Coach M's Maroczy Bind vs Taimanov Sicilian Puzzle Sheet

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.

In each position it is black to play. The first couple positions are geared at exploiting a sub-optimal opening choice by white to play a "Maroczy Bind" (pawns on e4 and c4 when white's d-pawn has already been traded-off for black's c-pawn) at the wrong time against black's Taimanov Sicilian defense.

1. In the Taimanov Sicilian, 1. e4 c5 2. Nf3 e6 3. d4 cxd 4. Nxd Nc6, 5. c4?!, setting up a Maroczy Bind, is usually not the best choice for white and it can be exploited (correct was 5. Nc3 and white is still better).

Question: How do we exploit 5. c4?!, equalizing quickly? Note: Three moves will reduce white's edge to ~ +.2 or less. Can you list all three such moves?

Solution to 1: *Good job if you found 5…Nf6! which equalizes nicely by developing with tempo. Also, either 5…Qb6!? or 5…Bc5!? near equalize though the text move is objectively best.*

Evaluation ⬤ Lines ⬤ Explorer ◯	depth=37 | Stockfish 16 ⚙
+0.05 5…Nf6 6.Nxc6 bxc6 7.Nc3 Bb4 8.Bd3 e5 9.O-O O-O 10.Be3 Bxc3 11.bxc⋯ ▼	
+0.17 5…Bc5 6.Nc2 Nf6 7.Nc3 Qb6 8.Qd2 O-O 9.Na4 Bb4 10.Nxb6 Bxd2+ 11.⋯ ▼	
+0.18 5…Qb6 6.Nc2 Bc5 7.Qd2 Nf6 8.Nc3 O-O 9.Na4 Bb4 10.Nxb6 Bxd2+ 11.⋯ ▼	

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2. Now continue exploiting white's poor 5th move choice.

Question: White played 6. Nc3 in response to 5…Nf6. Now black has two moves to keep the eval. ~ +.1 (approximate equality). What are these two moves?
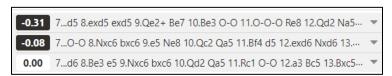
Solution to 2: *Good job if you found 6...Bb4! which keeps an initiative by developing with tempo. Alternatively, 6...Bc5!? is strong though the text move is objectively best.*

Evaluation ⬤ Lines ⬤ Explorer ⬤	depth=34	Stockfish 16 ⚙

+0.08	6...Bb4 7.Nxc6 bxc6 8.Bd3 e5 9.Be3 O-O 10.O-O Bxc3 11.bxc3 d6 12.c5... ▼
+0.17	6...Bc5 7.Nc2 Qb6 8.Qd2 O-O 9.Na4 Bb4 10.Nxb6 Bxd2+ 11.Bxd2 axb6... ▼
+0.44	6...Qc7 7.Be2 Nxd4 8.Qxd4 Bc5 9.Qd3 O-O 10.Bg5 b6 11.Bxf6 gxf6 12... ▼

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3. It's move 7. for black... Observe that the evaluation bar has shifted slightly in black's favor but only one move will retain black's edge... Which move keeps up the pressure and momentum?

Solution to 3: *Good job if you found 7...d5! which hits the center while it is vulnerable. Alternatives do not retain any significant edge for black.*

-0.31	7...d5 8.exd5 exd5 9.Qe2+ Be7 10.Be3 O-O 11.O-O-O Re8 12.Qd2 Na5... ▼
-0.08	7...O-O 8.Nxc6 bxc6 9.e5 Ne8 10.Qc2 Qa5 11.Bf4 d5 12.exd6 Nxd6 13.... ▼
0.00	7...d6 8.Be3 e5 9.Nxc6 bxc6 10.Qd2 Qa5 11.Rc1 O-O 12.a3 Bc5 13.Bxc5... ▼

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4. It's move 10. for black... Observe that the evaluation bar now pulls heavily in black's favor (black is winning)... Two moves keep the winning edge. They are?

SoSoDumb (2005) +1   9:38

2.2

CM chesscoachtaipei (2323)   9:35

Solution to 4: *Good job if you found either 10...0-0! Or 10...Nxd5! Alternatives are lesser and spoil the winning edge for black.*

Evaluation ⬤ Lines ⬤ Explorer ⬤	depth=34 | Stockfish 16 ⚙
-2.56 10...O-O 11.Be2 Nxd5 12.Bd2 Bc5 13.Ne4 Bd4 14.Qa4 c5 15.O-O-O Be... ▼	
-2.06 10...Nxd5 11.a3 Ba5 12.Qe2+ Be6 13.Bd2 Nxc3 14.Bxc3 Bxc3+ 15.bxc3 ... ▼	
-0.03 10...Qe7+ 11.Qe2 Nxd5 12.Qxe7+ Kxe7 13.a3 Bd6 14.Bd2 Rb8 15.b4 N... ▼	

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5. It's move 11. for black... Observe that the evaluation bar still pulls heavily in black's favor (black is still winning)... One move keeps the winning edge. It is?

Solution to 5: *Good job if you found 11...0-0! Alternatives are lesser and spoil the winning edge for black albeit black is still better after 11…NxN?! or 11…Rb8?!*

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6. It's move 12. for black… The evaluation bar still pulls heavily in black's favor (black is still winning)… Two moves keep the winning edge. They are?

Solution to 6: *Good job if you found either 12...cxd5! or 12…Re8+! Alternatives are lesser and spoil the winning edge for black albeit black is still a bit better after 12…Bxd2+? NOTE: The game continuation of 12…cxd5! Does not drop the bishop on b4 on account of the Q check on h4.*

Evaluation | Lines | Feedback | depth=33 | Stockfish 16

-2.37 12… cxd5 13. ♗d3 ♖e8+ 14. ♔f1 ♗d6 15. ♖c1 ♖b8 16. ♕c2 h5 17. …

-1.91 12… ♖e8+ 13. ♗e2 ♗a6 14. ♘xb4 ♗xe2 15. ♕xe2 ♕h4+ 16. g3 ♖xe…

-0.41 12… ♗xd2+ 13. ♕xd2 cxd5 14. ♕d4 ♖b8 15. a3 ♖b3 16. ♖d1 ♕f6 1…

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7. It's move 16. for black… The evaluation bar still pulls heavily in black's favor (black is still winning)… There are multiple (5+) technical wins here. Give any (3).

Solution to 7: *Good job if you found any (3) of the continuations below. Coach M opted for 16… Ba6! with the sound plan of transitioning into a technically winning rook endgame.*

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8. It's move 19. for black… The evaluation bar still pulls heavily in black's favor (black is still winning)… There are multiple (5+) technical wins here. Give any (3).

Solution to 8: *Good job if you found any (3) of the continuations below. Coach M opted for 19…BxB! as a natural and effective continuation of the 16. Ba6! plan.*

	Evaluation 🟢 Lines 🟢 Feedback ⚪ ⚙ depth=35	Stockfish 16 ⚙
-4.60	19… ♖xe2+ 20. ♖xe2 ♝xe2 21. ♕xe2 ♕xe2+ 22. ♔xe2 a5 23. ♖a1 a… ▾
-4.50	19… ♝xe2 20. ♖xe2 ♖xe2+ 21. ♕xe2 ♕xe2+ 22. ♔xe2 a5 23. ♖a1 a… ▾
-4.23	19… ♝c4 20. ♖c2 ♕b3 21. ♕c1 ♕b6+ 22. ♔g2 ♕e6 23. ♔f1 ♕h3+… ▾
-3.76	19… ♕b2 20. ♖c2 ♕b6+ 21. ♔g2 ♕e6 22. ♖a2 ♝b5 23. ♔f1 ♕d7 … ▾
-3.65	19… ♕a5 20. ♝xa6 ♖xe1 21. ♕xe1 ♕xa6 22. ♖c2 h6 23. ♕e5 ♕e6 … ▾

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9. It's move 22. for black… The evaluation bar still pulls heavily in black's favor (black is still winning)… There are multiple (5+) technical wins here. Give any (3) and explain your winning plan.

Solution to 9: *Good job if you found any (3) of the continuations below. Coach M opted for 22...a5! as a natural and effective continuation. The winning plan that he chose in the game was simply to drive the a-pawn as far as it can go! Eventually, white will need to blockade this a-pawn but that job will need to be from the front with their rook (not an ideal blockade for white). If it were possible, white would prefer to blockade the a-pawn with their king however the white king is unable to serve as the a-pawn blockader because he cannot safely cross the c-file (why?). Once the white rook becomes a passive blockader of the a-pawn from the front, we can simply march our king into the center and then flank the kingside pawns as white runs out of moves and must cede ground. Other winning plans likely exist as well.*

Evaluation ◉	Lines ◉	Feedback ○	⛉ depth=38	Stockfish 16 ⚙

-4.98	22... a5 23. ♔d3 a4 24. ♖a1 a3 25. ♖a2 ♚f8 26. ♔d4 ♟a5 27. ♔c3 ... ▾
-4.25	22... f6 23. ♖a1 a5 24. ♖a4 ♚f7 25. ♔d3 ♚e6 26. ♔d4 g6 27. h4 f5 ... ▾
-4.24	22... f5 23. ♖a1 a5 24. ♖a4 ♚f7 25. h4 g6 26. ♔d1 ♚e7 27. ♔c1 ♚... ▾
-4.24	22... ♚f8 23. ♖a1 a5 24. ♖a4 ♚e7 25. h4 g6 26. ♔d3 ♚d6 27. ♔c2 ... ▾
-3.69	22... g6 23. ♔d3 a5 24. ♖a1 a4 25. ♖a3 ♚g7 26. ♔d4 ♟a5 27. ♔c3 ... ▾

Full game link/Solutions/PGN/Image Files

https://www.chess.com/game/live/107617360095

How'd you do on this Maroczy Bind vs Taimanov Puzzle Sheet?

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

All the best!

Sincerely, Coach M