

Text by:
IA Tomasz Delega,
Chairman of the
ECU Arbiters'
Council



The difference between a good arbiter and not the best one

I hope no one minds if we speak about tournament cases. Sometimes they are easy to identify and makes one or more arbiters "spotlighted". As all of us, we learn from the mistakes of others and our own, so it shouldn't be a shame. The only man who never makes mistakes is the man who never does anything. Imagine a simple situation, where the player makes a claim of three times occurrence of the same position.

Usually in such case, the arbiter focuses on resolving the claim, which is somewhat right. So the arbiter stops a chessclock (if it is not done by the player), asks the claimant about the scoresheet and starts checking. Sometimes it is very easy, but sometimes it can be very complicated, as the same position may occur for example, every ten moves. So the arbiter not being sure, replays the game from the beginning. It takes some time, depending of the number of the moves done, and finally if the claim is correct arbiter announces a draw. I would say arbiter can be happy announcing the draw, otherwise the situation becomes more complicated. You may wonder why, as there is nothing more to do as to add two minutes to the opponent of the claimant and ask the players to continue the game. Let me explain. Imagine that the arbiter have been checking the claim five minutes, when both players were sitting at the chessboard. It means the arbiter gave five minutes extra thinking time for the players and this may be decisive in some positions. And that's not the way it should be.

The Laws of Chess says 11.11 *Both players must assist the arbiter in any situation requiring reconstruction of the game, including draw claims and*

11.12 *Checking three times occurrence of the position or 50 moves claim is a duty of the players, under supervision of the arbiter.* The idea behind these rules is to prevent players from sitting at the chessboard and thinking while the arbiter checks the claims! So why do arbiters keep making the same mistakes when checking a player's claims on their own? The simplest answer would be they don't know the rules, as these rules are quite new (2018). But I think most of them know the rules, but probably do not understand what they are for.

It is not difficult to guess what the correct procedure should look like when checking such claims. After stopping the clock, the arbiter should invite both players to a separate chessboard and ask them to reconstruct the game and show him repeated positions. Not because he is lazy or he is not able to do it, but to limit the possibility of the players to think about positions and future moves. Additionally, doing it that way, the whole process is easier, faster and also safer, as eliminates possible mistakes.

The difference between not the best arbiter and a good one is that the first one knows the rules and the second one understands also, what these rules are for.

Text by:
IA Tomasz Delega

"The difference between not the best arbiter and a good one is that the first one knows the rules and the second one understands also, what these rules are for."