

Draw Claims – A Guide by Andy Howie

Draw claims are probably the most contentious issue currently in chess. I have been involved in many an argument on the way back home from a game, mainly based around why I, as a lowly graded player, can decide on whether a position is drawn for 2 players graded 2000+

There is a general misunderstanding that the Arbiter (or league controller) is adjudicating the position. That is not the case, if it were then I would have to agree with the sentiments expressed by my team mates.

To begin with, lets take a look at the laws of chess to see what they say on the matter.

Article 10: Quickplay Finish

A `quickplay finish` is the last phase of a game, when all the (remaining) moves must be made in a limited time.

If the player, having the move, has less than two minutes left on his clock, he may claim a draw before his flag falls. He shall stop the clocks and summon the arbiter.

- a. If the arbiter agrees the opponent is making no effort to win the game by normal means, or that it is not possible to win by normal means, then he shall declare the game drawn. Otherwise he shall postpone his decision or reject the claim.
- b. b. If the arbiter postpones his decision, the opponent may be awarded two extra minutes and the game shall continue in the presence of an arbiter, if possible. The arbiter shall declare the final result later in the game or after a flag has fallen. He shall declare the game drawn if he agrees that the final position cannot be won by normal means, or that the opponent was not making sufficient attempts to win by normal means.
- c. If the arbiter has rejected the claim, the opponent shall be awarded two extra minutes thinking time.
- d. The decision of the arbiter shall be final relating to 10.2 a, b, c.

Article 10 covers the rules of a quickplay finish. There is a problem as Article 10 refers to having an arbiter present. Although in the leagues, the team captain is considered an arbiter, he is not empowered to perform the duties of Article 10.

The following comes from Chess Scotland's Guidance to Players and Arbiters

Chess Scotland Notes for the Guidance of Arbiters and Players on Quickplay Finishes

The rules for Quickplay finishes are included in Article 10 and Appendix D of the Laws of Chess. Players are advised to make themselves aware of these Laws. In summary, a claim of a draw **MUST** be made before a flag falls. Following the claim of the draw the opponent *may* be awarded an additional two minutes by the Arbiter.

- 1 The recommended time-controls for games completed under quickplay finish rules, and which are to be sent for grading are:
 - a) where traditional or digital clocks are used, an initial period of at least 1 hour per player, with a clock rate not faster than 2 minutes per move (eg 40 moves in at least 80 minutes or 30 moves in 1 hour), followed by at least an extra 15 minutes per player; or
 - b) where digital clocks are used, an initial time control as above followed by a minimum of an additional 20 seconds per move.

These requirements must have been clearly stated before the tournament starts. Organisers planning a faster time-control should consult the grader.

- 2 The guidance given here is an attempt to ensure that the player does not lose who, from the position on the board and his demonstrated standard of play, would be able to gain at least a draw had time considerations not played a critical role.

Before claiming a draw from the Arbiter the player is recommended to first offer his opponent a draw and the following time restraints apply. If the time control is one of those described in 1(a) the draw should be offered with less than two minutes remaining on the player's clock. If the time control is one of those described in 1(b) the total time elapsed should be a minimum of 25 minutes beyond the main playing session (this figure may be increased if specified before the first round starts), before the draw is offered.

If this is declined the player should stop the clocks and summon the Arbiter.

- 3 The Arbiter will consider the player's claim. In these circumstances the Arbiter may:
 - (a) Reject the draw claim and award the opponent an additional two minutes;
 - (b) Award the draw immediately;

(c) Order play to continue and if appropriate award the opponent additional time of two minutes.

4 If the time control is as allowed in 1(a) and the Arbiter has postponed his decision (3c), the player should attempt to demonstrate the draw in the time remaining. It is advisable that the player allows himself as much time as possible to demonstrate the draw **by his play** to the Arbiter. If a player continues to play for a win then he risks losing.

5 If 3(c) applies the Arbiter should try to watch the remainder of the game, though there may be other similar situations occurring. In that case the Arbiter should use discretion as to his most appropriate positioning. It may be appropriate to note the position and number of moves played.

6 If 3(c) applies the Arbiter may award the draw after a flag fall. The reasons for awarding the draw include:

(a) the player's material and/or positional advantage is clear, and that the opponent has no reasonable way to create counterplay that would give him winning chances. The more material on the board, the greater the advantage must be;

(b) that the position is clearly drawn, eg the player is controlling the queening square with his king against a or h pawn and wrong coloured bishop;

(c) the opponent has not been trying to win on the board, but has been trying to win on time by making passive moves.

(d) that the player's offer of a draw was declined when the opponent had an inferior position and the opponent has not since then created any counterplay.

(e) that the play of the player has fully demonstrated that he knows how to draw the position which is materially even or disadvantageous to him, eg K+N vs K+R with no pawns.

7 In exceptional circumstances the Arbiter, before making a decision, may allow each player to make a brief statement of his view on the position.

8 The Arbiter's decision is *not* an adjudication, but an ad hoc decision based on the position on the board, the play after he has been summoned and the claims of the players. The game is still in progress until the decision has been reached. Pieces must not be moved on the board, and only the players concerned and the Arbiter must be involved in the decision. It is acceptable for the Arbiter to consult another Arbiter.

9 The onus of proof is on the player who has made the claim. If there is reasonable doubt, his claim must fail.

10 In matches where no official Arbiter is present and if item 2 has been satisfied then:

(a) If a draw claim is being made because the opponent cannot win by normal means a copy of the final position should be noted and verified by the opponent.

(b) If a draw claim is being made because the opponent is making no effort to win then a copy of the final position and a copy of both players' scoresheets should be submitted.

These actions permanently halt the game with immediate effect.

In a match between two teams the respective captains should attempt to reach a decision; otherwise the evidence should be submitted to the person designated in the tournament rules.

One of the areas you can claim a draw is if the opponent is not making any effort to win the game by normal means. Again I have an example from The Allegro at the weekend.



In this position, white has about 4 minutes and black 35 seconds. The game went .. Rh8 Rh6 Rg8 Rfg6 Rf8 Rf6 and this pattern went on for a good 5 or 6 moves more (with white being careful not to repeat the position). I had a chat with both players after the game as had black claimed on the basis that white is not trying to win by normal means, I would have given it without hesitation and it would have cost white joint 2nd!

In a league game, again I would have consulted the scoresheets and given a draw (had black claimed it) as it is obvious that white is not making any effort to win by normal means.

My next example comes from the national league, It is a David V Goliath struggle



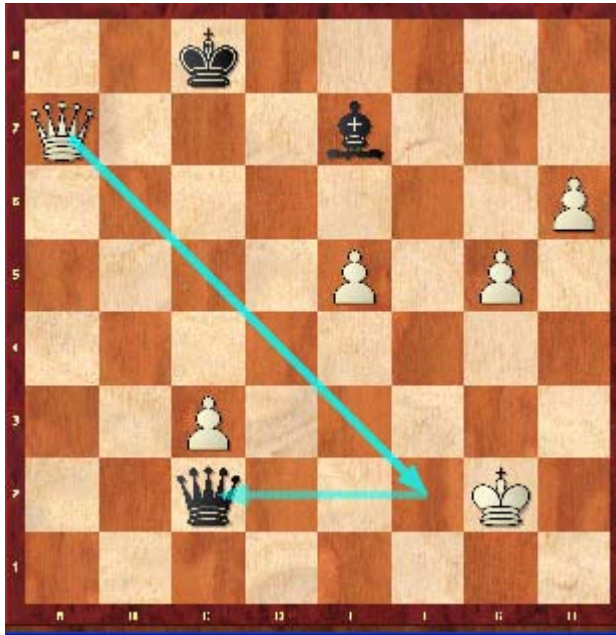
Black is a 2000+ player, white was about 1400. Black is in serious time trouble. Donald Wilson and I were discussing this game as it looked to be a plum draw. We were debating if it could be described as a locked position.

Black claimed a draw, I asked him on what basis and the reply was “My opponent wants to take h2 and I am not letting him”. Despite my instinct to give this, I wanted to make sure that black realised he could not take the bishop off the diagonal it was on so I asked him to play on (with no penalty as it was a reasonable claim). Had he kept the bishop on the diagonal, I would have given it however 1.Bd8 Ng8 2.Nc7 Hf6 3.Bd8 Nh5 4. Be7 Nxc3 showed that he was looking at the wrong pawn all along and he resigned.

In a league game, with so much on the board, the claim would have been rejected (which I think you will agree is justified given what actually happened).

As a final example

This is an actual claim that came in. Here is the position



White claimed the draw as he was short of time. Please note that it is white to move. The important thing is white is in check. Depending where he puts his king (or blocks) changes the game completely. Had this been a congress game, they would have been told to play on as I wanted to see what white was going to do.

As it was a league game and given what was on the board. We had no alternative other than to decline on the grounds there was too much play (this was discussed at a meeting with 4 arbiters present where we all agreed).

Tips for claiming a draw in a league game

- Keep your scoresheet up to date as much as possible, This is essential for “Not winning by normal means” claims. If your opponent is keeping score as he has plenty of time, let him. He has to give you the scoresheet to bring yours up to date.
- If you both are running short of time, ask the team captain to record the moves for you if you think you are going to make a claim
- Always, always offer a draw a couple of moves before hand and record it on the sheet
- With league games, make the claim as late as possible
- A complicated position will always be rejected as there are no grounds to be asked to play on with too much play. Simplify as much as possible.
- When the draw is claimed, record the position on the back of your scoresheet. Do not allow anyone other than the team captains (or deputy) to be at the board and involved in the discussion. If the team captains cannot agree the result with the 2 players, send the game in to the League controller to make the decision. State your case for or against (and don't bother with pages of analysis as it is irrelevant)

Additional Tips for a Congress

Most of the above apply, it is obvious which ones don't (those involving team captains). The only real difference is you probably want to make your claim round about 1 minute to go so you have time to prove on the board if the arbiter asks you to play on