

THE FIFTY SHADES OF DRAW – PART 2

In my previous article, I tried to explain the nuances of claiming 3-fold repetition (or 50 moves, which is treated in a similar way). In this article, a few examples from practical play will be presented to, hopefully, remove any traces of doubt.

In the following example (position 1), the claim is formally valid, but, due to 9.2.3, it's not a threefold repetition, which can easily be overlooked. In the last round of 59th World Juniors 2022 the following position appeared in the Mendonca-Kozak game after 65.Ke4. Followed by 65.-Nf6+ 66.Ke5 Nd7+ 67.Kd4 Nf8 68.Ke4 Nd7 seemingly the same position appeared on the board second time. After 69.Ra2 Kf6 70.Rf2+ black stopped the chessclock, wrote in 70.-Ke7 on his scoresheet and claimed a draw according to the regulations. But – unfortunately for him – the claim was rejected by the arbiters. As you may have already noticed, in the first position it was black's move, in the other two occurrences it was white's turn, so the position wasn't exactly the same.



Position 1

Position 1 (above),
Position 2 & position 3 (right)



Position 2



Position 3

But is it the case? After the 61st white move both players made exactly 50 moves on the board. Many people misunderstand the regulation and think that 50 'whole' move should be made, and in their interpretation black could only claim a draw in the above position to her own 111th move. But this is not the case! Although her next move would be a pawn move, and after that she'd get checkmated by her opponent, the 15 years old Hungarian girl properly stopped the chessclock, summoned the arbiter and claimed a draw based on the 50 moves rule. And she was right! Her composure and knowledge of regulations (and basic mathematic skills) worth half point to her and 1 match point to her team.

Let's see an example to a valid 50-move rule claim – in my opinion, the best example I've ever seen. In the European Team Championship (Women section) the following position arose in the Klek-Gaal party after 61.Nxg4 (position 2).

In the following section white was trying to force the black king to the h8 corner, and apparently her efforts became fruitful. After 111.Ne5 the following position appeared (position 3). It's easy to see that black is forced to make 111.g4 and in the next move 112.Neg6# captures the oposina king.



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The ECU Arbiters Council publishes monthly Arbiters' corner articles in the ECU E-Magazine.

All the articles can be found on the ECU Arbiters Council website.

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Now let's move on to the not very old upgraded version of these regulations: the fivefold repetition and 75 moves rule. The regulation says:

9.6 If one or both of the following occur(s) then the game is drawn:

9.6.1 the same position has appeared, as in 9.2.2 at least five times.

9.6.2 any series of at least 75 moves have been made by each player without the movement of any pawn and without any capture. If the last move resulted in checkmate, that shall take precedence.

In the World Rapid 2022, the following interesting situation appeared in the Maghaem- Khusenkhojaev party. White had rook and bishop against a rook. The players didn't have scoresheets so they were lacking the easiest way to count the moves made without capturing or making a pawn move. In move 150, after 72 moves completed since the last capture, black claimed a threefold repetition. After 4 minutes of checking, the arbiters decided – correctly – that there was no threefold repetition regarding black's claim. Of course they were not allowed to inform black that 72 moves has already passed so according to the 50 moves rule, he could claim a draw practically anytime. The game continued and after white's 76th move black resigned, as the checkmate became inevitable. But immediately after the resignation one of the DCAs of the event arrived at the board and notified the players that, according to the 75 moves rule, the game is declared a draw. It doesn't matter what happened in the next move(s), from the game's point of view it was invalid. The game itself ended when both players made their 75th move without capture (and pawn move, of course).

I had a similar case from First Saturday May 2018 in standard game, but with fivefold repetition.

In the Khamparia-Li game, Black tried to claim a draw in the 73rd move. He did this the following way: he made his move on the board, stopped the chessclock and said 'repetition' to me. I immediately rejected his claim. As he only spoke Chinese and there was no translator around, although I've tried to explain my decision to him, I even showed him the FIDE regulations, but of course he was not be able to understand this because of the language barrier. 2 moves later, in the 75th move the same situation happened with the same result. After this there was no more repetition and white won the game by checkmate. After the game the father of Black arrived, and since he spoke a little English I tried to explain them what was wrong with Black's claims. After several minutes of talking, Li unexpectedly said: "Five". After checking the game (it wasn't broadcasted), I realised that in moves 60, 62, 68, 73 and 75 (the first appearance was even on a different scoresheet) the same position really appeared on the board. So I had to change the result to a draw.

As IA Werner Stubenvoll explained: the question is not whether checkmate or fivefold repetition is the strongest.

The question is: which happened first? The game ends at that very moment.