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How to work with the Fide Laws of Chess

In this article I wish to share my thought process in dealing with cases, implementing the Laws of Chess. As arbiters, we must first and foremost have full knowledge of the Laws of Chess. The Laws of Chess are like the Bible, everything starts there. Those laws are the basis of every decision we make. Secondly, we must always bear in mind that those laws don't cover everything, and we need to impose the rational of the laws as a whole.

So, I believe the way to work with the Laws of Chess is as follows: Whenever a dispute occurs you first go to the Laws of Chess and seek the relevant article. If the article covers and matches the case completely – It's an easy decision. If the case is different to some extent and the article does not cover the facts partially or completely – we use the laws as a base and exercise our judgment based on the rational of the relevant article/s and our sense of justice. In dealing with the Laws of Chess we either conduct an APPLICATION meaning we apply the law as it is on our case. Or we conduct a DISTINCTION meaning we conclude the principles of the article do not match our case and the law is not to be applied. I wish to give 2 "twin" examples where I had concluded a distinction from the article:

First example - The Coerced Resignation

I was DCA at the European Youth Rapid and Blitz Championship. The issue with rapid chess is that the games are not recorded, which means arbiters must be way more vigilant. At the Girls U-10 section there was a wild game. Player 1 was totally winning but failed to find the winning path. Player 2 was able to counter attack. Player 1 looked upset for squandering her winning chances and appeared kind of resigned to her fate.

Player 2, elated by the turn of events in her favor, suddenly made a move, gleefully announced "Mate", and extended her hand to her opponent. Player 1, in a dejected state, reluctantly shook opponents hand, just to realize a second later that it's actually not mate and she could continue the game. Player 2 demanded a win claiming Player 1 had resigned.

In approaching the case what do you do first? Go to the Laws of Chess and look for the applicable article.

5.1.2 The game is lost by the player who declares he/she resigns (this immediately ends the game), unless the position is such that the opponent cannot checkmate the player's king by any possible series of legal moves.

In this case the result of the game is a draw. According to this article 5.1.2, it looks like a shut and done case. Player 1 resigned, game over – isn't it? However in that case I decided that the game should be continued. I applied a **distinction**.

Reason was that I had concluded that Player 1 did not declare that she resigned as specified by the article, but instead was led to believe erroneously that she was mated, and immediately upon realizing the mistake, retracted her agreement that she was mated.

Arbiters Corner

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In that circumstance I concluded that resignation did not take place, in accordance with article 5.1.2. and the game should be continued. Before finalizing the decision I had consulted with the CA and he concurred. I did not punish Player 1 because I had concluded that Player 2 had contributed to the disturbance by her mistake.

Second example - The Short Handshake

Another European Youth Rapid & Blitz Championship. This time I'm CA. 2 girls are playing at the Girls U-16 section Rapid Championship. Player 1 enjoys an advantage throughout the game. Player 2 fights to stay in the game. At a certain point, Player 2 seemed to have lost hope and started extending her hand in resignation. However, before there is physical contact between hands, Player 2 realized she still had defense, retracted her hand and made a move. Player 1 paused the clock demanding a win claiming Player 2 had resigned. In approaching the case what do you do first? Same as previous example - Go to the Laws of Chess and look for the applicable article 5.1.2.

In this case the result of the game is a draw. As we see it's the same article as previous example but facts of the case are different. Here Player 2 can't claim

she was deceived by opponent. She decided, out of her free volition, to extend her hand. Here too I had concluded there was no resignation. The reason was that the resignation was not completed. Article 5.1.2. states declares resignation but here I concluded there was merely an attempt to declare resignation and the act was aborted before completion. I did sanction Player 2 by adding 2 minutes to Player 1 because she created unnecessary disturbance. Game continued and was drawn.

Conclusion

I'm happy to share both those "twin" cases associated with the same article about resignation. I support those decisions but am not stating in any shape or form that those were necessarily and unequivocally the correct decisions. Judges / Arbiters often disagree with each other. Every Judge/ Arbitrer brings his/hers worldview and values to the job. It is imperative that regardless of the position and arbiter status you believe you are part of – it is beneficial to consult with other arbiters. It is beneficial to do brainstorming and hear other points of view. It is beneficial to share your thought process with other arbiters, and hear their views. They learn from you, you learn from them – Win-Win situation.



ECU Arbiters Council

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