

S O F I A A N D O T H E R R U L E S *

Is it possible to prevent a draw at an early stage of the game without getting into other problems

In many mayor round-robin tournaments, where multiple extremely strong players with high ratings are found, a draw and a few numbers of moves are the outcomes of the greater number of the games. These are the most frequently, games where 10-15 opening moves are played and a draw is agreed when the battle is yet to begin.

This occurrence causes damage to the organizers who suffer from decreased interest in the tournament and therefore the number of interested sponsors is decreased, which consequently draws the decrease in money and prize fund. Decreased prize fund rejects the players from accepting the invitation for the tournament, thus reducing the possibility to earn the money for their existence. Here, somewhere, the circle closes!!

The organizers are now trying to outwit the players and prevent the early draws, without play. In the prestigious M-TEL tournament in Sofia, a few years ago, the organizers have decided and in the Tournament's regulations included the rule according to which the draw by agreement is not permitted without arbiter's approval (regardless of the number of the moves played before the draw offer!!). If the arbiter is not certain of his assessment, his advisers are at his disposal. This regulation, according to the location of the first application, is named Sofia rules. In some tournaments it is not allowed to have draw by agreement before playing the required number of moves (usually 30). This is not a problem for the players because today's theory goes beyond that. Good examples of this are some variations in Spanish game, and not just in it. The players can play that within a few minutes.

Is it possible to administratively prevent a draw at an early stage of the game without getting into other problems?! Answer for yourselves, and the purpose of the text is to facilitate your job by presenting you some aspects of this problem. Considering the employment of the Sofia rules, we believe that the arbiters are not competent to make decisions about some positions, whether they are within the bounds of the draw and whether the possibilities of a win are exhausted. It is therefore necessary to have the advisors, but they, as well, must decide in a short time, which in itself carries a risk of an error! Since the Sofia rules are employed, at least for now, only at the grand tournaments it is necessary to have, in addition to the Appeal committee, 2-3 Advisors as well. We still do not know what will be the name of that expert team, but we will hereafter call it- the Advisors. This, additionally burdens the budget of the tournament, thereby reducing the prize fund.

There is also a question of choosing the Advisors, their number and title, or rating. Thinking in this direction, at least two Advisors and an arbiter, as the third member, are necessary. As for the Advisors' title and rating, in the round-robin

tournaments, the Advisors should have a minimum average tournament's rating and a title appropriate to rating! In the Swiss-system tournaments, with more than 100 players, an average rating of the top 20 participants could be taken as a parameter for the selection of the Advisor.

Some proponents of the employment of such a fight against the draw-germs say that the advisor's rating is unimportant, but the reputation is, and suggest that this may include some big names from the previous period, but, of course, with extensive experience.

As for the arbiters' expertise of position, we believe that the arbiters do not have enough chess knowledge (except a negligible number of arbiters with the GM title, who, as a rule, act as arbiters only at the significant matches) to assess the position of the two players with a rating over 2600 points and to approve or deny the draw. Just recall the arbiter's disgrace in Nalchik, in a very simple problem (the arbiter was a GM, though female).

We have a lot of draw variants in the theory, just after 10-12 moves, some are forced perpetual checks. We will give you some examples of this, so take a look.

The game shown below is one in a series of ten that are in Chess Base for 2011. which were played by GM Matulovic Milan against various opponents (sometimes with white and sometimes with black pieces) and at various tournaments.

Matulovic, Milan (2428) – Popchev, Milko (2431) [B05]

Belgrade TS06 GM Belgrade (3), 17.06.2002

1.e4 d5 2.e5 d4 3.d4 d6 4.f3 g4 5.h3 h5 6.g4 b6 7.g3 b3 8.g5 xd1 9.gxf7+ d7 10.g6+ e8 ½-½ (the final position is shown in the diagram)



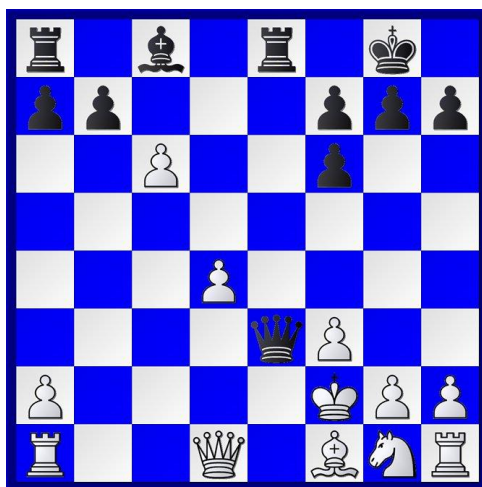
And now, here are two more variants suitable for the circumvention of administrative barriers in order to do a short draw. Let us remind the readers that there is a special segment in the Law theory called **Fraus legis**. So, the chess

players are also human beings of flesh and blood and it is difficult to separate them from something that they have previously had in mind.

Matulovic,Milan (2432) – Sedlak,Nikola (2524) [B13]

Pancevo (11), 30.06.2003

1.e4 c6 2.d4 d5 3.exd5 cxd5 4.c4 ♘f6 5.♗c3 ♘c6 6.♙g5 ♚a5 7.♙xf6 exf6 8.cxd5 ♙b4 9.dxc6 ♙xc3+ 10.bxc3 ♚xc3+ 11.♔e2 0-0 12.f3 ♞e8+ 13.♔f2 ♚e3+ 14.♔g3 ♚g5+ 15.♔f2 ½-½



There are about forty of these positions in the Chess Base for 2011. Of course, they all ended in perpetual check.

Matulovic,Milan (2432) – Martinovic,Slobodan (2461) [C92]

PancevoPancevo (5), 24.06.2003

1.e4 e5 2.♗f3 ♗c6 3.♙b5 a6 4.♙a4 ♗f6 5.0-0 ♙e7 6.♞e1 b5 7.♙b3 d6 8.c3 0-0 9.h3 ♙b7 10.d4 ♞e8 11.♗g5 ♞f8 12.♗f3 ♞e8 ½-½



There are about 1500 of these positions in the Chess Base!! Of course, they didn't all end in a draw, but if the players wanted that, in what way this could be prevented.

The upper examples are just the illustrations of how the players can circumvent the ban on a draw. This is, of course, an evident example that the outcome of the game is agreed in advance. But there is NO proof for this statement!! It is possible, after these and similar examples, to impose sanctions against those involved, but then the game is won for those at the green table. Is that the goal? No – I am sure. And if the players appeal, then the real scandal will arise.

Every sport (although there are some opinions that chess is not a sport, and for the purpose of this, let us just recall the recent episode when the Serbian chess was transferred into a group of some kind of games by the Ministry of Sport), including chess has its own characteristics. In some sports points just follow each other (basketball and handball), in some points are rare (football), in some the result is based on the referee's decision (boxing), in some there is no tie (volleyball, tennis) etc. Chess has a number of definitions, which are more or less known, and I would like to add one of my own: **Chess is the art with the elements of a competition!**

Article 5 of the FIDE Laws of Chess gives the ways a game may end. The game may end in a checkmate as well as in a draw, so all possible ways of a draw are described in the mentioned article. We especially emphasize the article 5.2.c which states: **"The game is drawn upon agreement between the two players during the game. This immediately ends the game. (See Article 9.1)"**

Employing the Sofia rules or any other anti-draw measure slowly opens the door to a change in the FIDE Laws of Chess. If this is to be applied selectively, for example, only at the big and important tournaments, then there would be dual rules for the same game. If it is to be applied to all tournaments then chess would become some other game.

We consider that the possibility given in the article 9.1 is quite enough, and that some competitions can have the rule according to which the draw before certain number of moves or without arbiter's approval is forbidden. So, take it or leave it!!

Frequent changes in the rules do not always mean the improvement. This can even be counterproductive. Simply, the rules should be such that they do not require frequent interventions in the text, and thus in the practice. Let us just remind you of how little the U.S. Constitution has been amended since its adoption until today.

Football (the most important secondary thing in the world) has tried to solve the problem of the bloodless game and a tie (especially with no goals) by extra time, a golden goal, and a silver goal, by the penalties, by the additional validation of the victory (with three points), but none of that has brought valuable results.

Every sport or a game (as you like it) is by its nature either dynamic or not. You cannot make basketball, formula 1 or tennis out of chess. In chess, victory is achieved by checkmate and it can be achieved (if achieved at all) only once during

the game. It is not a game with a ball where during the match or the game more goals can be achieved and when the time is up all that is summarized and the winner is chosen. For those who would like to obtain the dynamics of chess and to see more games ending in a victory remains the possibility of organizing the rapid or blitz chess tournaments. Another question, in this case, is the extent to which chess still remains chess. In The Practicum (p.159, in Commentary on the Laws of chess p.176), I made the comparison of the standard (classical), rapid and blitz chess with long distance, medium and sprint running. Chess has been played for centuries and should be improved to some extent. No more than that. Otherwise, it won't be what it is- CHESS.

Lately, some organizers have been trying to stimulate players' fighting spirit by different scoring, so they give three points for a win and one point for a draw and, of course, no points for a loss. However, this, as well, doesn't give good results, and it may be tricked in a very simple way. This calculation is known as the Bilbao rules. Several problems appear here. First, we have to point out that it is extremely easy to trick this and even to benefit from it. Namely, if three players with the similar strength and rating (and being friends, as well, who, as a rule, do not play in the tournaments against each other to win) agree not to draw but to win against one and to lose against the other in the mutual games, they will then have three points instead of two. Furthermore, with this kind of scoring **the natural balance** is disturbed: you always get twice more for the victory than for the draw, which is not the case here! And another thing: the results and the tables with normal calculations are used for the calculation of the rating, which means that you get one point for a win and a half point for a draw. So, we have two placings here which is certainly not a stimulus.

Regardless of the fact that the Rules of chess allow here, as well, different scoring system in some competitions (Article 11, Rules of chess) we shouldn't go beyond that in this case either.

Excessive administration causes chess to cease being chess. Players will be gladiators, and the difficulty of the chess game is evidenced by the fact that the chess players, according to the efforts (physical and intellectual) they make during the game, are ranked third among all athletes!!

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