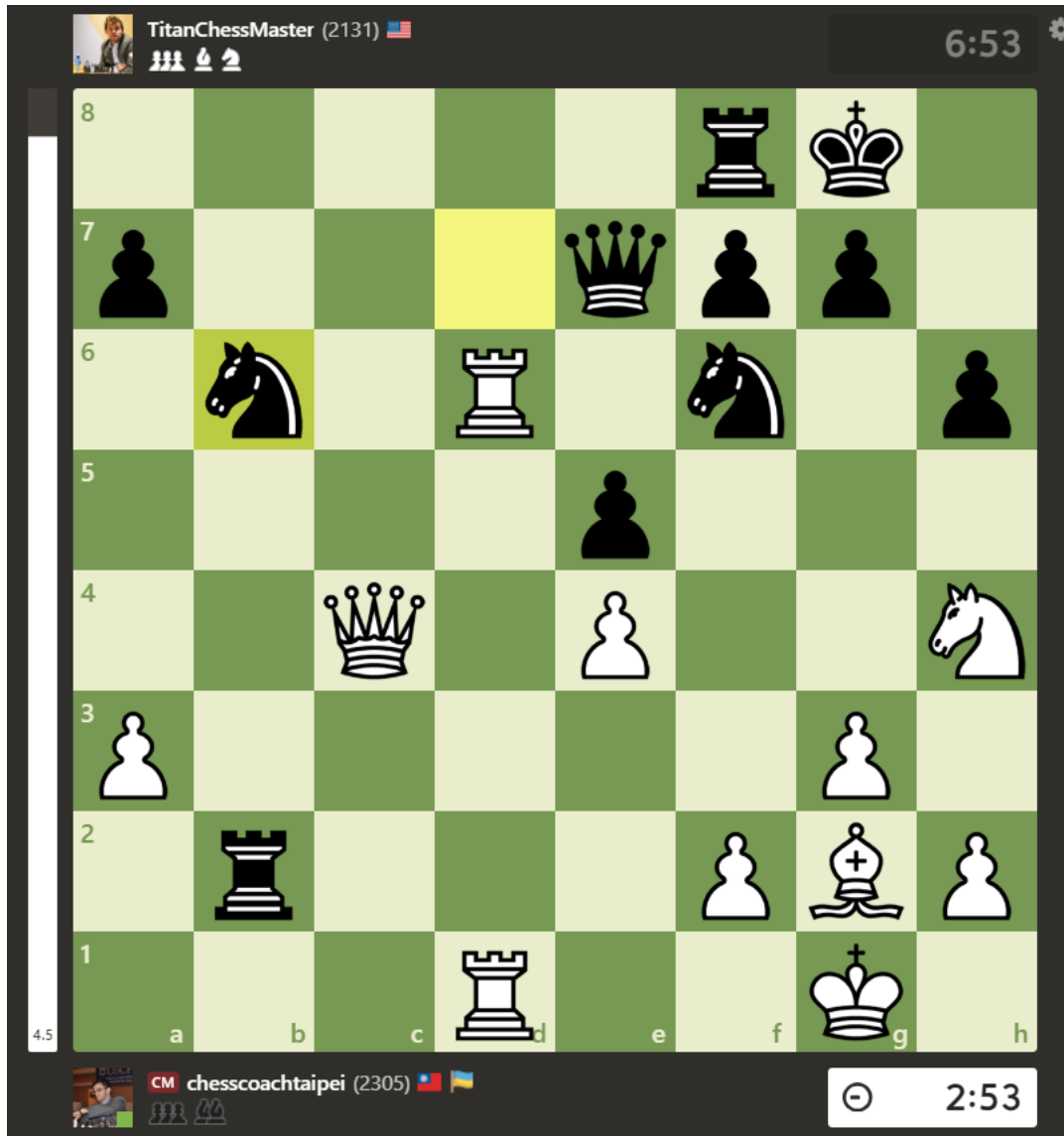


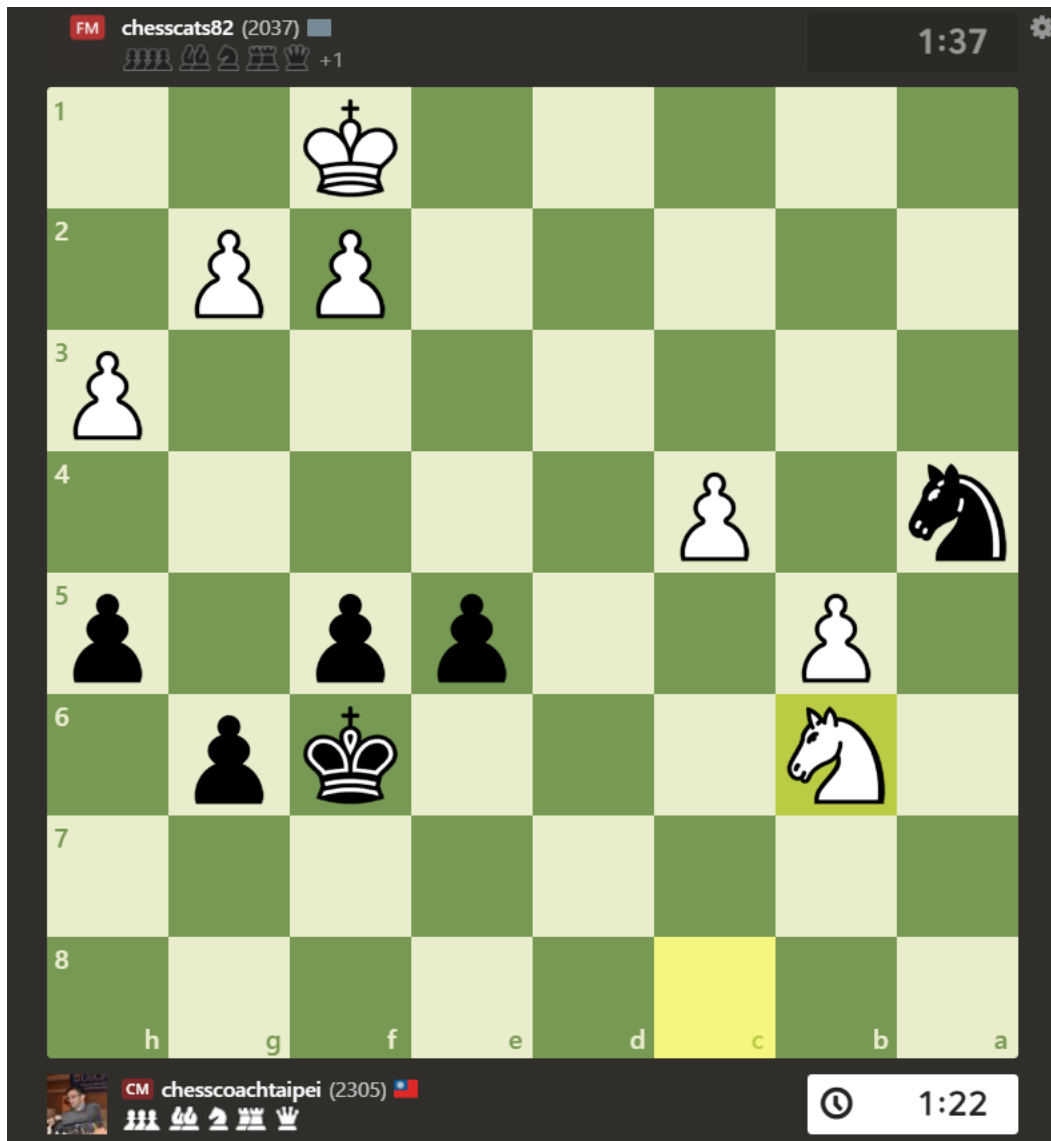
Coach M's New Years 2024 Puzzle Sheet, Happy New Year!!

Coach M's Tip: If a puzzle position is proving too difficult, then set this position up on a physical chess board. After you've formulated your solutions for each position, you can check your work by loading up the PGN file in an analysis board and switching on the chess engine. For each position, the object is to give the best move/line of play. Select PGNs are provided at the bottom.

1. White to play. Equal material, +4.5 edge? Why is white winning here?



2. Black to play. Verify that the black knight can keep the two connected passers at bay without much issue. After, the black king can come over and gobble them both up, 0-1. Multiple solutions to this one...what's your way to do it?

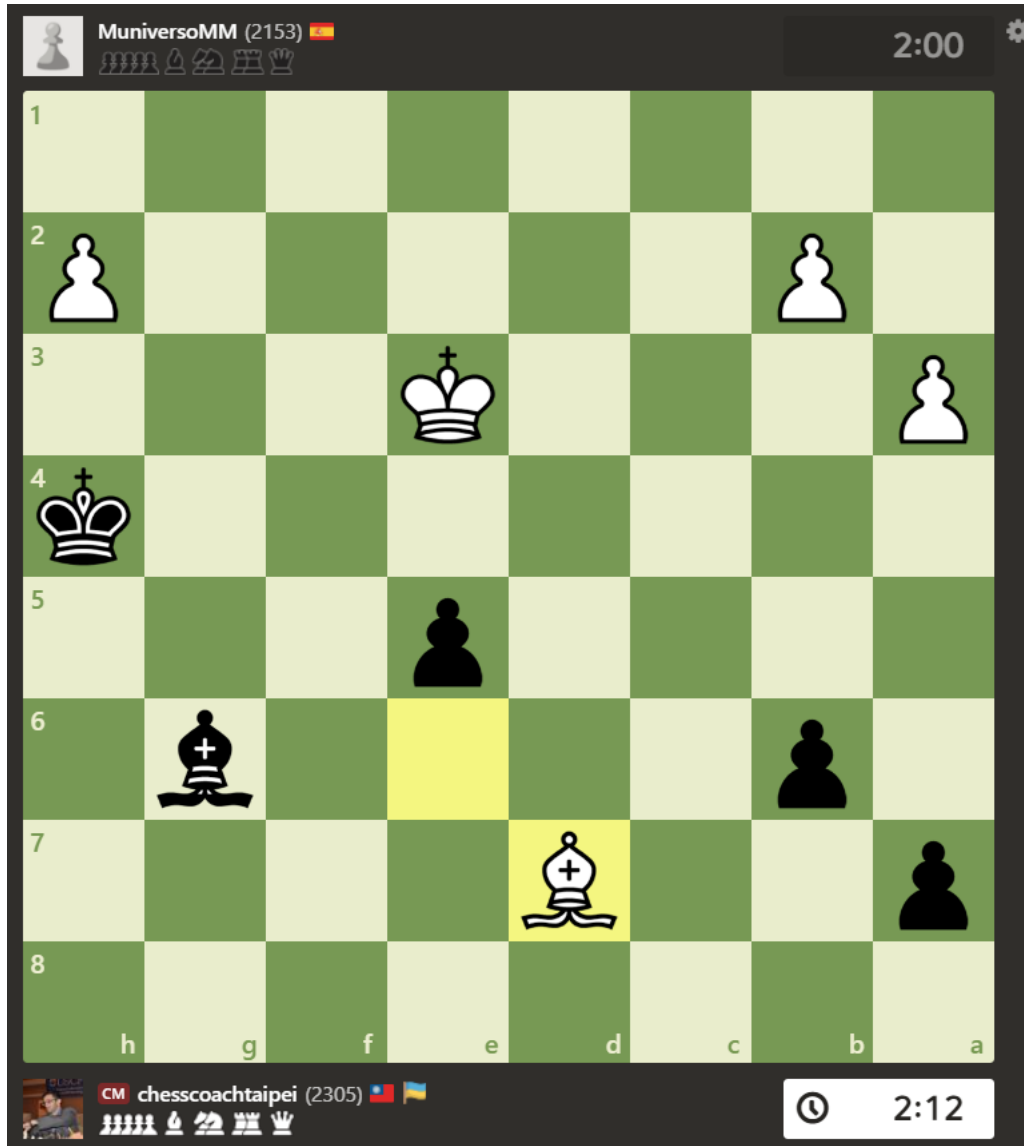


3. Black to play. According to the evaluation bar, black is crushing it here. However, black must parry two strong threats (the primary threat being the mate on f7 threat and the secondary threat being the capture of the B on g5). How on Earth can you parry both threats here?

Note: Coach M failed to find this one in the actual game and opted to prioritize preventing the mate at the cost of the B. Yet after g6?, dropping the B, black is no longer winning. Do better than Coach M in this game and realize the -3.6 edge.



4. Black to play. White and black played a real bender here. 98+% accuracy vs 98+% accuracy, 3050 elo vs 3050 elo projection. White is slightly better here, why? Figure out the main ideas used for black to hold this game and earn the draw.



5. White to play. Black has gotten the better of the opening here in this QGA battle and holds a small edge. Regardless of this, what should white do to fight back?

Note: White actually wins this game after just a few more moves here so whatever plan that was chosen, it must have been a rather tricky one for black to deal with... What would you do here?



6. Black to play. In this dominant endgame for black, your challenge is to play the next (3) moves with 100% accuracy. That is, what is the best (3)-move line of play for black? (Here, the best line of play is the one evaluating at -4.0)



7. White to move. Knights vs Bishops is often but not always favorable for the player with the Bishops... This position is dynamically equal. This said, how should white play to maintain that equality?



8. Black to play. Black has outplayed white in this game and has an objectively winning position. Coach M erred here and played a second best move though, Rg4?!, and the advantage was cut by ~80% to only about -.6. What was the (1) move that was missed which realizes the -3.4 edge?



9. Black to play. Black has played a rather ambitious exchange sack on e2 so he could double white's f-pawns and weaken the white king. The position is dynamically balanced but only one line of play for black keeps it that way. What would you do here to maintain the dynamic equality?



10. White to play. White has played a successful Queenside Bind plan in the QGD. White's advantage is overwhelming and the win is all but assured with the correct plan... How do you do it/how did Coach M do it?



11. BONUS. This one comes from a famous game between veteran US GM Gata Kamsky (as white) playing US GM Sam Shankland, both of whom are former US Champions and each peaking over 2700 FIDE. Unfortunately for GM Shankland here, he has fallen into a rather famous trap in the London opening (which did not originate in this specific game). What's the trap and how did Kamsky win here? Note: This trap is rather easy to fall into in the symmetrical anti-London and MANY strong players, defending the black side of the symmetrical London have fallen to it.



Select PGNs/Solutions:

1. Qc1! gaining a valuable tempo (diagrammed).



The game ends with fireworks... 23...Rb5 24. Nf5 Qb7 25. Rxf6 Rc8 26. Qd2 gxf6?? 27. Qxh6 1-0.

Full game link:

<https://www.chess.com/analysis/game/live/97612279219?tab=analysis&move=0>

2. Nxb?? NxN c5 Na4 or Nd7 or Nd5, all are sufficient. The pawns are going nowhere.

3. Nf4! (diagrammed). Black keeps everything and will parry both threats with his fantastic move. If BxN, Qxd+ wins the material back with interest maintaining a piece up position/winning edge.



4. White is better because of the outside passer which draws the black king away from the center. Still, black holds by coordinating B and central passer to prevent the white king from advancing $\frac{1}{2}$ - $\frac{1}{2}$. The full game score is given here:

<https://www.chess.com/analysis/game/live/97570771981?tab=review>

5. b4! Nce4 NxN NxN b5!, white has created an advanced support square on c6 for his d4 knight to plunk into. This proved too difficult for black to deal with and the game was won shortly after. The full game score is given here:

<https://www.chess.com/game/live/97566570649>

6. Correct is Rd1+ Rf1 RxR+! RxR Rd2 is 100% accurate and realizing the -4 edge. Note: Coach M played the subpar Rd1+ Rf1 R1d2 which was good enough though significantly easier for white to defend.

7. Nh5+! followed by g4! is the only way to maintain the dynamic equality as was played in the game. Here's the full game score:

<https://www.chess.com/game/live/97561158871>

8. Be2!! (diagrammed)



Time pressure played a role here in the flurry of moves at the end of this game. Coach M could not find this resource and played Rg4!? Instead which was good for an ~-.6 edge. Here's the full game score:

<https://www.chess.com/game/live/97559966731>

9. Qd7! is the only move which holds the balance. Black defends his b-pawn while eyeballing the white king, ~ = eval.

10. Nxb5! is crushing here (diagrammed).



Here's the full game score:

<https://www.chess.com/analysis/game/live/97518657591?tab=analysis>

BONUS: Kamsky wins it with BxB! QxB dxc! Qxc Bxh+! KxB Qh5+ Kg8 Ne4!! gaining a tempo on the Q and transferring to g5 next move. Black is lost.

How'd you do on this 2024 New Years Worksheet?

I'm so much looking forward to continuing working with you in 2024 and seeing you all continue to climb the ranks, grow stronger, and achieve your chess goals!

All the best and see you in 2024!

Sincerely, Coach M