**CAA Guidelines for controlling at Junior Events - DRAFT**

The laws of chess are predominantly written with adult competitive players in mind. Some say the laws are geared more and more towards the top echelon of players.

Below are guidelines for Arbiters and organisers for controlling junior tournaments, where the players are very young or inexperienced. There are some direct references to The Laws of Chess at the end. All of the advice here can depend on the standard of the players and tournament involved combined with sensible judgement.

**Arbiting with Children**

Working with young children in any area requires special skills. This is just as true in arbiting as it is in any other area. This document is designed to help arbiters not used to dealing with the special problems of working with youngsters.

When running junior tournaments it is advisable that the organising team should consist of both male and female officials. Children tend to find women more approachable than men when they have a problem. All officials must hold a current ‘Disclosure Check’/CRB Clearance. Any assistants not holding such clearance must not be allowed to end up in a position where they are working alone with a small number of children (less than 5). Even with clearance try to avoid working in a one-to-one

situation with a junior.

• The arbiter should, when speaking to a child, whenever possible, come down to the same physical level by kneeling down or even sitting. Children find looking up to an adult intimidating. Avoid leaning over a child – this can be felt to be threatening.

• Try to give instructions in simple English, avoiding technical terms whenever possible. Children will usually have a shorter attention span than adults so do not make long announcements. Remember KISS – Keep It Short & Simple

• Look for signs that your comments have been understood by examining the face of the child. If asked, many children will say they understand even when they don’t. A blank expression usually confirms a lack of understanding.

• Explanations of difficult concepts should be minimised, especially in any introductory remarks. For example an explanation of 10.2 (claiming a draw in the last two minutes) is very complex. It is simpler to announce “If you have less than 2 minutes left and are worried about losing on time stop your clock and get an arbiter.” Very few games will reach this stage anyway. If a game does go this far then you can make sure that BOTH players understand the process.

• In junior games the arbiter may have to be more proactive than in adult tournaments. It is acceptable for an arbiter to halt a game to establish that a player is aware of the Laws. For example an arbiter may halt a game when a player has 2 or 3 minutes left to ask if the player knows that he may claim a draw in the last two minutes or to ensure that a player knows that he does not have to laboriously record moves right to the end of a game. The arbiter must be careful that the opponent understands it is an explanation of the Laws and not advice being given to claim a draw, stop recording, etc

• Beginners’ tournaments will require more intervention than adult ones because of the high number of illegal moves likely to occur, confusion over the rules, etc. Youngsters can feel a greater sense of injustice than adults, so if turning down, for example a touch move claim, it can be important to reassure the claimant that you are not doubting his word but that you need more evidence than is available before you can act.

• At the beginner level it is not uncommon to declare games drawn where the player with more time and material does not know how to get checkmate. Here the moves of the opponent are very important. In king and queen or king and rook v lone king, the lone king could be considered to be defending accurately if it is kept in the centre of the board but not if it goes to the edge, where it may stumble into a checkmate. The former may be declared drawn, the latter may require 50 moves to be counted before a draw is given. In either case the arbiter may wish to keep a count of the number of moves played.

• Youngsters often ask the arbiter to confirm checkmate. This should not be done. Instead the arbiter should state that he/she is not allowed to say and ask the opponent to look at the board and see if it is mate. Where it is not mate, saying this may give a considerable advantage to the opponent. It is up to the players to decide if the unprotected queen next to the king is in fact delivering ‘mate’!

• Parents and/or coaches can be a problem in junior events. Some tournaments ban parents from the playing hall for that reason.

• Parents should be discouraged from standing in their child’s direct line of sight. Some parents will pressurise their child by doing this (usually obvious by the child taking quick glances up at the parent or staring continuously), others will unwittingly or otherwise give advice through facial expressions,

body language or worse. Spectators should always stand well back and to the side of the game. Parents should also be prevented from staring at their child’s opponent. This is a form of intimidation and should be stamped on immediately. It may be necessary to remove the parent from the tournament hall if the behaviour continues.

• Parents are very protective of their offspring. Try to be patient even when what appears to be a ludicrous accusation is made. No matter how ludicrous, it may have some basis in fact.

• If parents are allowed in the hall it is worth emphasising that they should approach an arbiter if they spot a problem and not to get involved themselves.

• Conversations between players or spectators etc should not be allowed near the board. Youthful enthusiasm often leads to audible discussion about a game in progress.

• The more an arbiter patrols during a round the less chance there is of a major problem arising – though there may be an increase in the number of minor problems discovered!

• A child may get very emotional over an adverse decision. When this is the case it is not unreasonable to give a few minutes break so that the youngster can compose him/herself before continuing the game. It may be sensible to have this away from the board to avoid accusations of ‘extra thinking time’.

• The arbiter must be careful to avoid putting himself or herself in an awkward position. Whilst it is very tempting to try to console a player reduced to tears by a bad loss, care must be taken that your actions cannot be misconstrued. Unfortunately, in today’s society the arbiter has to be aware of actions being misinterpreted and of the potential for accusations to be made and may therefore have to curb natural protective instincts.

• With this in mind arbiters should avoid situations which would leave them alone with a single child. Ideally, when working with children there should always be at least two adults together.

**Basic Rules of Play**

**Article 1.3** states that “If the position is such that neither player can possibly checkmate then the game is drawn”

We would advise that the literal translation of this law can be applied to the junior who is playing with a Queen or Rook against bare king but has no idea how to mate with them e.g. only moving the Queen, never advancing the king. In a match without scoresheets it is unlikely that someone will be around to count to 50, so after a reasonable time it would be ok to declare the game drawn.

**Article 2.1 – 2.3** states the rules about the orientation of the board and the set up of the pieces.

In many junior events with lots of players and few controllers (who know how to play chess) it is frequently the case that a game starts with either the board the wrong way round or the pieces displaced e.g. K & Q reversed. A quick tour of the boards immediately prior to the start of play should prevent most of these situations.

We would advise that if neither player has complained then the game should continue when many moves have been made (and it is sometimes the case that the K & Q have been moved to their new stations as part of the game). If the game is still in the early stages and it is possible to reverse the K & Q without serious damage to either player’s position then that would seem sensible. Of course, if there is enough time then the game should be restarted (but beware of this if one player is totally winning, you may get histrionics)

As many junior events are ‘rapidplay’ then the laws state that nothing should be done after 3 moves anyway, but this, again, should be dealt with sensibly.

**Article 3.7d** **“En Passant”**

You will often get juniors who complain that their opponent has made an illegal pawn move when they took en-passant.

We would advise that you explain the en passant rule to the player. It may be that the opponent will allow the player to make another move under the circumstances, if it will not have a major effect on the game.

**Article 3.7e “Promotion”**

Just explain that there is no such piece as an upside down Rook or Siamese Pawns and would they like you to get them another piece. The player has technically made an illegal move for which you should not penalise him/her. Ask the player what the piece is supposed to be and replace it with the appropriate piece. Gently warn the player after the game that a penalty may be imposed if the offence is repeated.

The player may change their mind about which piece will replace the pawn until it has actually touched the promotion square.

It is the player’s responsibility to retrieve and place the promoted piece.

**Article 4 the act of moving the pieces**

Remember, the ‘touch move’ and ‘touch take’ rules only apply to the player touching a piece **‘with the intention of moving it’,** brushing against a piece whilst going to move anotherwould not be considered ‘touching’.

**Article 4.1** “Each move must be made with one hand only”

Remember, the ‘move’ includes the pressing of the clock. If we enforce this it takes care of a number of common problems such as the hand hovering over the clock. A more lenient approach may be taken on moves such as castling or promotion.

**Article 4.2** If a player wishes to ‘tidy up’ the pieces by centring them on squares, etc he must warn his opponent first by saying “adjust” or something similar. Experienced players use the term “J’adoube” when doing this. Doing this should only happen when it is the player’s turn to move. If rearranging the pieces is done too often it can be seen as distracting the opponent.

**Article 4.3** When capturing pieces - if the player deliberately touches the piece intended to be captured with their own piece then it is considered to have been ‘touched’.

**Article 4.4** Castling – It is illegal to castle by moving the Rook first, but without a complaint from the opponent a word after the game should suffice. If the opponent does complain then the Rook must be moved, not the King.

Castling when only the Rook is under attack is allowed.

**Article 4.6** Only when a piece has been released on a square must it remain on that square. The player must move the piece touched but until he has let go he can change the square to which it is moved. However, trying out every square on the board can be regarded as distracting the opponent!

**Article 4.6c** The promotion must be completed on the player’s move i.e. before pressing the clock. Many juniors will push the pawn to the 8th rank, say ‘Queen’ and press the clock. Again, a word about the laws should be all that is needed.

**Article 4.7** states that the opponent loses his right to claim against a ‘touch move’ once he has touched a piece. This is really handy to know.