired with the same IM. I notified the TD that I would not be shaking hands with my opponent. After a brief exchange of heated words, the game proceeded without incident. The TD paid particular attention to our board. I resigned by writing "0-1" and signing both scoresheets. It's reasonable to expect that I will again face this player in the future. Heated words aside, was my conduct in the second game correct? What general advice do you have for dealing with opponents who are "beyond the law"? (*Name withheld by request*)

Answer Well, I cannot say that your behaviour was incorrect. But still there is something I do not like. First of all, chess is a game and not the end of the world. To be angry for a long time because of what happened in a game is not to be recommended. I think you have to find a way to normalise the relationships with the opponent who acting wrongly in the first game. Probably the TD of your club can act as an intermediary.

Caso 3

Formulario in tasca

Question Dear IA Gijssen, In at least two recent Australian events, an incident like this has occurred: Player A was clearly losing on the board and had lots of time left but Player B was very short of time. While A's clock was running, A stood up, and walked away from the playing table without making any move. In one instance, A also shrugged his shoulders and put his scoresheet in his pocket. A did not, however, leave the "playing area" in either case. Later, A returned to the table and started making moves, B having in at least one case assumed that A was resigning. In both cases B noticed A's return, and B won the game.

It seems to me that both cases (particularly the one with A putting his scoresheet away) could create a reasonable belief that A was giving up the game (although in an unusual way), and therefore violated Article 12.5 "It is forbidden to ... annoy the opponent in any manner whatsoever." Do you agree? *Kevin Bonham (Australia)*

Answer I agree with you that the behaviour of the players was not correct. It is even clear that they are wrong according to the Laws of Chess. For this I quote Article 8.2: "*The scoresheet shall be visible to the arbiter throughout the game.*" And a scoresheet in a pocket is not visible for the arbiter. There is more. In my opinion they tried to mislead their opponents in an unacceptable way. But the question is how to penalise them, because they lost already their games? More than an official warning is in my opinion not possible. By the way, since 1 July 2001 we have a new 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."

Caso 4

Un matto che non c'è.

Question Dear Mr. Gijssen, At a Swedish seminar on the FIDE Laws of Chess recently, the following situation came under debate:

Player A makes a move (which A erroneously believes is mate) and stops the clocks. His opponent, B, (also under the impression that it is mate) shakes hands with A, without saying "I resign" or anything similar (which, by the way, would seem somewhat out of place when a mate has been delivered). Both scoresheets are signed wherein the result is noted as a win for A. During the post-mortem, the players realize their mistake. The questions are:

- a) Has A won the game and if so, under what rule in the Laws of Chess? (Comment: Article 5.1 (a) and (b) should be the most relevant ones, although as it was not mate, (a) should not be applicable, leaving only (b) resignation. Is it reasonable to say, that B has in fact "resigned" the game by shaking hands, signing the score-sheets etc?)
- b) If A should be declared winner, would it have made any difference if B had realised the mistake before signing the score-sheets?
- c) May A "agree" to a resumption of play?

I can mention that the meeting came to the conclusion that A should stand as winner and that B's actions should be regarded as equal to resignation. Some of the participants (including myself) felt that the situation is somewhat unfortunate, as it is not clearly covered in the Laws of chess and could lead to confusion if it occurred. *Johan Sigeman (Sweden)*

Answer A long time ago we had interpretations of the Laws of Chess. And about resigning there was an interpretation saying: shaking hands will not be considered as resigning the game. In fact it is very funny that in the Laws of Chess it is not clearly written how a player should resign. Is it verbally or by laying the king on the board or by leaving the playing hall?

Article 5.1.b says: "*The game is won by the player whose opponent declares he resigns. This immediately finishes the game.*"

OK, it can be declared verbally, but it is still not clear and furthermore it is possible that nobody noticed this. I remember a tournament in which a player offered a draw in two games, but the opponent did not hear this and the player won both games as well as the tournament.

A better help is 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.*

Well, it is clear that, after signing the scoresheets, the result stands.

Let us discuss the other possibilities: B resigns, the scoresheets are not signed and the players start to analyse the game. During this analysis, they discover it is not mate. What to do now? In my opinion a resumption of the game is impossible. The game is over, but what is the result of the game, especially when B declares he did not resign? The only thing the arbiter can do in this situation is to rely on his sound judgment and, as I have previously stated, his intuition. The players started to analyse the game. This means clearly that the game is over. A resumption is in my opinion impossible. When B tells me that A resigned I am ready to believe him and I shall award the point to B. I should take the risk that A will go to the Appeals Committee to change my decision. But the lesson is of course:

when the game is over, the arbiter should rush to the board and let the players sign for the result.

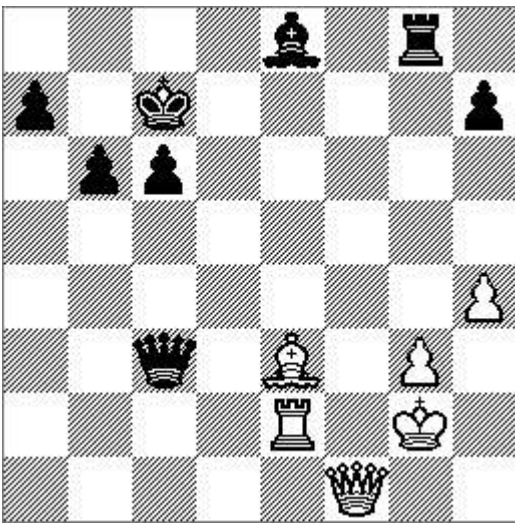
Once I had a case where two players were already analysing the game when I saw that the game was finished. White wrote on his scoresheet 1-0 and Black protested and told me that it was 0-1. There were no witnesses and I decided to talk to the players to convince them that they should agree to a draw, although I was sure that White was right. Finally the draw was agreed. The next day a spectator came to me and confirmed that Black had resigned, but he was not ready to confirm this in writing. When I thought the whole incident over after the tournament, I came to the conclusion that my interference was wrong. I should have declared the game won for White. I based

this on the way the players acted and reacted: White was very emotional (almost crying); Black was cool, without any emotion, and only asking for the evidence that he had resigned.

Caso 5 Df4 e mezzo!

Question Dear Geurt, In addition to the exchange of opinions at ChessCafe.com, I would like to express my opinion regarding the consequences after an illegal move in blitz games. According to FIDE Laws of Chess C3, the opponent of the player who made the illegal move is entitled to claim a win before making his own move. The reason of such rules' existence in the Laws is understandable, but in the meantime, I think that there might be cases when it will be difficult for the arbiter to make an objective decision or the players might apply the rules incorrectly.

These incidents are mostly possible in tournaments where the number of arbiters does not allow them to follow all the games. For example, at the end of a game, when the players are short of time and the moves are made fast, the following position takes place on the chessboard:



White moves to square Qf4½ (i.e., half on f4 and half on f5) and after Black's move a7-a5, White adjusts the position of the Queen on the square f4 and claims a win, as Black's King is under check. Black objects stating that the Queen was on f5. It is clear that it is very difficult for an arbiter who was not present to make an objective decision. I think that it will be fairer if, in the Laws of Chess, milder penalties are sanctioned in the event of an illegal move; for example, an addition of 30 seconds to the opponent's clock (or one minute, depending on the clock's technical capacity), as it is in the Laws of Chess. *Ashot Vardapetyan (Armenia)*

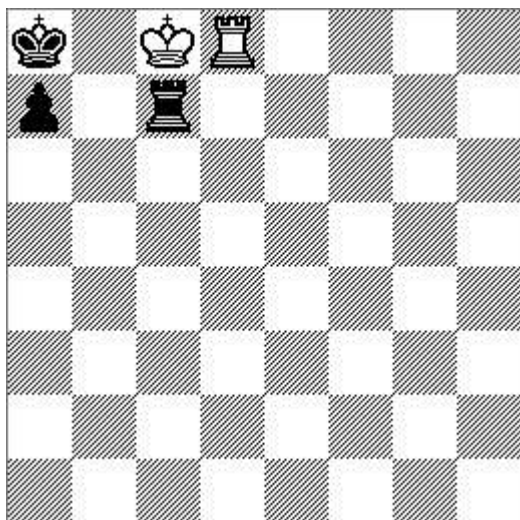
Answer It is my opinion that in your example, Black should immediately claim something. Without leaving the board he should summon the arbiter. He can even claim a win because in my opinion the move Qf4½ is an illegal move. By the way, putting pieces ambiguously on two squares is a very well known trick in blitz chess.

Furthermore, I have the feeling that you are looking for a kind of compromise. To give a penalty is OK, but not the ultimate penalty: to declare the game lost.

Finally I would like to return to your example. It is clear that the only thing an arbiter who summoned in this case by the Black player can do is to notice that at least one of the players is wrong. But who was wrong? Without witnesses there is no possibility of discovering what really happened. And we see again the weakness of the Laws of Chess generally. They are written for situations where there are only two players and an arbiter who has the possibility of watching the game from move 1 until the end of the game and, as everybody knows, this is not always the case.

Caso 6 Vittoria forzata?

Question Dear Mr. Gijssen, I have a follow-up question to Alex Shternshain's question on Article 1.3 (= 9.6, etc) in your Feb 2 column. Suppose that a position is an automatic win for White, i.e., no matter what legal moves White and Black play, White cannot avoid checkmating Black. Does it not make sense that the game should be declared a win for White, even if White would otherwise lose on time? In other words, why are only mandatory draws protected from the clock, and not mandatory wins? It's obviously not a big deal, but I am curious as to the rationale. A simple example of this is illustrated in the diagram. *Andrew Buchanan (USA)*



Answer Your question is very interesting. I never thought about the possibility that a player may be forced to mate his opponent. Personally I share your opinion that it is very logical to treat winning positions in the same way as positions that are forced draws. But on the other hand, as you yourself already indicated, it happens very rarely, I am sure that there is no majority in the General Assembly of FIDE for this proposal.

Caso 7

Chi ha il tratto?

Question Dear Mr Gijssen, in our local rapid tournament we had a problem I've never seen before: The players couldn't agree on whose move it was. One of them claimed a draw by stalemate. The other one said it was his move and therefore no draw. They had already stopped the clocks before the arbiter arrived, there were no witnesses and there was nothing to support either side.

How does one rule in such a case?

The game was declared to be a draw by stalemate. We used FIDE rules with the exception that players are required to write down the moves with more than 5 minutes remaining, which the player seeking the win had not done; the other player was nearly out of time and had not written the moves. But this decision does not seem really satisfactory to me, and what if we hadn't had this local rule and moves were not written down? *Ingrid Voigt (Germany)*

Answer Frankly, to solve a problem like this is almost impossible. It is clear that one of the players is cheating. But who is cheating whom? I have written several times that it is virtually impossible to prevent cheating. The only thing you can do is to try to reconstruct the game. But often this is also 'mission impossible'.

There is a solution, but it may not be possible in all games, that being if the game was played with an electronic clock with a move counter. But even this is not absolute proof, but only an indication. When the game is played with a DGT clock, the position of the lever can be an indication.

Caso 8

Mossa illegale consapevolmente ignorata

Question The question sent by Mr Keles, July column, is very interesting and confusing. As a TD who plays more often than directs, I would like to be certain of your view- if there is a checkmate, and the last move played is a legal move, the game is completed and thus no recourse for an appeal regards an earlier illegal move... However, for a repetition claim the game remains in progress and thus the game can be reverted to the position before said illegal move? Additionally, let us suppose that Player A makes an illegal move.

Player B decides at the time not to make a claim Later Player B makes a speculative sacrifice, no checkmate but instead perpetual check On the repetition claim, B notes the illegal move By declining to make the claim immediately B has benefited in the assessment of the position, realizing that the speculative sac isn't working. Not that we should have sympathy for those who make illegal moves, but is it not much less confusing for all to have the rule stipulate the claim has to be immediate in order to avoid the scenario above, which can of course be matched or exceeded by our audience's creative imagination! If not, is it possible for Player A to note the illegal move so as to not have the prospect of letting B play the position twice?
Andy Rea (USA)

Answer Yes, you understood everything I wrote. And I have to admit you're your observations are absolutely correct. When a player has completed an illegal move, the opponent has the possibility at any moment as long the game is in progress (and I am talking about a normal game, not a Blitz or Rapid game) to summon the arbiter that the player completed an illegal move some moves ago. The arbiter is then obliged to check the moves and to punish the offending player. And you are also right that the player can take all kind of risks, having in mind that he has the ability to return to the position that was on the board just before the illegal move was completed. The only danger for the opponent is that he overlooks that he has been checkmated. In that case the game is over.

Unfortunately I have to say again: If a player likes to cheat his opponent, it is possible to do so.

Caso 9

Pedone bianco promosso a Donna nera

Question During the Dutch youth Blitz Championships in Bunschoten I was a witness to the following incident:

Black had only the King. White had King, Rook, Knight and a pawn. Both players were short of time. The only question was: Is White able to mate his opponent's King before his flag would fall? White's plan was to promote his pawn to a Queen and then to mate his opponent's King. But what happened? After the white pawn reached the last rank, the White player replaced the white pawn by a black queen. The black player claimed a win, saying that white player made an illegal move: a white pawn cannot promote to a black queen. White claimed a draw pointing out that a bare King can never win. He added that the black queen appeared irregularly on the chessboard and therefore the black king must be considered as bare. I am curious what decision you would take in this situation. *Theo Heukels (The Netherlands)*

Answer I was informed that the arbiter declared the game won for Black. It means that he agreed with the Black player that this irregularity has to be considered as an illegal move. First of all we have to investigate if an irregular action has to be considered in the same way as an illegal move. Article 7 describes "Irregularities". And we find in the sub-articles of Article 7 two types of irregularities: displaced pieces and illegal moves. Article 3.7(e) states clearly that in case of promotion the pawn must be exchanged as part of the same move for a piece of the same color.

White's action is therefore in conflict with this Article and because an illegal move is generally a move not pursuant to one of the sub-articles of Article 3 (The moves of the pieces), it is reasonable to consider this incorrect promotion as an illegal move. But this is not the end of the story. Let us go to Article C3 of the Blitz rules: *An illegal move is completed once the opponent's clock has been started. However, the opponent is entitled to claim a win before making his own move. If the opponent cannot checkmate the player's king by any series of legal moves with the most unskilled counterplay, then the player is entitled to claim a draw before making his own move. Once the opponent has made his own move, an illegal move cannot be corrected.*

I do not know at which moment the opponent, the black player, started to protest. If he did so before the white player had stopped his own clock and started the opponent's clock, then white would have had the possibility to correct his mistake. See the first sentence of Article C3. If this happened after the clock of the black player was started, the illegal move could not be corrected. Let us assume that this was the case. Then it is for me very clear that the arbiter's decision was completely wrong and I agree with the white player that the game should be declared a draw.

Caso 10

Cattura di un pezzo senza rimozione dello stesso dalla scacchiera

Question Dear Geurt, I enjoy your column very much. During a flurry of moves at the end of a blitz game, with both players having only seconds left to play, there is a series of exchanges culminating in the capture of a (black) pawn on the fifth rank. White, who has captured the pawn, fails to remove it from the board. A few moves later, with the pawn still on the board, black advances it to the sixth rank and punches his clock. White immediately stops the clock and claims an "illegal move" win, reasoning that the pawn was not "really" on the board, and hence cannot be moved. Black argues that he has in fact, made a legal move of a piece on the board, and is being punished for failing to keep track of which pieces his opponent has failed to remove from the board. The arbiter rules in favour of White. Do you agree? *Michael Ratliff (USA)*

Answer I disagree completely with the arbiter's decision. Let us analyse the situation. On move 'x' White captures a black pawn, let us say on e4, with his Bishop. I understand that the black pawn was not taken from the board and the Bishop went to another square. (Two pieces on the same square is very unlikely.) White stops his clock and starts Black's clock. At that moment, Black could claim a win, because White did something illegal. Black did not claim. He played a move, stopped his clock and started White's clock. By completing his move, Black we right aived thto claim a win and the game must be continued in the position, which is now on the board, including the pawn on e4. It means that Black could play, at some later move, his pawn from e4 to e3 without any legal consequence. I would like to emphasise that this is the Law for Blitz games. In "normal" and rapid games, you have to go back to the move when the irregularity occurred.

Caso 11

Non mettete a posto i pezzi se la partita non è finita!

Question Volkov has actually made quite a name on the international circuit as a fire starter. In fact, his grudge with Grivas had begun in July, in another Blitz tournament! During the Korinthos Open a Blitz tournament was held, with a few rounds per day, spanning several days. At some point Grivas and Volkov played each other. Volkov pushed a pawn all the way to promotion, but seeing no queen handy, he stopped the clocks and went to fetch another one from a nearby board. In fact he had plenty of time and the board was very close to him, so he could have done this without stopping the clocks and with no real damage to him. Is he entitled to do this?

I understand that he can stop the clocks and summon the arbiter to provide him a queen, but can he stop the clocks to fetch the queen himself? Aren't the clocks supposed to be stopped in Blitz games only to resign or summon the arbiter? Anyway, he placed his queen on the board and restarted the clock, whereupon Grivas got up from his seat to summon the arbiter himself, without stopping the clocks. I haven't seen the position of the game at that time, but I believe Volkov was clearly winning, which probably led him to interpret Grivas' action as resignation. Thus, he started setting the pieces back to their starting position (!!!).

This caused a funny incident; Volkov was claiming Grivas had resigned (although he never actually did anything to indicate that); Grivas was claiming a win because Volkov had destroyed the game position. Obviously Grivas did nothing irregular here, so forfeiting him would be absolutely irrational. After some consultation the arbiters decided to have the game replayed. This wasn't much to Volkov's liking, while Grivas accepted this decision, not without complaints. Eventually an understanding could not be reached with Volkov and after much debate and several sessions of the Appeals' Committee the game was declared won for Grivas. Was this decision correct? I think it was. Was the decision of replaying the game correct or should the arbiters have immediately forfeited Volkov? More food for thought.

Answer In my opinion, Volkov made a mistake when he stopped the clocks to fetch a queen from another board. It can cause misunderstandings and it is not only better, but also necessary to summon the arbiter. In that case the situation is very clear.

Grivas left the board to find an arbiter and to protest. It is clear that he did not resign, but it was probably unclear to Volkov that he had left the board to summon an arbiter. Nevertheless, it was a real mistake for Volkov to return the pieces to the initial position. As a matter of fact, it is not forbidden to leave the board. The decision of the Appeals Committee was correct, therefore the arbiter's decision to replay the game was incorrect.

Caso 12

Partita Lampo: il nero, con una mossa illegale, matta sè stesso!

Question Hello, A few months ago during a blitz-tournament at our club there was one curious incident. The black player made a move where he mated himself (so this move is illegal). The white player saw this and stopped the clock, but unfortunately his flag had fallen. The mate is illegal, so the rule that mate should end the game immediately is not applicable. But there is no scoresheet so from arbiter's point of view you can't check this. On the other hand the claim was too late (flag). What should the result be? *Paul Peters (Netherlands)*

Answer One thing is clear: Black made an illegal move. The fact that White stopped the clocks probably meant that Black had even completed the illegal move. Furthermore it was a Blitz game. Article C3 of the Blitz rules states, that in this case *White is entitled to claim a win before making his own move.* Another relevant Article is Article B6 of the Rapid rules, but also applicable for Blitz games: *"The flag is considered to have fallen when a player has made a valid claim to that effect."*

Here there were two claims, one from each player. And the question is which one should have priority. It is my opinion that the first claim is valid. This means that Black lost the game.