

Michael's Cue Bids and the Unusual 2NT overcalls

Why?

After an opponent opens, it's often difficult to describe a hand with two long suits. The auction may get too high (or end too soon) for you to show both, or you may not have the strength to safely bid both suits. It can also disrupt the opposition making it hard for them to find their ideal contract or win a low level contract. Consider these problems if RHO opens:

(a) RHO opens 1♣ and you hold: ♠KQ964 ♥KQ872 ♦52 ♣7

(b) RHO opens 1♥ and you hold: ♠765 Void ♦K10765 ♣QJ1093

(c) RHO opens 1♠ and you hold: ♠4 ♥KJ872 ♦AJ10754 ♣5

(d) RHO opens 1♦ and you hold: ♠AJ1075 ♥10 ♦82 ♣QJ1093

With (a) and (d), you could overcall 1♠ and hope to bid your other suit later. With (b) and (c), it may be dangerous to bid at all, especially bidding the second suit at the 2-level. Both hands have good playing strength, but neither can be described with a standard overcall, which tends to show a one-suited hand with more high-card points.

The Michaels Cue Bid and Unusual Notrump are conventions that let you show two suits with one bid. The convention you use depends on which suit the opponent opens and which suits you have. There are variations to Michaels cue bid, but I will only explain one here and at some later date when you master the bid and understand it better, you may want to change.

Michaels Cue Bids

This is a direct cuebid of the opponent's opening suit (1♣ by RHO, 2♣ by you) to show 5+ cards in two other suits.

- Over a minor-suit opening, a Michaels Cuebid (1♣-2♣ or 1♦-2♦) shows the OTHER minor and an unspecified major.
- Over a major-suit opening, a Michaels Cuebid (1♥-2♥ or 1♠-2♠) shows the OTHER major and an unspecified minor.

Unusual 2NT

This convention is a direct jump to 2NT over an opponent's opening bid to show two suits of the same rank. You should have at least 5 cards in each suit for this bid.

- Over 1♣ or 1♦ opening, 2NT shows ♥ and ♠
- Over 1♥ or 1♠ opening, 2NT shows ♣ and ♦

In the example hands above, Hands (C) and (D) are perfect for a Michaels Cuebid. With (A) and (B), an Unusual 2NT. (A) to show both majors and (B) shows both minors.

Strength requirements

Michaels Cuebids and Unusual Notrump overcalls are usually preemptive in nature - they show good suits and distributional values, but don't necessarily promise the high-card strength of a regular overcall (the right 7HCP can be enough). They can, however, be used with stronger hands where you want to force partner to choose one of your suits. Over an opponent's 1♦ opener, for example, you can bid 2NT Unusual Notrump with AKQ98 KQJ92 K5 7, and then jump to game in the major partner bids.

Finding partner's unknown suit

The Michaels Cuebid means you won't know partner's exact two suits (showing the other major and an unspecified minor or vice versa).

1♣ - 2♣ means you know partner has ♦, so you can bid it if you have 3+ cards (or 2 card) support. If you have at least 3/3 in the majors, bid 2♥ to ask partner which major they hold. You don't mind which major they choose as you have both. 2♥ is known as a "pass or correct" bid and must be alerted. If you hold 5♠/3♥ do not bid your spades, as this means you do not have support for ♥ and you have length in ♠ (at least 6 cards) and no interest in partner's 2 suits

Responding bids

Remember that partner's Michaels Cuebid or 2NT overcall is artificial. The Michaels is not alerted as it is deemed to be self-alerting, but the 2NT bid must be alerted. If your RHO passes, you cannot pass. For all Unusual 2NT overcalls, you know the exact two suits partner holds, so bid your longer one of the two. You should almost always bid one of partner's suits; don't be tempted to suggest any other suit unless you have great length and strength in it.

The level of your bid depends on your strength and trump support. With a weak to intermediate hand, bid at the lowest level available. With a stronger hand, you can jump in one of partner's suits to invite to game or jump directly to game if better.

If the next player makes a bid, you should compete only if you have some strength and support for one of partner's suits. Partner is promising 5-5 in his suits, so any 3-card holding is good support.

If you're not vulnerable and you have a weak hand with long support, you may want to sacrifice. Suppose LHO opens 1♥, partner overcalls 2♥ (spades and a minor), and you hold ♠J9642 ♥5 ♦A87 ♣J874. You know the opponents probably can make at least 4♥, so if you're not vulnerable, you should sacrifice right away by jumping to 4♠. With your long trumps and singleton (and filler in whatever partner's minor is), a spade contract should make at least 8 or 9 (and maybe 10) tricks.

When your partner has an undisclosed suit and you hold both the possible two suits, bid the lowest one for your partner to correct if they hold the other.

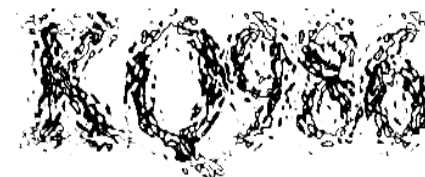
eg 1♦ - 2♦ by partner and you hold ♠KJ4 ♥872 ♦A952 ♣Q107

Even though you know you have a club fit, it is much better in a major and you can stand either major. Bid 2♥ and if it is not Hearts you partner has, they correct to 2♠. 2♥ must be alerted as it is an enquiry as to partner's second suit

*The Michaels convention is named after its inventor,
Mike Michaels (1924-1966) of Miami*

Michaels Cue Bids

a convention for bidding 2 suited hands



Notes by Karen Martelletti