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WHAT EXACTLY IS CHECK-MATE?

For most players, checkmate is a position on the board where one player's king is 'under attack' and has no legal move to undo this attack .

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his kind of position immediately ends the game and the player who has checkmated his opponent is the winner. However, a careful look at the Laws of Chess and, especially, the Competition Rules, proves that things are slightly more complicated than that.

The Competition Rules introduce, among others, the use of chess clocks and illegal moves that only affect games played in tournaments.

According to these, the fall of a flag or the completion of two illegal moves leads to the end of the game. In that case, the result depends on the position on the board.

To simplify things, let's consider the following position: (W: Ke6, h7 B: Ke8) It is White's turn to move and by playing 1.h8Q (or 1.h8R) he leaves the playing hall with one full point. But what happens if, before replacing the pawn with a queen (or a rook) on h8, his flag falls? Then White doesn't win the game, but neither does Black, because he cannot checkmate White's king by any possible series of legal moves (article 6.9) and the result is draw.

Another case is that of the "illegal promotion". In the same example, White pushes the h-pawn to h8 but, instead of replacing it with a queen, presses the clock.

If during the game White has already completed an illegal move, the act of pressing the clock grants him a second one (article 7.5.2). The pawn that has been left on the eighth rank after pressing the clock is by force replaced by a queen. Once again, White doesn't win the game, but neither does Black, because he has no legal moves to do so. The result is draw.

Another delicacy can be found in article 7.5.4. In the following position (W: Ke6, h7 B: Ke8, Rg8), White intends to play 1.hxg8Q (or 1.hxg8R) and win. What happens if he uses both hands to make the capture? Is it considered and penalized as an illegal move?

The arbiters' manual is clear: "Article 7.5.4 is not applicable if the move ends the game according to articles 5.1.1, 5.2.1, 5.2.2, 9.6.1 or 9.6.2", meaning if the move leads to a checkmate/ stalemate/dead position, five-fold repetition or completion of 75 without captures or pawn moves. So, in that case, White wins the game.

This is truth for the first illegal move. For the second one, it seems that the illegal move prevails. We will ask FIDE RC and ARB for clarification for this particular interpretation from Arbiters' Manual. To be continued (comment by ECU AC)

Final note:

As a final note, players of all ages and levels are highly encouraged to attend FA seminars, in order to always be informed about the new rules and changes in the laws of chess and avoid any unpleasant surprises in their games.