Grandmaster Repertoire

The Pirc Defence

By

Mihail Marin

To Mariya
And to my Kumas, of course

Quality Chess
www.qualitychess.co.uk
## Contents

Key to symbols used & Bibliography 4
Preface 5
Introduction 7

### Classical System

1. Various 7th Moves 14
2. 7.a4 43

3. 5.h3 74
4. 5th Move Alternatives 99

### Austrian Attack

5. 5th & 6th Move Alternatives 109
6. 6.dxc5 133
7. 6.\(\&b5^+\) 171

### Various 4th Moves

8. \(\&c3\) 200
9. 5.h3 215
10. 5.\(\&d2\) 235

11. Fianchetto System 269
12. 4.\(g5\) 292
13. 4.\(f4\) 324
14. Minor Lines 339

### Rare 2nd & 3rd Moves

15. 3.f3 358
16. 3.\(d3\) 377
17. Anti-Pirc Systems 389

Variation Index 400
My love story with the Pirc Defence started a long time ago, while still a teenager. For reasons soon to be revealed, though, it remained at a platonic level for many years.

In 1983 my father gave me Guerman Samoilovich Fridshtein’s *Zaschita Pirtsa-Ufimtseva*, which captivated me immediately, possibly due to its pleasant green cover. I studied it carefully and even filled a 48-page maths notebook with my analysis. When everything was done I showed my father (a second category player) what I considered my most spectacular finding in one of the main lines. He was delighted, as everything started with a knight sacrifice on b2, but as we went along the main line of the analysis I suddenly realized that I had not counted the pieces in the final position very well: Black was still a piece down!

I was so disappointed and ashamed (I did not say a single word to my father about it) that I immediately gave up the plan of playing the Pirc. But for many years my father was convinced I was playing “Guerman” (this is how we had baptized the opening, according to the author’s name), when in fact I had switched to the Sicilian Paulsen.

The second important moment in this story occurred in the autumn of 1996. For two years I had been playing the Sicilian Dragon almost exclusively, but then Kasparov spoiled it all by using this opening (and one of my novelties in the game he won) during the match with Anand. It immediately became clear that the Dragon was going to become fashionable, ceasing to be my opening and forcing me to keep pace with the latest theoretical developments, which has never been my favourite hobby.

I had little more than a month to prepare for the Romanian Championship and definitely needed a new opening against 1.e4, as this was the main move of most of my opponents. In the meantime I had been fooling around with the Caro-Kann a bit, but that was obviously not my opening. I asked my friend and trainer IM Vali Stoica for advice and a few hours later he came up with the following idea: “Bob, you are skilled in pawn play. Why not try the Pirc?”

I became so addicted to this idea (after all, the Dragon constellation was still there, pawns from the d-file to the h-file) that at the championship I started all my games with 1...d6, even in the two games when my opponents played 1.d4 and 1.♘f3. And then nearly a whole decade followed in which I played the Pirc almost exclusively. I temporarilly gave up the Pirc after a painful loss to Fressinet in 2004 (see page 221), but three years later I reclaimed the moral right to play it at least occasionally after using it to defeat the same opponent in the last round of a blitz super-tournament. Nowadays my repertoire is quite ample, but if I feel too lazy or tired to prepare I just choose the Pirc: the opening I can play just by reflex.

Based on my accumulated experience over the years, I will now give a general description of this opening.
The Pirc is mainly a positional weapon, but the strategic tension that gradually accumulates often leads to critical moments when tactical or dynamic decisions are necessary. In other words, it is an opening that suits players with a balanced (or complete) style.

Over the years I have developed the useful habit of constantly analysing my own games, looking for improvements – mainly in the cases when I was in danger, but not only then. The Pirc is flexible enough to allow me to vary a little from one game to the next, thus avoiding my opponents' specific preparation.

After a few years I had accumulated some slight doubts regarding certain lines I had played. It was with great joy that I received Nunn and McNab's *The Ultimate Pirc* as a present from my friend Ari Ziegler, and I immediately started looking for their recommendations in the positions that were bugging me. Much to my surprise, in all six cases I found my own games in the main lines – precisely the games in which I had felt unsure at certain moments!

This was very flattering, of course. It meant that my knowledge, understanding and games were good enough to build a book upon, but at the same time I understood that I had to do the new analytical work myself in order to keep the opening in good shape; hard and rewarding work at the same time.

The repertoire examined in this book is the fruit of many years of refining my analysis, but I advise the reader to follow my own method of continuous improvement. I believe that the verbal comments to all the critical lines will serve as a guideline.

Dieter Nisipeanu, a natural enemy of the Pirc, once confessed to me his personal view. This opening gives White a false impression of safety, increasing the risk of becoming careless or over-optimistic in the middlegame. Indeed, Black is cramped in the first phase of the game, but his strategic and dynamic resources are greater than one might think at a brief glance. But the reverse of the medal is that Black should believe in his position and his chances of turning the tables at White's first inaccuracy.

A few years ago I published a pair of ChessBase DVDs containing a Pirc repertoire for Black. For this book I had two main reasons for analysing different lines against White's main systems. First of all, I thought that this was the correct approach anyway. Secondly, and more importantly, I also wanted to deepen and widen my own knowledge of my favourite opening.

The general structure of the book contains the positional lines with 4.\(\diamond f3\) (Chapters 1 to 4), the aggressive lines with 4.f4 and 4.\(e3\) (Chapters 5 to 10), and assorted less topical systems (Chapters 11 to 17). Before launching into these chapters I have placed a strategic introduction, explaining in some detail the most typical structures of the Pirc.

As a final piece of advice, I would ask you to be good to my old love, as she will surely repay you well!

Mihail Marin
Bucharest, September 2017
Chapter 5

Austrian Attack

5th & 6th Move Alternatives

Variation Index

1.e4 d6 2.d4 ¤f6 3.¤c3 g6 4.f4

4...£g7

A) 5.e5
B) 5.a3 0–0 6.¤f3 c5!? 7.dxc5 £a5 8.b4 £c7
   B1) 9.e5
   B2) 9.£d2
C) 5.£d3 £c6
   C1) 6.e5
   C2) 6.£f3
D) 5.£f3 c5
   D1) 6.d5
   D2) 6.£e2

A) note to 11.£b1

C1) after 9.£e4

D1) after 14.£e4

14...b5!N

9...£xc3!N

14...£d7!N
1.e4 d6 2.d4  f6 3.c3 g6 4.f4  g7

From the first moment I became interested in the Pirc Defence, I have always thought that the Austrian Attack is the most challenging system. White builds up a massive pawn centre, creating the positional threat of e4-e5, which in many cases leaves Black with a cramped position and offers White chances for a direct attack against the king.

Black’s thematic break in the centre with ...e7-e5 is more problematic than in other systems, so he frequently resorts to ...c7-c5. After the centre stabilizes with d4-d5, White can consider the consistent attack based on e1-h4, f4-f5, h6 and g5.

The only drawback of this system is that it slightly delays White’s development, allowing Black to fight against the centre by dynamic means. White received a serious warning about the dangers awaiting him if he treats the centre superficially in one of the first recorded games with the Pirc Defence:

5.f3 0–0 6.d3  bd7 7.e5  e8 8.0–0 e5

White has not sustained his initial aggression with h2-h4, or e5-e6 followed by h2-h4, and Black has managed to undermine the centre very effectively. The next two moves are obvious concessions, giving up the shaky centre without a fight and activating the black knights.

9.exd6  xd6 10.dxc5  xc5

With great play for Black in Weiss – Paulsen, Nuremberg 1883.

Over the years I have systematically refrained from embarking on theoretical discussions in what is objectively the main line, 5...c5. My wish to avoid forced lines was backed up by my excellent results in the lines 5...0–0 6.d3  a6 followed by ...c5, and 6.e3 b6, but over time I became aware that refraining from 5...c5 is equivalent to giving up hope of taking advantage of White’s delayed development.

When writing this book I finally took the bull by its horns and made the early central break our repertoire line.

Returning to the position after 4...g7, White has a choice between the comparatively rare A) 5.e5, B) 5.a3 and C) 5.d3, and the absolute main line D) 5.f3, which is introduced towards the end of this chapter before being examined further in the next two chapters.

Now and at later branching points I have covered the minor and unpopular lines in lesser detail, reserving space, time and energy for the critical variations.
A) 5.e5

Due to White’s completely undeveloped kingside, this is premature. After the insertion of 5.\( \text{\textit{\&f3}} \) 0–0 the early central break is far more consistent, for two main reasons – \( \text{\textit{\&f3}} \) is useful in offering White attacking chances after \( h2-h4 \), and the black king may become a target. But under the current circumstances Black has little to fear.

5...\( \text{\textit{\&d7}} \)

The most flexible answer, preparing to undermine the centre with ...c5.

6.\( \text{\textit{\&f3}} \)

White does not achieve anything positive with:
6.h4 c5 7.h5 cxd4 8.h6

Hoping to force ...\( f8 \).

8.\( \text{\textit{\&xd4}} \) loses a pawn without any compensation: 8...dxe5 9.\( \text{\textit{\&f2}} \) \( \text{\textit{\&c6}} \) 10.hxg6 hxg6 11.\( \text{\textit{\&h8}} \) \( \text{\textit{\&h8}} \) Black had an extra pawn and normal development in Tredup – Oetzel, Krumpa 1972.

7.exd6

White tries to stabilize the position and prove that the knight’s retreat was a mere loss of time, since under the changed circumstances it will have to return to \( f6 \). But after the e5-pawn vanishes, the weakness of the e4-square becomes a telling factor. White has two main alternatives: a) 7.e6 and b) 7.dxc5.

a) 7.e6

8...\( \text{\textit{\&xe5}} \)!

The best solution to the global tension. Black eliminates an important pawn, avoiding the opening of the h-file by hxg7 at the same time.

9.fxe5 dxc3 10.exd6

In Napoli – V. Moskalenko, Barcelona 2012, Black played 10...\( \text{\textit{\&a5}} \), retaining an advantage, but I would opt for the more flexible developing move:

10...\( \text{\textit{\&c6}} \!

10...0–0 is also strong. With all his pieces on the first rank, White has no chances to exploit the weakness of the g7-square, so Black can safely enjoy his material advantage.
This gives up the vulnerable pawn to weaken Black's structure in the king's neighbourhood, but at the same time it clears the diagonal for the g7-bishop.

7...fxe6 8.\( \text{\textg}{\text{xe}3} \)  
A new try by a top-level grandmaster to bring some fresh life to the position.
The old line went 8.\( \text{\textd}{\text{g}5} \) \( \text{\textf}{\text{f}6} \) 9.dxc5 \( \text{\textc}{\text{c}6} \), with comfortable development. Black's more numerous pawn islands are compensated for by White's slight delay in development and the weaknesses left behind by his advancing pawns. A classical game between two Soviet grandmasters continued: 10.\( \text{\textc}{\text{c}4} \) Forcing Black to release the tension and weaken the e5-square. 10...d5 11.\( \text{\textb}{\text{b}5} \) d4 12.\( \text{\textc}{\text{c}6} \) \( \text{\textb}{\text{xe}6} \) 13.\( \text{\textd}{\text{e}2} \) \( \text{\texta}{\text{a}5} \) 14.\( \text{\texte}{\text{d}2} \) \( \text{\texte}{\text{x}5} \) 15.\( \text{\textd}{\text{d}4} \) \( \text{\textd}{\text{d}5}= \)

Black's structure looks even more shattered than before, but the queen's activity, the bishop pair and the possibility of obtaining activity in the centre with either ...e5 or ...c5 offered Black entirely adequate play in Vasiukov – Tsekhovsky, Leningrad 1974.

8...\( \text{\textc}{\text{c}6} \) 9.dxc5 \( \text{\textc}{\text{xc}5} \) 10.\( \text{\texte}{\text{xc}5} \) dxc5 11.\( \text{\texte}{\text{e}2} \) \( \text{\textc}{\text{c}6} \) 12.\( \text{\texte}{\text{e}3} \) \( \text{\textb}{\text{6}} \) 13.\( \text{\textb}{\text{3}} \) \( \text{\textb}{\text{3}} \) \( \text{\textb}{\text{6}} \) 14.\( \text{\textb}{\text{3}} \) \( \text{\textb}{\text{3}} \) \( \text{\textb}{\text{6}} \) 15.\( \text{\textc}{\text{c}4} \) \( \text{\textc}{\text{c}4} \)

In Giri – Ivanchuk, Leon 2013, Black could have safely retained his extra pawn with:

b) 7.dxc5  
This is best met with the asymmetric:

7...\( \text{\textd}{\text{xe}5} \)  
Fighting against White's main trump, his space advantage in the centre.

8.\( \text{\textf}{\text{xe}5} \)  
White's hopes of depriving Black of the right to castle with 8.\( \text{\textg}{\text{xe}5} \) \( \text{\textf}{\text{xe}5} \) 9.\( \text{\textc}{\text{x}d8} \) are illusory due to 8...0–0!, as played in a few games. Black will retrieve the c5-pawn soon, most likely with ...\( \text{\textd}{\text{a}5} \), with free development and active play.

8...0–0 9.e6  
The pawn was doomed anyway, so White uses it to provoke some positional damage.

9...\( \text{\textf}{\text{xe}6} \) 10.\( \text{\textc}{\text{c}4} \) \( \text{\textc}{\text{x}c}5 \) 11.\( \text{\texte}{\text{e}2} \) \( \text{\textc}{\text{c}6} \) 12.\( \text{\textc}{\text{c}3} \) \( \text{\textb}{\text{6}} \) 13.\( \text{\textb}{\text{3}} \)  
Shielding the b2-pawn and threatening \( \text{\textb}{\text{a}4} \).

13...\( \text{\texta}{\text{5}} \) 14.0–0

14...\( \text{\textc}{\text{x}b}3 \)  
14...\( \text{\textb}{\text{6}} \), preparing ...\( \text{\texta}{\text{6}} \), is a worthwhile alternative. After 15.\( \text{\textb}{\text{b}5} \) \( \text{\textx}{\text{b}2} \) followed by ...\( \text{\textg}{\text{7}} \), White has compensation for the pawns but no real threats.

15.axb3 \( \text{\textx}{\text{h}5} \)  
In the absence of White's king's bishop, the queen belongs on the light squares. On h5 it is not only safe, but also restricts White's attacking possibilities. The passive 15...\( \text{\textc}{\text{7}} \), played in Bronstein – Tringov, Reykjavik 1974, could have caused Black some trouble in finding a safe square for the queen after 16.\( \text{\textb}{\text{5}} \).
16. $\textit{e}4

The only way to harass Her Majesty.
16... $\textit{d}7 17. $\textit{g}3 $\textit{g}4=

Once again, White’s compensation for the pawn due to his better structure is something that Black can perfectly well live with. One important aspect is that 18. $\textit{a}4 fails to bother the queen, since after 18... $\textit{b}4 there is no time for $\textit{c}2-c3 as the rook is hanging. And if 19. $\textit{xa}7 $\textit{xa}7 20. $\textit{d}5 $\textit{d}5 $\textit{xd}4 Black has a lot of activity.

7...0–0

8. $\textit{e}3

White does better to develop, as pawn-grabbing offers Black the initiative:
8...exd6

Ensures him a space advantage. Eliminating it turns a bad position into a worse one by opening the d-file for the enemy rook:

15.0–0 $\textit{xc}2 16. $\textit{xc}2 $\textit{xd}4 $\textit{xd}4 wins the bishop on $\textit{c}2.
15...$\textit{xc}2 16. $\textit{xc}2 $\textit{xd}4 17.cxd4 $\textit{ac}8 $\textit{ac}8–+

Black had a decisive initiative along the open files in Rakic – Petronic, Cetinje 1993.

8...exd6

Returning the game to a normal course of development.

9. $\textit{d}2 $\textit{c}6 10.0–0–0

This is not only the fastest way of getting the king away from the centre, but also the relatively best way of defending $\textit{b}2. The plan of castling short is slow, allowing Black to obtain a strong initiative with ...$\textit{b}6 followed by ...$\textit{e}8 and ...$\textit{f}6.

10...$\textit{a}5

Not only putting pressure on the $\textit{a}2$-pawn, but also defending the $\textit{c}5$-pawn in order to allow ...$\textit{f}6.

11. $\textit{b}1

This does not create problems either.
Austrian Attack

11...\(\text{\&}f6\) 12.\(\text{\&}c4\)

Or if 12.\(\text{\&}b5\) \(\text{\&}xd2\)† 13.\(\text{\&}xd2\) \(\text{\&}e4\)N

14.\(\text{\&}d1\) \(\text{\&}f5\) with comfortable play.

12...\(\text{\&}g4\)

Increasing the pressure on the d4-pawn and more or less forcing White to open the d-file.

13.dxc5

13.d5 \(\text{\&}c7\) followed by ...a6 and ...b5 will soon endanger not only the white king, but also the d5-pawn.

13...dxc5

Black has active play and it is already White who needs to be careful, but in Schaefer – Schlemermeyer, Germany 1993, he was not:

14.\(\text{\&}f2\)

However, Black missed his chance to start a dangerous attack:

14...\(\text{\&}f5\) 14.\(\text{\&}b3\)

Preventing \(\text{\&}g4\).

12...\(\text{\&}e8\) 13.\(\text{\&}c4\)N

Only in part an active move. White prepares to defend his king with \(\text{\&}b3\).

Under the present circumstances, the familiar manoeuvre 13.\(\text{\&}b5\)?, as played in A. Toma – Sfarlog, Predeal 2006, should have led to disaster after 13...\(\text{\&}b4\)N 14.a3 \(\text{\&}e4\) 15.\(\text{\&}e1\) a6†, when many white pieces, including the king, are vulnerable.

13...\(\text{\&}f5\) 14.\(\text{\&}b3\)

14.g4 can be met in many ways, but the simplest is 14...cxd4 15.\(\text{\&}xd4\) \(\text{\&}e4\) 16.\(\text{\&}xe4\) \(\text{\&}xe4\) 17.\(\text{\&}h2\) d5, with a comfortable version of the isolani due to Black’s control over the e4-square.

14...\(\text{\&}c4\)!

The fastest way of achieving counterplay. At the cost of one pawn Black clears the c-file and gains a tempo for advancing his b-pawn.

14...b5 would lose the c5-pawn with unclear consequences.

15.\(\text{\&}xc4\)
15...b5! 16.b3
Taking the second pawn clears the b-file and allows Black to gain even more tempos for his attack.

16.axb5 0–0 17.e2 e4 18.e1 e4 wins the queen.

16.axb5 b4 17.d6
17.c1 ac8 leaves White hopelessly hanging.
17...e4 18.xf7†
The brave bishop will perish soon, but 18.xe4 xe4 19.c1 ac8 20.b3 xc2 offers Black a decisive attack.
18...f8 19.xe4 xe4 20.c1 xf7†
White has four pawns for the piece, but Black's pressure persists.

16...b4 17.e2 e4 18.c1 b5
Planning ...a5 or ...a5, with obvious compensation for the pawn.

B) 5.a3

Knowing that the main drawback of the Austrian Attack is the delay in White's development, this move looks completely illogical. Can White really afford to waste another tempo just like that?

However, things are a bit more complicated. Black's only way to make the position dynamic at an early stage is to break with ...c5, but then a2-a3 proves really useful by supporting b2-b4. This is a good illustration of the not-so-obvious truth that pawn moves can contribute to overall development.

5...0–0 6.d3 c5!
During the long years when I had 6...a6 in my repertoire against the main line, I was ready to react with 6...a6, when 7.d3 c5 8.d5 g4 9.0–0 transposes to my systems. But here, too, a2-a3 is useful, preventing ...b4 and thus allowing a quick queen transfer to the kingside starting with e1. Or if 8...c7 preparing ...b7-b5, the a-pawn would slow down Black's queenside attack. I believe Black's position is viable anyway, but for this book I
preferred to analyse a variation that suits the spirit of the main lines more faithfully.

7...dxc5  a5 8.b4

The only way to give meaning to 6.a3. Otherwise White would be practically a tempo down with respect to the normal lines.

8...c7

Black pins the c5-pawn but, as we shall see, regaining the pawn will require a certain accuracy. White is underdeveloped, but Black’s queen, having already spent two tempos, is likely to be exposed, so play may be expected to become rather sharp.

White can choose between B1) 9.e5 and B2) 9.d2.

9.d2

This simplifies Black’s task.

9...dxc5 10.e5

In Veys – Solozhenkin, Vaujany 2013, Black should not have refrained from:

10.fxe5

The knight jump to b5 needs investigating at practically every step:

a) 11.d5 12.e4† 13.e2 14.xe2† 15.g3+ allowed White to consolidate his extra pawn in Trent – Romanov, Chalkidiki 2003.

White has a choice now:

13...d5 14.a6 15.b3 a3 16.bxc6 bxc6 17.bxc6 dxc6

9...dx e5

The knight jump to b5 needs investigating at practically every step:

10.b5 d7

Threatening to deprive White of the right to castle.

10...c6?! 11.xe5 e4† 12.e2 xe2† 13.xe2 c6 14.b2 d5 15.b3+ allowed White to consolidate his extra pawn in Trent – Romanov, Chalkidiki 2003.

White has a choice now:

a) 11.xe5 xd1† 12.xd1 c6 13.b2

13.xc6? bxc6 14.e4 g4+- wins material.

13...d5 14.g3 c6 15.c3 e3†
16. $\text{c}1$

16. $\text{d}2$ fights against the intruding knight, but exposes the king, allowing Black to gain a tempo for developing his rook: 16... $\text{xf}1+$

17. $\text{hxf}1$ $\text{xe}5$ 18.$\text{fxe}5$ $\text{h}3$ 19.$\text{fe}1$ $\text{fd}8+$

Black holds the initiative due to White's poor coordination.

16... $\text{xe}5$ 17.$\text{fxe}5$ $\text{f}5$

Black will retrieve the pawn soon, and his initiative compensates for White's bishop pair.

b) 11.$\text{fxe}5$ $\text{g}4$ 12.$\text{b}2$ $\text{xd}1+$ 13.$\text{xd}1$ $\text{c}6$

White has maintained the right to castle, but his $\text{e}5$-pawn is doomed.

10... $\text{d}8$

As in a previous line, it is useful to control the $\text{d}$-file before choosing a square for the knight.

10... $\text{g}4$ 11.$\text{d}5$ $\text{d}7$ 12.$\text{f}4$ $\text{c}6$ 13.$\text{b}5+$

was not entirely satisfactory for Black in Slingerland – De Wit, Haarlem 2011.

11.$\text{d}3$ $\text{h}5$

14.$\text{c}7$

Trying to reactivate the errant knight.

14... $\text{b}8$ 15.$\text{d}5$ $\text{e}6$ 16.$\text{h}3$

16.$\text{b}5$ fails to save the $\text{e}5$-pawn: 16... $\text{xd}5$

17.$\text{xd}5$ $\text{e}6$ 18.$\text{d}7$ $\text{cxe}5=$

16... $\text{cxe}5$ 17.$\text{xe}5$ $\text{xe}5$ 18.$\text{xe}7+$ $\text{h}8$

Threatening ...$\text{fe}8$ with fatal consequences due to the X-ray pressure along the $\text{e}$-file.

19.$\text{e}2$ $\text{f}3$† 20.$\text{xf}3$ $\text{xb}2$

Because of the renewed threat of ...$\text{fe}8$, Black regains the pawn with approximate equality in a still complicated position.
The knight will be temporarily passive, but it prevents $\text{f4}$ and the knight would otherwise find itself on an unfavourable path.

For instance: 11...$\text{g4}$ 12.$\text{b5}$$\text{d7}$ 13.$\text{c2}$ $\text{a6}$ 14.$\text{h3}$ $\text{xb5}$ (14...$\text{h6}$ 15.$\text{bd4}$ $\pm$ leaves Black too passive) 15.$\text{hxg4}$ $\text{c6}$ 16.$\text{b2}$ $\pm$

Although the position is not entirely clear, Black’s compensation for the pawn is not obvious to me.

12.$\text{b5}$

Now is the best moment for the knight jump.

12.0–0 $\text{c6}$ 14.$\text{e1}$

The best way to defend the pawn, since 14.$\text{b2}$ $\text{a6}$ 15.$\text{c3}$$\text{f4}$ $\pm$ allows the activation of the knight from the edge.

Although the position is not entirely clear, Black’s compensation for the pawn is not obvious to me.

12...$\text{d7}$

The queen is forced to block the bishop’s development, but Black will soon gain a tempo with ...$\text{a6}$, helping him to regain his coordination.

13.0–0 $\text{c6}$ 14.$\text{e1}$

The best way to defend the pawn, since 14.$\text{b2}$ $\text{a6}$ 15.$\text{c3}$$\text{f4}$ $\pm$ allows the activation of the knight from the edge.

The familiar 14.$\text{e6}$ does not work due to 14...$\text{xe6}$, and 15.$\text{c7}$ is ineffective since the a1-rook is also hanging.

14.$\text{d2}$

This demands some accuracy.

14...xe5!

This paradoxical move, giving away the fianchettoed bishop, is the only way to equalize completely. The alternatives are inferior:

14...$\text{xe6}$? 15.$\text{e6}$! $\text{xe6}$ 16.$\text{c3}$ $\pm$

14...$\text{xe5}$ 15.$\text{xe5}$ $\text{xe5}$ 16.$\text{f3}$ $\pm$
15.\texttt{b1}  

The point is that 15.\texttt{xe5} \texttt{xe5} leaves White’s bishops hanging.

15...\texttt{f6} 16.\texttt{e1} \texttt{b6}!  

The best way to continue developing and to neutralize White’s space advantage on the queenside.

17.cxb6 \texttt{axb6}  

With complex play and mutual chances.

Chances were even in Genzling – Solodovnichenko, Nancy 2014, though play could turn in either’s side favour due to the highly asymmetric structure.

\textbf{B2) 9.\texttt{d2}}

This looks less natural than 9.\texttt{b2}, mentioned on page 116, but it has the merit of shielding the queen along the d-file.

9...\texttt{dxc5} 10.e5 \texttt{\textd8}!N  

Nevertheless, Black reacts in the same way as after 9.\texttt{b2}, even though this already involves a piece sacrifice. This is not the only moment when Black needs to take radical measures.

Normal moves fail to equalize:

10...\texttt{h5} 11.\texttt{d5} \texttt{d7} 12.\texttt{e3} \texttt{d8} 13.c4 \texttt{c6} In Sedina – Gaponenko, Plovdiv 2014, White should have continued her development with 14.\texttt{e2}N\texttt{+}, making the h5-knight look miserable.

10...\texttt{xb4} is a less auspicious version of the piece sacrifice: 11.\texttt{b5} \texttt{b6} 12.\texttt{e6} \texttt{xf6} 13.\texttt{xb4} \texttt{a1} 14.\texttt{xa1}\texttt{+} Ivanchuk – Gardner, Edmonton 2015.