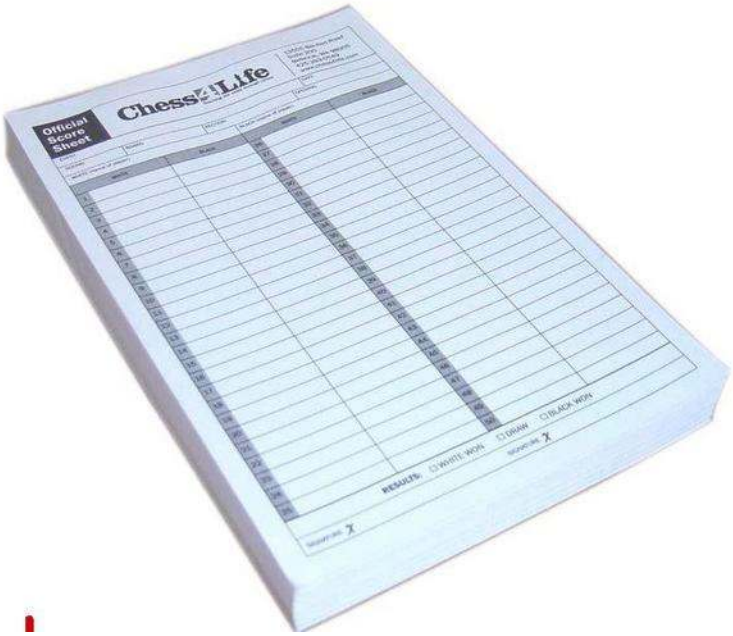
## ECU ARBITERS COUNCIL

Text by: Marco Biagioli
arbiters.europechess.org

# IS APPENDIX A (RAPID CHESS) TOTALLY CONSISTENT WITH ART. 9 OF THE LAWS OF CHESS?

All of us know that if we want to ask for a threefold repetition or fifty-moves draw basing on a move we are going to make, we have to respect a certain procedure: art. 9.2.1.1 of the Laws of Chess states that if the third position “is about to appear, if he (the player NdR) first writes his move, which cannot be changed, on his scoresheet and declares to the arbiter his intention to make this move” and art. 9.3.1 states: “he writes his move, which cannot be changed, on his scoresheet and declares to the arbiter his intention to make this move which will result in the last 50 moves by each player having been made without the movement of any pawn and without any capture”. These statements, taught for a standard game, put us a problem if we are playing a rapid/blitz game. Art. A.2 actually states: “players do not need to record the moves, but do not lose their rights to claims normally based on a scoresheet. The player can, at any time, ask the arbiter to provide him with a scoresheet, in order to write the moves”.
It clearly means that a player is exonerated to record any move, but he can anyway ask for a draw in such cases that the scoresheet is concerned, which means exactly art. 9.2.1.1 or 9.3.1. Moreover, there is no article saying that in case of a rapid/blitz game, the procedure the player has to fulfil in order to claim a draw is different, so art. 9.2.1.1 and 9.3.1 totally apply. The point arises when a player, who is not recording anything in a rapid/blitz game, claims a draw basing on the move he is going to do without writing any move, but only declaring it. Obviously, if the opponent agrees, there is no question. But what if the opponent protests that such a claim cannot be considered due to the fact the claimant didn’t write anything?
We have to focus on a point: the opponent is not questioning whether the threefold repetition or fifty moves occur, he barely says the arbiter should not investigate the matter and just reject the claim as inadmissible because it was made on a different way than the one prescribed by the Laws. Last year I have been to four big rapid/blitz events (EYRBCC, ERBCC and WRBCC, as well as the national rapid and blitz championship) and in each of those tournaments, I found out different solutions to the point from different arbiters. My opinion is that the opponent’s protest has a merit: the Laws are clear about the obligation to write down the move.
Moreover, art. A.2 let the players not record the moves, but it does not prohibit it: “The player can, at any time, ask the arbiter to provide him with a scoresheet, in order to write the moves”. I think the most correct procedure should be that a player asks a scoresheet, writes down that single move and then asks for a draw normally; personally, I see no other reason to have written this second sentence in art. A.2 other than the requests made upon art. 9.2.1.1 and 9.3.1.
Nevertheless, I see that such a way of proceeding is fault-finding and very hard to figure out in a tense circumstance as a rapid/blitz game is. Hence, I would not blame an arbiter if he decides to accept the claim without a written move basing on the preface of the Laws of Chess.
In World rapid/blitz Championship, a different solution was found, considering that the declaration of the player is assumed enough, the arbiter was supposed to ask the player to show him the move by simulating it, with the time stopped.




If we consider the purpose of the duty to write down the move (avoid the player to change it, as in case the game is not draw, the move stands), this solution seems to be satisfactory because the act of simulating the move gives an immediate and not arguable evidence of what move, in case, has to stand. However, this problem can easily lead to different solutions from different arbiters and in extreme cases, can even lead the same claim to be rejected or granted by different arbiters.

Such arbitrariness is too much, thus I think art. A.2 should be rewritten in some way to grant a legal cover to this situation (not so rare as one can imagine).

Last summer I discussed this matter also with Mr Alex Holowczak and we both concluded it is a matter for the Rules Commission, which hopefully will solve the problem.

*ECU Arbiters Council*

*Mr. Marko Biagioli*