

Coach M's August 2024 "Maximum Effort" 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 with the answers given in the back of the worksheet and/or 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. Below is a scoring rubric. Each of the below positions are from either unrated rapid G10 games played by Coach M on chess.com or from tournament games played in the USA during a Summer 2024 trip back stateside.

Note: Some positions may have multiple solutions. The positions are sorted by difficulty with the easiest puzzles given first. Good Luck and Do Your Best!

10/10	Super Grandmaster	Elo: 2700+
9/10	Grandmaster	Elo: 2500-2700
8/10	Master	Elo: 2200-2500
7/10	Expert	Elo: 2000-2200
6/10	Class A	Elo: 1800-2000
5/10	Class B	Elo: 1600-1800
4/10	Class C	Elo: 1400-1600
3/10	Class D	Elo: 1200-1400
2/10	Class E	Elo: 1000-1200
0-1/10	Beginner	Elo: Under 1000

1. White to play.

(Difficulty Level: Easy)

(From Internet G10

Unrated Rapid Chess)

Find white's path ...



The Best Move is _____.

White is (winning/better/equal).

(choose one).

2. White to play.

(Difficulty Level: Easy)



The Best Move is _____.

White is (winning/better/equal).

(choose one).

Note: This position arose in a tournament game from an Adult Swiss tourney played in Orlando, FL on July 12, 2024. The opponent, a Mr. Mac Bleakly, was rated only in the 600 range yet despite this, he had successfully played an adequate “Ragozin” Defense to the Queen’s Gambit in this game. To this point, Mr. Bleakly’s first 10 moves were all rather strong and keeping the white edge only nominal. This 11th move b5?! however is an opening and we will need to exploit such slight inaccuracies as these to get anything out of this opening...

Follow-Up: If not 11. b5?!, then what was the correct 11th move for black?

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3. Black to play.

(Difficulty Level: Easy)



The Best Move is \_\_\_\_\_.

Black is (winning/better/equal).

(choose one).

Note: Also from the same tournament as the prior position. This opponent is unrated. Black successfully navigated an irregular opening to get this position.

4. Black to play.  
(Difficulty Level: Medium)



The Best Move is \_\_\_\_\_.  
Black is (winning/better/equal).  
(choose one).

Note: Also from the same tournament as the two prior positions. This opponent, a Mr. Douglas McCoy is rated ~1800. Black (Coach M) was able to equalize and then gain the upper hand in this “Slav” Defense to the Queen’s Gambit after some inaccuracies were played by white. There is still plenty of work to be done to prove that black is actually any better here...white’s king is slightly weak...how would you proceed?

Remark: Coach M was able to win all (3) of these games from this tournament, netting (+2) rating points from the three victories. In retrospect, these pairings against lower rated players are extremely risky for players whose goal is rating gain as any draws or losses will result in large slides in rating whereas the wins earn little-to-no points (+2 for three victories).

5. White to play.  
(Difficulty Level: Medium)



The Best Move is \_\_\_\_\_.  
White is (winning/better/equal).  
(choose one).

(From Internet G10  
Unrated Rapid Chess)  
In this Benoni position,  
White must address the  
b5 expansion idea...  
What’s the best way?  
Hint: It’s NOT obvious...

6. White to play.

(Difficulty Level: Medium)

(From Internet G10

Unrated Rapid Chess)

In this Queen's Pawn

opening position, white

may have something but

precision is needed to

reek-out maximum effect.



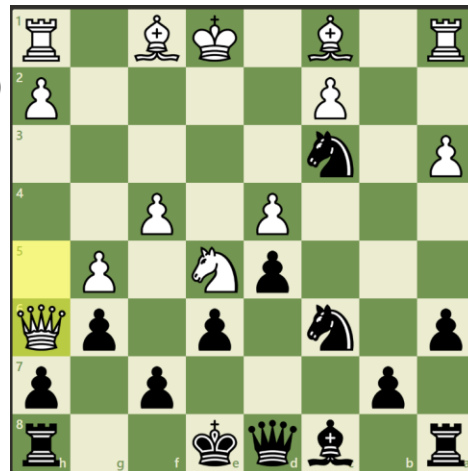
The Best Move is \_\_\_\_\_.

White is (winning/better/equal).

(choose one).

7. Black to play.

(Difficulty Level: Medium)



The Best Move is \_\_\_\_\_.

Black is (winning/better/equal).

(choose one).

Note: This was a key position from one of the tournament games played in Orlando against an unrated opponent. Both players have significant threats I.E. if white can string together Qg7, a3-a4, and Ba6, black may be lost on the dark squares but it's black's move and this initiative enables black (Coach M) to remain in control...so would you nab the d-pawn or is this risky? Should you take the N on e5 or will this squander black's potential edge? How best to execute black's initiative?

8. Black to play.  
(Difficulty Level: Hard)

(From Internet G10  
Unrated Rapid Chess)

In this "Closed Sicilian"  
opening position, black  
is doing fine but irregular  
(and precise) ideas are  
now needed to take the  
game to white... How  
would you play this?



The Best Move is \_\_\_\_\_.  
Black is (winning/better/equal).

(choose one).

9. Black to play.  
(Difficulty Level: Hard)

(From Internet G10  
Unrated Rapid Chess)

In this dire looking spot,  
black can turn the tables  
with a combo of flashy  
shots... Can you spot the  
table-turning sequence?



The best line of play is:  
HINT: Is there a mate for black?!

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10. White to play.  
(Difficulty Level: Very Hard)

(From Internet G10

Unrated Rapid Chess)

In this closed up position, white stands better due to space edge and potential for breakthrough. White to move, how to force a way through?



The winning line of play is:

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## Solutions:

1. **pxB+**! Kh8 QxN! forces a winning endgame. For example, gxQ Rxh+ Qg7 Rh7+ picks up the queen with interest and creating a dominant rook ending. White is winning.

2. **a4!** and black is worse. Correct on move 11. was b6 and the game is level. 12. a4! is the the only pathway to an edge for white in the game position. White is better.

3. **Qc3!** (not Nf2+) is by far the most precise and cuts out any counterplay. Black won a few moves later after Qc3! Rb1 Qxd+ Ke1?? Qf2+ Kd1 Nc3#. Black is winning.

4. **h5!** as was played in the game is black's best chance to win. Objectively, the position is equal yet it requires accurate defense. White struggled to find the correct defensive moves and the game ended in a rout. The position is level.

Here's the full game with some light annotations.

White: Douglas McCoy (1811)

Black: CM Jeremy Mandelkern (2187)

Result 0-1

1. Nf3 d5 2. d4 Nf6 3. c4 c6 4. Nc3 dxc4 5. a4 Bf5 6. e3 e6 7. Bxc4 Bb4 8. O-O O-O [Here we have a main line Slav Defense to the QG.] 9. Bd2?! [Qe2 or Nh4 are more promising with Qe2 being the most popular at master level. After the text move, the position is equal.]. 9...Qe7 10. Qe2 h6?! [Nbd7 is equal. After the text move, white retains an opening edge.]. 11. h3?! [e4 and white has some edge, ~+.4. After the text move, we have equality once more.]. 11...Nbd7 12. Rfd1 Bh7 13. Bd3 Bxd3 14. Qxd3 Rfd8

15. Qc2 Rac8 16. Rac1 e5 17. dxe5 Nxe5 18. Nxe5 Qxe5 19. Be1?! [Inaccurate. Ne2 kept things level. Now the game starts to turn in black's favor]. 19...Bd6! [Avoiding trades and targeting the king proves difficult to defend.]. 20. g3 h5! 21.

Ne2 h4 22. Qc3? [The final straw. White was still fine with Bc3 holding and keeping the game level.]. 22...Qf5! 23. Kg2 hxg3 24. f3 [Black is objectively winning now.]. 24...Qe6!? [Also just Nd5! now is strong.]. 25. Rd4? [Under time pressure, white completely misses black's next move which is crushing.]. 25...Nd5 26. Nf4 Bxf4 27. Rxd5 cxd5! 28. Qa5 Qxe3 29. Rxc8 Qe2+ [Here white resigned as mate is imminent.].

Conclusion: This was a fairly smooth win for black albeit I had at least one consequential inaccuracy in 10...h6?! which could of given white an edge had he continued with 11. e4! (~+.4). Instead the game was level after 11. h3?! and further inaccuracies by white on moves 19. and 22. sealed the game. Furthermore, I add that although I was never at risk in this game, it is risky proposition to play lower rated players in this 1800 range if rating gain is the goal. This game could of easily petered out to a draw with slightly better decision making in key positions for white on moves 19. and 22.

**5.** Not a5?! but **Nc4!** and white is better. The move a5?! is OK but inaccurate in comparison to the better move Nc4! The point being that black is unable to play b5 (presumably on account of Na5). Check this with an engine to verify... White is better.

**6.** The queen is precarious but flicking in b4! driving the B back to e7 first seals the win. Verify with an engine that b4! is significantly better than the immediate Ne5?! as was played in the actual game. White is winning.

**7.** It's absolutely OK for black to grab the d-pawn here though the game gets very sharp. Also very good was the game continuation, **NxN**, which simplifies into a pawn-up middle game where black retains an initiative. Black is better.



8. Did you spot **d5!** followed by e5! These moves take the game to white. Coach M, went with d5! followed by e6?! which wasn't as effective. The game is level. Here's the full game: <https://www.chess.com/game/live/113931670791>

9. A keen eye may spot **Bh4+!!** luring the Q away from the soft spot on g2. If QxB, Rxcg+!! and that's all she wrote! Apparently, Bh4+!! is a KO. Verify this with the help of an engine. Black is winning.

10. White breaks through with **Rd2!** with the idea to sac for the N and roll the pawns in the center. This is a winning position for white after Rd2! White is winning.

How'd you do on this Coach M's August 2024 "Maximum Effort" Puzzle Sheet?

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! Sincerely, Coach M

(\*) Visit my website [http://drmtutoring.com/en\\_US/chess-tutoring/](http://drmtutoring.com/en_US/chess-tutoring/) for more Chess Worksheets or find me on FB at "Dr. M's chess and math page", LIKE and FOLLOW, to enjoy more content from Coach M. Thanks! -Coach M