

# LESSON 4

## *Two-Suited Overcalls*

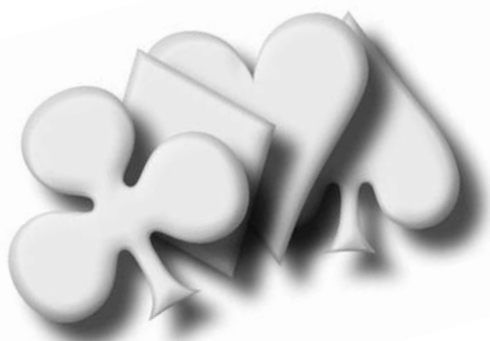


General Concepts

General Introduction

Group Activities

Sample Deals



## GENERAL CONCEPTS

### ***Two-Suited Overcalls***

This lesson continues the discussion of overcalls. The focus is on conventional methods for showing two-suited hands: the Michaels cuebid and the *unusual notrump*.

### **Bidding**

First, there are examples to show how the classic use of the direct cuebid — to show a very strong hand — can be replaced by starting with a takeout double. The standard version of Michaels — to show both major suits — and the extended version — to show the other major and an unspecified minor — are introduced. Some additional applications of the Michaels cuebid are discussed, but the leaping Michaels variation is left to the Appendix in the textbook.

Another form of two-suited overcall, the unusual notrump, is also introduced. The modern-day version — a jump to 2NT shows the two lower unbid suits, not just the minor suits — is presented, along with some variations on the use of the unusual notrump.

No specialized defense to two-suited overcalls is discussed. There is a section on unusual over unusual in the Appendix of the textbook if the subject is raised.

Here are the topics covered:

#### **Direct Cuebid**

This section briefly covers the classic use of the direct cuebid to show a hand that would have started with a strong two-bid, if the right-hand opponent had passed. Such hands are rare. The modern style is to handle them by starting with a takeout double and following with a cuebid, if necessary.

#### **Michaels Cuebid**

The original form of Michaels — the direct cuebid of opener's minor suit to show both majors — and the extended form — the direct cuebid of a major to show the other major suit and a minor — are introduced. The most popular variation is discussed. It's assumed that the cuebid promises at least five cards in each suit and shows a relatively weak hand. This allows the advancer to act accordingly — taking preemptive action with a weak hand, but a good fit. Michaels also can be used with a very strong hand, where the cuebidder plans to bid again, even if the advancer stops at a low level. Five-five hands, of opening-bid strength or better, are typically handled by overcalling the higher-ranking suit, planning to show the second suit if the opportunity arises.

### Advancing After a Michaels Cuebid

The advancer assumes the Michaels cuebid shows a relatively weak, distributional hand and acts accordingly. When the overcall has shown an unspecified minor suit, the advancer needs a way to ask which minor suit is held, typically 2NT. Emphasis is placed on the advancer's ability to assess the combined fit when partner shows a two-suited hand. Most students are unaware of the relative safety of bidding to a high level with a good fit — either your side will make the contract or their side should be able to make something.

### Other Uses of Michaels

This section discusses how Michaels is used in competitive auctions, both from the overcaller's point of view and the advancer's point of view.

### The Unusual Notrump

Both the original version of the unusual notrump — a jump overcall of 2NT to show both minor suits — and the modern variation — using 2NT to show the two lowest-ranking unbid suits — are discussed. The convention is typically used in a manner similar to the Michaels convention — to describe either a weak or very-strong distributional hand with at least five cards in each of the two suits.

### Advancing After the Unusual Notrump

The advancer bids after an unusual notrump in a manner similar to the Michaels cuebid. The primary intent is to disrupt the opponents' auction, although the unusual notrump will sometimes lead to a good contract that might not be reached through standard methods. The emphasis is on the advancer's judgment, given the nature of the hand promised by the unusual notrump overcall.

### Other Uses of the Unusual Notrump

Once the principle of the unusual notrump is understood, the convention can be applied in a number of situations. Just how creative one can be with the unusual notrump depends on the experience of the partnership.

## **Play & Defense**

The deals are all examples of the Michaels cuebid and the unusual notrump in action. With most competitive deals, it is unlikely all of the auctions will go exactly as planned. Nonetheless, at the end of each deal, you can walk the students through the intended bidding and play.

Because of the bidding concepts in this lesson, most of the deals will be played from the short side. Declarer will need to focus on establishing dummy's suits instead of trying to eliminate all of the losers in declarer's hand. This change in perspective is an important concept to get across. The deals focus on:

- Trump management
- Suit establishment
- Handling suit combinations

## **Counting**

The first deal is a partscore contract with many possible variations. It will be best to take the students through only one possible line of play that will allow declarer to take eight tricks. The important concept to stress is that declarer should establish dummy's side suit when dummy also holds the length in trumps.

The second deal requires a careful sequence of plays to avoid losing control. Again, the concept is to establish dummy's side suit, making good use of the trump suit for ruffs and entries throughout the process. Don't go through too many variations. Walk through the line of play that will bring declarer ten tricks.

The third deal involves careful handling of a suit combination when taking a finesse. You can emphasize the concept of not leading a high card unless you can afford to have it covered. A second concept is to review the auction for clues to the location of missing cards. Most declarers are likely to guess the deal correctly without giving much thought to the auction — but that won't be the case on the following deal. So, this is a good opportunity to get the students to start thinking about the location of the missing high cards.

The fourth deal involves dropping an offside king when missing three cards in the suit. The only way to do this — which goes against the odds if the suit is played in isolation — is to pay attention to the bidding. Counting the missing high-card points is a difficult concept, but most of the students should be able to follow the logic on this deal — once it is explained.

## GENERAL INTRODUCTION

The previous lesson covered the typical use of the overcall — as a natural bid to show a one-suited hand. The concept of using a conventional (artificial) bid to show a two-suited hand was introduced with the Landy convention. This lesson takes that idea further, with two commonly used conventions that describe two-suited hands.

You might start the lesson like this:

“A competitive auction can make it challenging for your side to exchange information, but there are advantages to entering the auction after the opponents have opened the bidding. For example, the takeout double lets you show three suits at once!

“In this lesson, we’ll look at a couple of conventional bids that allow you to show two suits at once. That’s a lot safer than putting all of your eggs in one basket with a simple overcall showing a single suit. When you can show two suits, you are twice as likely to find a fit with partner. That reduces the risk that the opponents will be able to double for penalty.”

## GROUP ACTIVITIES

### Direct Cuebid

#### Introduction

“When the opponents open the bidding in a suit, you rarely want to play with that suit as trump. If an opponent opens 1♥, for example, it’s unlikely that you want to bid 2♥ to suggest playing with hearts as the trump suit for your side. Instead, an immediate overcall in the opponent’s suit is called a direct cuebid and is usually assigned a conventional meaning.

“Since an opening bid of 1♣ or 1♦ can be made on a three-card suit — or even fewer cards in some bidding systems — some partnerships do play that a direct overcall in opener’s minor suit is a natural bid. That’s the exception, however, and most partnerships treat a direct overcall in the opponent’s suit as artificial, whether the opening bid is a major suit or a minor suit.

“Traditionally, the direct cuebid was used to show a very strong hand — the type of hand that you would have opened with a strong two-bid, if there had not been an opening bid in front of you.”

#### Instructions

“Sort the cards into suits. Construct the following hand in front of South.

“In spades: the ace, the king, the queen and three low cards.

“In hearts: the ace, the king and two low cards.

“In diamonds: two low cards.

“In clubs: the ace.”

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
		1♣	2♣

SOUTH  
 ♠ A K Q x x x  
 ♥ A K x x  
 ♦ x x  
 ♣ A

Check that each table has the correct starting hand set up dummy style in front of South.

“**If South were the dealer, what would South open?** (2♣) You would start with a strong conventional (artificial) 2♣ bid.

“**Suppose the player on your right is the dealer and opens the bidding 1♣. What call does South make?** (2♣/Double.) This hand is too strong to overcall 1♠ because partner might pass, and you are likely to make game even if partner has very little. You don’t want to jump right to 4♠, however, since that doesn’t leave the partnership any room to explore for the best contract — partner might have a singleton spade and six hearts, for example.

“Traditionally, you could show this hand with a direct cuebid of your opponent’s suit, 2♣. This bid would be forcing to game, and you would start to describe your hand on the next round of bidding. Partner would have to say something over the 2♣ cuebid and would simply bid a long suit, treating the cuebid as a form of takeout double. You would then bid your spades, and partner would have to bid again.

“Originally, the direct cuebid also showed first-round control of the opponent’s suit — either the ace or a void. On this hand, that would be perfect, since you have the ♣A. Over time, however, that restriction was dropped and, if the opening bid were 1♦, for example, you would still start with a cuebid of 2♦ — even though you have two losers in the diamond suit.

“The use of the direct cuebid to show a strong hand is no longer popular among tournament players. There are a couple of reasons for this:

- Very strong hands are extremely rare when an opponent opens the bidding. Retaining the cuebid to show this type of hand, therefore, isn’t a very effective use of the bid.
- There are other ways to show a strong hand.

**“What call could South make to get North to bid something? (Double.)** The takeout double is similar to the cuebid in that it asks partner to bid. Although you don’t have support for all of the unbid suits, it doesn’t matter when you have a very strong hand. You have more than enough to bid again, no matter what North says. This is just an extension of the use of the takeout double to show a hand too strong for a simple overcall. In this case, you’re much too strong to make a simple overcall, but you will show your strength later.

**“Suppose South doubles and North advances to 1♦. What would South call next? (2♠.)** If you double and then bid only 1♠, you are showing a hand too strong to overcall at the one level — but not this strong. Instead, jump to 2♠ on your rebid. A takeout double followed by a jump in a new suit is forcing. It shows a hand similar to the strength of a strong two-bid.

“Another option you have to show a strong hand is to double and then cuebid. If North were to respond 1♥ to your takeout double of 1♣, for example, you could show a big hand by cuebidding 2♣ and then raising hearts. That way, you can investigate slam possibilities, even if North doesn’t have very much.”

## Summary

“In conclusion, there isn’t much of a need to reserve the direct cuebid for very strong hands. Such hands come up rarely and, when they do, there are other ways to handle them. That means that the direct cuebid can be put to more practical use.”

## Michaels Cuebid

### Introduction

“Mike Michaels, a bridge writer, lecturer and longtime associate of Charles Goren in various journalistic enterprises, invented a conventional use of the direct cuebid which has become quite popular. Michaels suggested using the direct cuebid of the opponent’s opening 1 ♣ or 1 ♦ bid as a two-suited takeout showing both major suits.”

### Instructions

“Change the South hand.

“In spades: take away the ace.

“In hearts: take away the ace and add the queen and a low card.

“In clubs: take away the ace and add a low card.

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
		1 ♣	2 ♣

SOUTH

♠ K Q x x x

♥ K Q x x x

♦ x x

♣ x

“**East, on your right, opens 1 ♣. Using the Michaels cuebid, how would South show this hand? (2 ♣.)** The direct cuebid of the opponent’s minor suit shows a two-suited hand with both major suits. Since the 2 ♣ cuebid will force North to choose a major suit at the two level, you should have at least five cards in each major suit. You can see one way the Michaels cuebid differs from a takeout double of 1 ♣. A takeout double would show support for all three unbid suits — diamonds, hearts and spades. Partner would only expect four-card support for an unbid major suit.

“**If East’s opening bid were 1 ♦, what would South bid? (2 ♦.)** The cuebid shows nothing about your holding in the minor suit. It merely promises at least five cards in each major suit.

“**If North–South were not using the Michaels convention, what call would South make after a 1 ♣ or 1 ♦ opening bid? (1 ♠.)** With no conventional methods available, you would make a simple overcall. With two five-card suits, you would start with the higher-ranking, spades, hoping to show your second suit later, if you get an opportunity.

“Discuss with the others at your table some of the advantages and disadvantages of using the Michaels cuebid.”



Give the participants a couple of minutes to discuss the convention among themselves.

**“What are some of the advantages of the Michaels cuebid?** (Descriptive/Obstructive.) The Michaels cuebid has some advantages over the simple overcall of 1 ♠:

- You describe your hand right away. Partner immediately knows where ten of your cards are located. If you were to overcall 1 ♠, partner would not know that you had a two-suited hand.
- It is especially useful if your left-hand opponent competes. If you overcall 1 ♠, you might not get an opportunity to show your heart suit if the auction is too high when it comes back to you.
- Giving partner a choice of two suits is safer than entering the auction with a one-suited hand. It’s quite likely that partner will have a fit for at least one of your suits. Even three-card support will give you an eight-card fit.
- Cuebidding takes more room away from the opponents than a simple one-level overcall. At the same time as you are describing your hand to partner, you are obstructing the opponents from finding their best spot.

**“What are some of the disadvantages to using the Michaels cuebid?** (Higher level / Gives away information.) There are some disadvantages to Michaels:

- You are committing the partnership to at least the two level. Partner will have to bid 2 ♥ or 2 ♠ to choose one of your suits. If you have no fit in either suit, the partnership could be dangerously overboard. On the other hand, if you were planning to bid spades and then show your heart suit, you would be at the two level anyway before you had described your hand.
- The Michaels cuebid describes your hand to the opponents as well as to partner. They may be able to take advantage of that knowledge in the play or the defense.
- You will need another way to show a very strong hand when the opponent opens 1 ♣ or 1 ♦. As mentioned earlier, this can be handled by starting with a takeout double.

“Most players feel that the advantages of the Michaels cuebid outweigh the disadvantages.

- “Change the South hand.
- “In spades: take away the queen and add a low card.
- “In hearts: take away the king and add two low cards.
- “In diamonds: take away a low card.

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
		1 ♣	2 ♣

SOUTH

♠ K x x x x

♥ Q x x x x x

♦ x

♣ x

“**East opens 1 ♣. What call does South make?** (Pass/2 ♣.) You have to exercise your judgment on whether to use the Michaels convention. Most partnerships use the convention to show a relatively weak, distributional hand with at least five cards in each major. The better the distribution, the friskier you can afford to be. It’s a good idea to keep an eye on the vulnerability, however. This would be an acceptable hand to cuebid 2 ♣ if non vulnerable. It’s likely you can find a fit at the two level. Even if North has only a doubleton heart, you will at least be in an eight-card fit. If your side is vulnerable, however, and your opponents are not, you might want to exercise some caution and pass.

“North will have to make a call after your Michaels cuebid, so it’s important that North knows what type of hand to expect. If your cuebid can cover too wide a range, partner won’t know whether to take further preemptive action, to be cautious or to constructively look for a game contract. The guideline, therefore, is that partner should assume you have less than the values for an opening bid when you use Michaels.

- “Change the South hand.
- “In spades: take away a low card and add the ace.
- “In hearts: take away two low cards and add the ace.
- “In diamonds: add the queen.

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
		1 ♣	1 ♠

SOUTH

♠ A K x x x

♥ A Q x x x

♦ Q x

♣ x

“**East opens with 1 ♣. What call does South make?** (1 ♠.) Although you are 5–5 in the major suits, the hand is too strong for a Michaels cuebid. Start with a simple overcall of 1 ♠. You are strong enough that it is unlikely the auction will be too high before you get another chance to bid. Even if West does raise to the two or three level, you are strong enough to introduce your second suit.

“Apart from leaving North in the dark as to your strength if you use Michaels on this type of hand, you leave yourself with a problem of what to do next.

If you were to cuebid 2♣ and North were to bid 2♥, you wouldn't know whether to bid again. After all, you've forced North to bid at the two level, and North might have a weak hand with only two-card support for hearts — or even a singleton on a really bad day.

“The caution about using the Michaels cuebid with an intermediate-strength hand of 12 to 16 points doesn't apply when you have a very strong distributional hand.

“Change the South hand.

“In spades: add the jack.

“In hearts: add the jack.

“In diamonds: take away the queen and a low card.

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
		1♣	2♣

SOUTH  
 ♠ A K J x x x  
 ♥ A Q J x x x  
 ♦ —  
 ♣ x

“**East opens the bidding 1♣. What call does South make?** (2♣.) You certainly want to insist on playing in a major suit, and the Michaels cuebid convention will get you off to a good start. You'll find out which major North prefers, and then you can raise to game. You expect to have a chance at making 4♥ or 4♠, even if North has only a couple of cards in the majors.

“The Michaels cuebid is used either with a relatively weak distributional hand with both majors or a very strong hand with both majors — not an in-between hand. Having said that, some partnerships do elect to play Michaels with intermediate-strength hands.

“Change the South hand.

“In spades: take away the ace and a low card.

“In hearts: take away the ace.

“In diamonds: add three low cards.

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
		1♣	1♥/Pass

SOUTH  
 ♠ K J x x  
 ♥ Q J x x x  
 ♦ x x x  
 ♣ x

“**East opens 1♣. What call does South make?** (1♥/Pass.) Michaels is only used with at least five cards in each major. If you were to bid 2♣, North might have to bid 2♠ with only two or three spades — putting the partnership in a very poor contract which may get doubled for penalty. Instead, you will have to choose between passing or making an overcall of 1♥, showing your five-card suit.

- “Change the South hand.
- “In spades: add a low card.
- “In hearts: take away the queen, the jack and a low card.
- “In diamonds: add the king and the queen.

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
		1 ♣	1 ♠

SOUTH

♠ K J x x x

♥ x x

♦ K Q x x x

♣ x

“**East opens the bidding 1 ♣. What call does South make? (1 ♠.)** Playing the Michaels cuebid, a cuebid of opener’s minor shows both major suits, not spades and diamonds. This hand doesn’t fit the Michaels convention. Instead, make a simple overcall of 1 ♠, the higher-ranking of the two five-card suits. You may get an opportunity to show the diamonds later. If not, you’ve done your best.

***Note to Teacher:* Keep the hand above on the table. It will be used again after doing Exercise 1.**

➡ “Let’s do Exercise 1 in the student text to review what we have just discussed.”

**Exercise One — Michaels Cuebid over a Minor**

What call would East make with each of the following hands after North opens 1♦?

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
	1♦	?	
1) ♠ Q J 9 6 5 ♥ K J 10 8 3 ♦ 8 ♣ 7 2		2) ♠ A Q J 7 6 ♥ A Q 10 8 6 3 ♦ 4 ♣ A	3) ♠ A Q 8 7 3 ♥ A K J 3 ♦ 7 3 ♣ 6 4

**Exercise One Answer — Michaels Cuebid over a Minor**

- 1) 2♦ (Michaels cuebid). The immediate cuebid of the opponent's minor suit shows both major suits and, typically, a weak hand. Competing to the two level doesn't carry too much risk if non-vulnerable, since West is likely to have a fit with at least one of the major suits. It would be riskier when vulnerable, but many players would still take a chance on competing.
- 2) 2♦ (Michaels cuebid). Although the cuebid usually shows a weak hand with both major suits, it can be used with a very strong hand. East plans to bid again after hearing which major suit West prefers.
- 3) 1♠. The distribution is not right for a Michaels cuebid, which promises at least five cards in each major. This hand is also too strong for a Michaels cuebid. Instead, overcall in the longer suit. East may get to show the hearts later in the auction.

**“If East were to open the bidding 1♥ instead of 1♣, what call would South make? (2♥.)** Although the original version of the Michaels cuebid applied only when the opening bid was a minor suit, the idea was soon extended to include a way of showing a two-suited hand over an opponent's opening bid of 1♥ or 1♠:

A direct cuebid of an opponent's opening major suit bid shows at least five cards in the other major suit and at least five cards in one of the minor suits.

**“If South were to bid 2♥ as the Michaels cuebid convention, what would North know about South's hand? (Spades and clubs or diamonds.)** South would be showing at least five cards in spades — the other major suit — and at least a five-card club suit or a five-card diamond suit. North won't know which minor suit. We'll see how North gets that information in a moment.

“As with the cuebid of a minor suit, the cuebid of a major suit tends to show a weak or very strong distributional hand. With 12 to 16 high-card points, it’s usually best to simply overcall in the major suit, planning to show the minor suit later.

“Change the South hand.

“In diamonds: take away all five cards.

“In clubs: add the ace and four low cards.

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
		1 ♥	2 ♥

SOUTH

♠ K J x x x

♥ x x

♦ —

♣ A x x x x x

“If East opens the bidding 1 ♥, what call would South make? (2 ♥.) A cuebid of 2 ♥ would show a two-suited hand with spades and an unspecified minor suit. By bidding 2 ♥, you are committing the partnership to the two level ... or the three level if partner doesn’t have a fit for spades. You don’t have to use the Michaels convention. It’s a tool you have available.

“Suppose East opens 1 ♦. What call does South make? (Pass/2 ♣/1 ♠.) You can’t cuebid 2 ♦ because that would show both major suits. When you don’t have a two-suited overcall available, the hand is awkward to describe. You could simply pass, or you could make a rather light overcall of 2 ♣ — bidding your longer suit — or you could overcall 1 ♠ — promising a five-card spade suit but keeping the true distribution of your hand hidden. Your choice would be a matter of judgment . Most players would probably overcall 1 ♠ — taking some action without getting too high.

“Change the South hand.

“In spades: take away the king and add a low card.

“In diamonds: add the king.

“In clubs: take away the ace.

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
		1 ♥	Pass

SOUTH

♠ J x x x x

♥ x x

♦ K

♣ x x x x x

“What would South call if East opened 1 ♥? (Pass.) Although a bid of 2 ♥ would show spades and a minor suit, you aren’t forced to use the Michaels cuebid just because you have the right distribution. Neither of your suits is worth showing. Bidding is likely to help the opponents more than your side.

“Change the South hand.

“In spades: take away a low card and add the ace.

“In hearts: add the king, the jack and a low card.

“In diamonds: take away the king and add a low card.

“In clubs: take away three low cards.

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
		1 ♥	1 ♠

SOUTH

♠ A J x x x

♥ K J x x x

♦ x

♣ x x

“**What would South call if East opened 1 ♥?** (1 ♠.) A cuebid of 2 ♥ would show spades and a minor suit, not both majors. Over 1 ♥, you would make a simple overcall of 1 ♠.

“**If East opened 1 ♣, what would South call?** (2 ♣.) Now you could make a Michaels cuebid showing both major suits.”

## Summary

“When the opponent on your right opens the bidding at the one level in a suit, you can use the Michaels cuebid convention to show a two-suited hand:

- A direct cuebid of opener’s minor suit shows both major suits.
- A direct cuebid of opener’s major suit shows the other major and an unspecified minor suit.

“You should have at least five cards in both suits and either a relatively weak distributional hand — less than the high-card strength for an opening bid — or a very strong distributional hand with which you intend to bid again after hearing partner’s response.”

➔ “Let’s do Exercise 2 in the student text to review what we have just discussed.”

**Exercise Two — Michaels Cuebid over a Major**

What call would East make with each of the following hands after North opens 1♥?

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
	1♥	?	
1) ♠ K J 10 7 4 ♥ 8 3 ♦ 7 ♣ K Q 10 7 5	2) ♠ Q 10 7 5 4 3 ♥ — ♦ K 10 9 8 4 2 ♣ 4	3) ♠ K Q 10 8 4 ♥ K 4 ♦ A Q 8 7 3 ♣ 5	

**Exercise Two Answer — Michaels Cuebid over a Major**

- 1) 2♥ (Michaels cuebid). The cuebid shows spades and a minor suit. If West doesn't like spades, West can respond 2NT to find out which minor suit East has. East would then bid 3♣.
- 2) 2♥ (Michaels cuebid). East doesn't need much strength to get into the auction with a two-suited hand with such good distribution. With 6–6, East should be willing to compete in whichever suit West prefers.
- 3) 1♠. This is the right distribution for a Michaels cuebid, but the hand is too strong. West would expect a much weaker hand (see previous examples), and a game could be missed. East overcalls, intending to show the second suit, if given an opportunity later in the auction.



## Advancing After a Michaels Cuebid

### Introduction

“When partner makes a Michaels cuebid, visualize partner’s two-suited hand when deciding what to call. Partner isn’t promising a lot of strength in terms of high cards. Instead, partner wants to compete on the grounds of good distribution — the possibility of having a good trump fit. The better your side’s trump fit, the more aggressively you can compete.

“The Michaels cuebid is both constructive — describing the hand and looking to compete for the contract — and obstructive — getting in the way of the opponents’ auction. It is similar to the opening weak two-bid in that sense. When choosing how to respond to the Michaels cuebid, you must decide between bidding constructively to your side’s best contract and bidding obstructively to prevent the opponents from reaching their best contract.”

### Instructions

“Leave the South hand as it is and construct a hand in front of North.

“In spades: a low card.

“In hearts: the queen and two low cards.

“In diamonds: the queen and three low cards.

“In clubs: the king, the queen and three low cards.

NORTH	<table style="border-collapse: collapse; width: 100%;"> <tr> <td style="padding: 2px 10px;">WEST</td> <td style="padding: 2px 10px;">NORTH</td> <td style="padding: 2px 10px;">EAST</td> <td style="padding: 2px 10px;">SOUTH</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="padding: 2px 10px;">Pass</td> <td style="padding: 2px 10px;">2♥</td> <td style="padding: 2px 10px;">1♦</td> <td style="padding: 2px 10px;">2♦</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="padding: 2px 10px;">Pass</td> <td style="padding: 2px 10px;">2♥</td> <td style="padding: 2px 10px;">Pass</td> <td style="padding: 2px 10px;">Pass</td> </tr> </table>	WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH	Pass	2♥	1♦	2♦	Pass	2♥	Pass	Pass	SOUTH
WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH											
Pass	2♥	1♦	2♦											
Pass	2♥	Pass	Pass											
♠ x		♠ A J x x x												
♥ Q x x		♥ K J x x x												
♦ Q x x x		♦ x												
♣ K Q x x x		♣ x x												

“**Suppose East opens 1♦. What call does South make?** (2♦.) South can make a Michaels cuebid to show five cards in each major.

“**If West passes the 2♦ cuebid, what call does North make?** (2♥.) Knowing that South has at least five hearts and five spades, North should give preference to one of the major suits. North should bid 2♥ for several reasons:

- By bidding 2♥, North puts the partnership in an eight-card major suit fit at the cheapest possible level.
- Since South will typically have less than the values for an opening bid, North has no reason to look for game, especially with such a mediocre fit with South’s suits.
- Even though North has a five-card club suit, North should not consider bidding clubs. South is unlikely to have more than one or two clubs.

- Although North–South have some length and strength in all four suits, it is unlikely that notrump will be a good choice. Without much of a fit in any suit, it will be difficult to develop enough winners. Even if winners can be developed in the heart suit, it may be difficult to reach them. By playing with hearts as trump, entries may be developed to the North hand.

**“If North bids 2♥ and East passes, what call should South make?** (Pass.) South has already described the hand with the Michaels cuebid. If North shows no interest in reaching game, South should not bid again. The partnership is high enough — or too high — already. Remember, South has essentially forced North to bid something. North’s 2♥ is not freely bid.

**“How will North–South fare in a contract of 2♥?** (Hard to say.) It’s difficult to judge how the play will go in a contract of 2♥, especially when the contract is declared from the short — three-card — side. From declarer’s perspective — the North hand — there are a lot of losers to consider: a heart loser, four diamond losers and four club losers.

“It is usually easier to consider the play from the South side — the hand with the long trump suit. From that perspective, there are four spade losers, one heart loser (assuming the missing hearts divide 3–2), one diamond loser and one club loser. It should be possible to do something about the spade losers. If the opponents don’t lead trumps, you may get to ruff a couple of spade losers in dummy. Even if the opponents do lead trumps, you can still ruff one spade loser, and you may eventually establish another winner in the spade suit through length.

“You will probably finish with at least seven tricks: four heart tricks, one club trick, the ♠A and at least one spade ruff. You might even make the 2♥ contract on a lucky lie of the cards or imperfect defense.

**“Would reaching a contract of 2♥ necessarily be a poor result?** (No.) As we’ve seen, you might actually take eight tricks. Even if you go down one trick, it’s likely that East–West can make a partscore — perhaps eight or nine tricks in diamonds or seven or eight tricks in notrump. In addition, your bidding might push the opponents into a poor contract. Perhaps they will get too high in diamonds or reach 3NT and go down when your side leads hearts — now that you know you have a fit in hearts. A lot of things can happen in a competitive auction, so the interference stands to have more to gain than to lose.

**“Suppose East opens 1♦, South makes a Michaels cuebid of 2♦ and West bids 3♦. What call does North make?** (Pass.) West’s bid relieves North from the obligation of responding to the Michaels cuebid. North can pass and choose to defend. Having described the hand with the 2♦ cuebid, South has no reason to bid again.

“Suppose East opens 1♦, South cuebids 2♦ and West doubles. What call should North make? (2♥.) West’s double does give North an opportunity to pass since South will get another call. With a preference for hearts over spades, however, North should bid 2♥.

“There are two reasons for this:

- If North passes, South will assume that North has equal preference—or lack of preference—for hearts and spades. It will be up to South to choose the trump suit, and South may bid 2♠ rather than 2♥. Now the partnership will have to go to the three level to get to its best fit.
- If North–South are in trouble, a pass by North followed by an attempt to reach the best spot will let East–West know exactly how much trouble they are in. East–West might start doubling. If North bids a confident 2♥ right away, East–West may be unaware that North–South are in a poor contract. They are more likely to simply continue and bid on to their own contract.

“Change the North hand.

“In spades: add a low card.

“In hearts: take away the queen.

NORTH ♠ x x ♥ x x ♦ Q x x x ♣ K Q x x x	<table style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <td style="width: 25%; text-align: center;">WEST</td> <td style="width: 25%; text-align: center;">NORTH</td> <td style="width: 25%; text-align: center;">EAST</td> <td style="width: 25%; text-align: center;">SOUTH</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;">Pass</td> <td style="text-align: center;">2♥</td> <td style="text-align: center;">1♦</td> <td style="text-align: center;">2♦</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;">Pass</td> <td style="text-align: center;">Pass</td> <td style="text-align: center;">Pass</td> <td style="text-align: center;">Pass</td> </tr> </table>	WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH	Pass	2♥	1♦	2♦	Pass	Pass	Pass	Pass	SOUTH ♠ A J x x x ♥ K J x x x ♦ x ♣ x x
WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH											
Pass	2♥	1♦	2♦											
Pass	Pass	Pass	Pass											

“If East opens 1♦, what call does South make? (2♦.) South starts with a Michaels cuebid.

“If West passes, what call does North make? (2♥.) If West passes, North has to make some call or the partnership will be playing in the opponent’s suit! Distasteful as it is, North should call 2♥, the cheapest available bid in one of South’s known suits.

“If East passes, what call does South make? (Pass.) You can see why South usually should pass North’s response to the Michaels cuebid. South already may have pushed the partnership too high.

“How will North fare if left to play in 2♥? (Poorly.) North will really have to work hard to take more than four or five tricks. The Michaels cuebid doesn’t guarantee success when competing. It can occasionally get the partnership to a poor contract. You just have to hope this is the exception, not the rule.

“Suppose East opens 1♦, South bids 2♦ and West doubles. Now what should North call? (Pass/2♥.) With no preference for either major suit, North can pass and leave the decision to South. South will have to pick one of the major suits—the longer major if South has more cards in one

major than the other, or the stronger major if South has equal length in the two suits.

“As mentioned before, North’s pass is likely to invite East–West to start doubling whichever suit South picks. A confident 2♥ call by North might stave off this possibility — although it also might land the partnership in the wrong suit. Sometimes, you just have to do your best in a difficult situation. Let’s turn to the more positive situations where North does have a good fit with at least one of South’s suits.

“Change the North hand.

“In hearts: add the ace and the queen.

“In clubs: take away the king and the queen.

NORTH	<table style="border-collapse: collapse; width: 100%;"> <tr> <td style="padding: 2px 10px;">WEST</td> <td style="padding: 2px 10px;">NORTH</td> <td style="padding: 2px 10px;">EAST</td> <td style="padding: 2px 10px;">SOUTH</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="padding: 2px 10px;">Pass</td> <td style="padding: 2px 10px;">3♥</td> <td style="padding: 2px 10px;">1♦</td> <td style="padding: 2px 10px;">2♦</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="padding: 2px 10px;">Pass</td> <td style="padding: 2px 10px;">3♥</td> <td style="padding: 2px 10px;">Pass</td> <td style="padding: 2px 10px;">Pass</td> </tr> </table>	WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH	Pass	3♥	1♦	2♦	Pass	3♥	Pass	Pass	SOUTH
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Pass	3♥	Pass	Pass											
♠ x x		1♦	2♦	♠ A J x x x										
♥ A Q x x		Pass	Pass	♥ K J x x x										
♦ Q x x x				♦ x										
♣ x x x				♣ x x										

“**Suppose East opens 1♦, South bids 2♦ and West passes. What call does North make?** (2♥/3♥/4♥.) North has a good fit with one of South’s majors, but it is unlikely that the partnership has enough for game, since South has less than the values for an opening bid. North could settle for 2♥, hoping to make that contract, but that doesn’t take advantage of the obstructive value of the Michaels cuebid. If North–South have a good fit, it is likely that East–West also have a good fit. If North bids only 2♥, East–West still may have plenty of room to find their best contract.

“A better choice is a jump to 3♥. This is a preemptive raise, not an invitation to game — although South could bid game with exceptional distribution. With a strong hand, North could bid game or cuebid the opponents’ suit. This bid is designed to get North–South to a reasonably safe level while making things difficult for the opponents. North might even jump to 4♥ as a preemptive action, but that might be taking things a little too far.

“**If North does jump to 3♥ and East passes, what call should South make?** (Pass.) South has a fairly typical hand for a Michaels cuebid — about what North could expect — and, therefore, has no reason to bid again. Hopefully, North’s preemptive action has done its work — getting the partnership to a reasonable spot while keeping East–West out of the auction.

“**If South and West pass, how will North fare in a 3♥ contract?** (Eight or nine tricks.) Although North will be declarer, it is still easier to look at the play from South’s perspective. From South’s point of view, there are four spade losers, one diamond loser and two club losers. The contract can be made if the spade losers can be held to one trick. This should be possible by ruffing one or two spade losers in the North hand. The remaining spades in the South hand should become winners. Unless suits divide very badly, North should be able to get away with one spade loser, one diamond loser

and two heart losers — making exactly 3♥.

“**How would East–West fare in a diamond or club contract?** (At least nine tricks.) East–West should be able to take at least nine tricks in diamonds or clubs. At most they are likely to lose one spade trick, two heart tricks and one diamond trick. If their four hearts are divided 3–1, they will lose only one heart trick. They also may avoid losing a diamond trick with the help of a successful finesse. They might make game their way. So, the jump to 3♥ could be effective in that way, even if North–South can’t take nine tricks. East–West could miss a partscore or a game contract — or they might be pushed into bidding too much.

“Change the North hand.

“In spades: take away a low card and add the king.

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WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH											
Pass	4♥	1♦	2♦											
Pass	4♥	Pass	Pass											

“**Suppose East opens 1♦ and South bids 2♦. West passes. What call does North make?** (4♥/3♦.) To bid accurately opposite a Michaels cuebid requires good judgment. Instead of counting the combined points, you need to visualize how the two hands will fit together. Here, you have only 11 high-card points and 2 of them — the ♦Q — are likely to be worthless. Nonetheless, it would be a reasonable gamble to jump to 4♥.

“Not only do you have a good fit in hearts — at least nine cards in the combined hands — you have some help in South’s other suit, spades. South has at most three cards in the minor suits, so you have at most three losers outside of hearts and spades. You probably have no heart losers. Even if you are missing the ♥K — which is unlikely — you may be able to avoid a loser with the help of a finesse. If South holds the ♠A, you can visualize avoiding any losers in the spade suit. Declarer should be able to ruff any losing spades in North’s hand and establish any remaining spades as winners.

“**If North does bid 4♥ and everyone passes, how will the contract fare?** (Ten tricks.) Unless the major suits divide very unfavorably, North should make 4♥, losing only one diamond and two clubs. So, the Michaels cuebid can help you reach a good game contract with only 20 high-card points in the combined hands. In fact, you might take 10 tricks without the ♠J, the ♦Q and the ♥J — only 16 high-card points. That’s the power of the descriptive value of the Michaels cuebid.

“It is possible to be more scientific. Instead of jumping to 4♥, North might want to find out whether South has a minimum or a maximum for the Michaels cuebid.

“**What forcing bid can North make?** (3♦.) A further cuebid of the opponents’ suit is forcing for one round and shows at least enough strength to be interested in game. With a minimum for the Michaels cuebid, South would bid 3♥. With more than a minimum, South should make some other call.

“**If North were to cuebid 3♦, what call would South make?** (4♥/3♥). With 9 high-card points concentrated in the major suits, South has a good hand for the Michaels cuebid, especially if non vulnerable. South should probably jump to 4♥, showing a willingness to play in game in whichever major North prefers. If vulnerable, South might take a more conservative view and rebid only 3♥. South probably wouldn’t make a vulnerable Michaels cuebid with much less. As you can see, both partners must exercise their judgment when trying to reach the appropriate level.

“Change the South hand.

“In spades: take away the ace and add the queen.

NORTH ♠ K x ♥ A Q x x ♦ Q x x x ♣ x x x	<table style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <thead> <tr> <th style="width: 25%;">WEST</th> <th style="width: 25%;">NORTH</th> <th style="width: 25%;">EAST</th> <th style="width: 25%;">SOUTH</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td></td> <td></td> <td>1♣</td> <td>2♣</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Pass</td> <td>3♣</td> <td>Pass</td> <td>3♥</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Pass</td> <td>Pass</td> <td>Pass</td> <td></td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH			1♣	2♣	Pass	3♣	Pass	3♥	Pass	Pass	Pass		SOUTH ♠ Q J x x x ♥ K J x x x ♦ x ♣ x x
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“**Suppose East opens 1♣ and South, non vulnerable, overcalls 2♣. West passes, and North shows interest in reaching game by cuebidding 3♣. What call does South make?** (3♥.) With a very minimal Michaels cuebid, South should bid 3♥.

“**What call would North make now?** (Pass.) Since South has shown a minimum, North can settle for 3♥.

“Change the North hand.

“In spades: add two low cards.

“In hearts: take away two low cards.

NORTH ♠ K x x x ♥ A Q ♦ Q x x x ♣ x x x	<table style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <thead> <tr> <th style="width: 25%;">WEST</th> <th style="width: 25%;">NORTH</th> <th style="width: 25%;">EAST</th> <th style="width: 25%;">SOUTH</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td></td> <td></td> <td>1♣</td> <td>2♣</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Pass</td> <td>3♣</td> <td>Pass</td> <td>3♥</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Pass</td> <td>3♠</td> <td>Pass</td> <td>Pass</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Pass</td> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH			1♣	2♣	Pass	3♣	Pass	3♥	Pass	3♠	Pass	Pass	Pass				SOUTH ♠ Q J x x x ♥ K J x x x ♦ x ♣ x x
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		1♣	2♣																			
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“**Suppose East opens 1♣ and South overcalls 2♣. What call might North make to show an interest in reaching game?** (3♣.) The cuebid shows at least game interest. With a good fit with partner’s major suits, North is interested in reaching a game in spades if South has a good hand.

“**If North cuebids 3♣, what call does South make?** (3♥.) With a minimum Michaels cuebid, South bids hearts at the cheapest available level.

South doesn't know whether North is interested in reaching game in hearts or spades — or something else. South is simply showing a minimum hand by bidding 3♥.

**“After South bids 3♥, what call does North make? (3♠.)** North corrects to 3♠, putting the partnership in its best trump fit.

**“What call does South make now? (Pass.)** South has the same minimum hand and should pass 3♠. North has merely clarified which suit should be trump.

“Delicate investigation is a little tricky opposite a Michaels cuebid. Although it will sometimes be possible, in most cases the advancer should simply make a reasonable decision on the best level for the partnership and get to it right away. Besides, most of the time, the opponents also will be competing vigorously for the contract, so there won't be much room for accuracy — both sides will be guessing.

“Change the North hand.

“In hearts: take away the ace and add two low cards.

“In diamonds: take away the queen.

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Double	4♠													

**“Suppose North-South are non vulnerable and East opens 1♦. What call might South make? (2♦.)** Whether East opens 1♣ or 1♦, South could make a Michaels cuebid with this hand when non vulnerable.

**“Suppose West doubles the 2♦ bid. What call does North make? (2♠/3♠/4♠.)** West's double could mean various things depending on the East-West agreements. Most likely, it shows some strength in diamonds. Whatever it means, however, shouldn't affect North's decision. Since South is showing both major suits and North has only 5 high-card points, North might take the conservative view of bidding 2♠. That's not likely to get the partnership into much trouble since there is at least a nine-card fit. A more aggressive bid would be a preemptive jump to 3♠, taking some bidding room away from the opponents. The truly aggressive bid, however, is a jump to 4♠!

**“Looking at the combined hands, how are North-South likely to fare in a contract of 4♠? (Down two or more.)** There's at least one spade loser and one heart loser, even if both suits are divided reasonably in the East-West hands. Since South has a singleton diamond and a doubleton club, North-South will have to lose at least three tricks in those suits. The best North-South could hope for is to go down two tricks. If the major suits divide unfavorably, it's possible that 4♠ could be defeated three or four tricks.

“So, the best case scenario is that North–South might be doubled and escape for a penalty of 300 points, since they are non vulnerable.

“**Would that be a disaster?** (No.) Since North-South have only 12 HCPs, East–West have 28 HCPs and probably some distributional points as well. They can make at least a game contract and, very likely a slam contract. Whatever game contract they might reach will be worth far more than 300 points.”

If the students don’t believe this, have them randomly deal out the remaining cards to East and West and see what contract East–West can make. East–West will have at least 10 tricks in notrump and 11 tricks in either 5♣ or 5♦ — most likely 12 or even 13 tricks.

“By jumping to 4♠, North is risking a loss of 300 or 500 points in the hope that East–West will misjudge the situation. East–West may double for penalty when they would get more for bidding a game, or settle for game when they can make a slam, or get to slam when they can make only game.

“In addition, East–West may not know whether North’s jump to 4♠ is based on values — with the expectation of making the contract — or based on weakness. They might even let North–South escape undoubled in a 4♠ contract.

“North should probably bid 4♠ over almost any bid that East makes — 3♣, 3♦, 2NT, 3NT and so forth.

“Change the North hand.

“In diamonds: take away a low card and add the ace.

“Change the South hand.

“In spades: take away the queen, the jack and a low card.

“In clubs: add the ace, the queen and a low card.

<p>NORTH</p> <p>♠ K x x x</p> <p>♥ Q x x</p> <p>♦ A x x</p> <p>♣ x x x</p>	<table style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <td style="width: 25%; padding: 5px;">WEST</td> <td style="width: 25%; padding: 5px;">NORTH</td> <td style="width: 25%; padding: 5px;">EAST</td> <td style="width: 25%; padding: 5px;">SOUTH</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="padding: 5px;">Pass</td> <td style="padding: 5px;">3♥</td> <td style="padding: 5px;">1♠</td> <td style="padding: 5px;">2♠</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="padding: 5px;">Pass</td> <td style="padding: 5px;"></td> <td style="padding: 5px;">Pass</td> <td style="padding: 5px;">Pass</td> </tr> </table>	WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH	Pass	3♥	1♠	2♠	Pass		Pass	Pass	<p>SOUTH</p> <p>♠ x x</p> <p>♥ K J x x x</p> <p>♦ x</p> <p>♣ A Q x x x</p>
WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH											
Pass	3♥	1♠	2♠											
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“**Suppose East opens 1♠. What call does South make?** (2♠.) South can cuebid 2♠ to show a two-suited hand with hearts and a minor suit.

“**If West passes, what call does North make?** (3♥.) With only 9 HCPs and a mediocre fit with partner, North isn’t interested in reaching game opposite a Michaels cuebid. Instead, North wants to get the partnership to the best partscore. North doesn’t know which minor suit South has — but doesn’t care. With three-card support for hearts, North can bid 3♥, putting the partnership in an eight-card fit.

“**If East passes North’s 3♥ bid, what call does South make?** (Pass.) South has described the hand with the Michaels cuebid. With nothing extra, South respects North’s decision to play in partscore. In fact, the partnership



may be too high already.

“Change the North hand.

“In hearts: take away the queen and a low card.

“In diamonds: add the jack.

“In clubs: add a low card.

NORTH	<table style="border-collapse: collapse; width: 100%;"> <tr> <td style="padding: 2px 10px;">WEST</td> <td style="padding: 2px 10px;">NORTH</td> <td style="padding: 2px 10px;">EAST</td> <td style="padding: 2px 10px;">SOUTH</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="padding: 2px 10px;">♠ K x x x</td> <td style="padding: 2px 10px;"></td> <td style="padding: 2px 10px;">1 ♠</td> <td style="padding: 2px 10px;">2 ♠</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="padding: 2px 10px;">♥ x</td> <td style="padding: 2px 10px;">Pass</td> <td style="padding: 2px 10px;">2NT</td> <td style="padding: 2px 10px;">Pass</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="padding: 2px 10px;">♦ A J x x</td> <td style="padding: 2px 10px;">Pass</td> <td style="padding: 2px 10px;">Pass</td> <td style="padding: 2px 10px;">3 ♣</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="padding: 2px 10px;">♣ x x x x</td> <td style="padding: 2px 10px;">Pass</td> <td style="padding: 2px 10px;">Pass</td> <td style="padding: 2px 10px;">Pass</td> </tr> </table>	WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH	♠ K x x x		1 ♠	2 ♠	♥ x	Pass	2NT	Pass	♦ A J x x	Pass	Pass	3 ♣	♣ x x x x	Pass	Pass	Pass	SOUTH
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“Suppose East opens 1 ♠, South overcalls 2 ♠ and West passes. What call does North make? (2NT.) North doesn’t like hearts and wants to play in the partnership’s minor-suit fit. To ask which minor South holds, North bids 2NT. 2NT is conventional (artificial) and simply asks partner to bid the minor suit.

“If North bids 2NT and East passes, what call does South make? (3 ♣.) South bids the minor suit at the cheapest available level.

“If West passes, what call does North make? (Pass.) North is happy to play in a partscore in the nine-card minor-suit fit.

“Change the North hand.

“In spades: take away the king and two low cards.

“In hearts: add the queen.

“In diamonds: add a low card.

“In clubs: add the king.

NORTH	<table style="border-collapse: collapse; width: 100%;"> <tr> <td style="padding: 2px 10px;">WEST</td> <td style="padding: 2px 10px;">NORTH</td> <td style="padding: 2px 10px;">EAST</td> <td style="padding: 2px 10px;">SOUTH</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="padding: 2px 10px;">♠ x</td> <td style="padding: 2px 10px;"></td> <td style="padding: 2px 10px;">1 ♠</td> <td style="padding: 2px 10px;">2 ♠</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="padding: 2px 10px;">♥ Q x</td> <td style="padding: 2px 10px;">4 ♠</td> <td style="padding: 2px 10px;">4NT</td> <td style="padding: 2px 10px;">Pass</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="padding: 2px 10px;">♦ A J x x x</td> <td style="padding: 2px 10px;">Pass</td> <td style="padding: 2px 10px;">Pass</td> <td style="padding: 2px 10px;">5 ♣</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="padding: 2px 10px;">♣ K x x x x</td> <td style="padding: 2px 10px;">Pass</td> <td style="padding: 2px 10px;">Pass</td> <td style="padding: 2px 10px;">Pass</td> </tr> </table>	WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH	♠ x		1 ♠	2 ♠	♥ Q x	4 ♠	4NT	Pass	♦ A J x x x	Pass	Pass	5 ♣	♣ K x x x x	Pass	Pass	Pass	SOUTH
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♠ x		1 ♠	2 ♠																			
♥ Q x	4 ♠	4NT	Pass																			
♦ A J x x x	Pass	Pass	5 ♣																			
♣ K x x x x	Pass	Pass	Pass																			
			♠ x x																			
			♥ K J x x x																			
			♦ x																			
			♣ A Q x x x																			

“East opens 1 ♠, and South overcalls 2 ♠. Suppose West jumps to 4 ♠. What call does North make? (4NT.) It’s probably not a good idea to choose to defend 4 ♠ when you know your side has at least a 10-card minor-suit fit and a partial fit in hearts. To find out which minor suit partner holds, North bids 4NT. This isn’t the Blackwood convention; it simply asks South to name the minor suit.

“If North bids 4NT and East doubles or passes, what call does South make? (5 ♣.) South bids the minor suit at the cheapest available level.”

The following point should be made only if the class is reasonably advanced.

**“Suppose East bids 1 ♠, South makes a Michaels cuebid of 2 ♠ and West bids 3 ♠. What call does North make? (4 ♣/4NT.)** West’s 3 ♠ bid takes away North’s artificial 2NT bid. If North wants to compete at the four level in a minor suit, North must bid 4 ♣, not 3NT. The standard agreement is that 3NT is always a natural bid — to play — after a Michaels cuebid. The advancer has no other way to play game in notrump with a strong hand. So, to compete at the four level, the advancer has to bid 4 ♣. South is now expected to pass with clubs but to ‘correct’ to 4 ♦ when diamonds is the second suit. Instead, North could jump to 4NT. That would not be Blackwood ... since it is highly unlikely that North–South are looking for slam in a competitive auction. It would ask South to name the minor suit.

“It’s subtleties like this that can lead to misunderstandings when a partnership adopts a new convention. It will work well when the auction continues in a predictable manner, but it may get the partnership into trouble when the auction moves into uncharted waters.”

## Summary

“When partner makes a Michaels cuebid over a minor suit, showing both major suits, the advancer can:

- Give preference with 2 ♥ or 2 ♠ with no interest in game.
- Make a preemptive jump to 3 ♥ or 3 ♠.
- Jump to 4 ♥ or 4 ♠ to play. This could be preemptive, or it could be bid with the intention of making the contract.
- Make a further cuebid in the opponents’ suit to show at least game-invitational values.
- Bid 2NT as a natural invitational bid, or bid 3NT to play — although this is rarely done opposite a two-suited hand.

“When partner makes a Michaels cuebid over a major suit, showing the other major and a minor suit, the advancer bids in a similar fashion with the exception that:

- 2NT (or 4NT) is conventional (artificial), asking partner to bid the minor suit.”

➡ “Let’s do Exercise 3 in the student text to review what we have just discussed.”

**Exercise Three — Advancing After a Michaels Cuebid**

What would West respond with each of the following hands after East uses a Michaels Cuebid?

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
?	1♥	2♥	Pass
1) ♠ 10 7 2 ♥ Q 8 7 6 ♦ Q 8 3 ♣ K 7 2		2) ♠ K 10 7 5 ♥ 6 ♦ J 9 6 2 ♣ Q 6 5 4	3) ♠ 8 ♥ 10 8 7 6 3 ♦ K 4 2 ♣ J 9 6 5
4) ♠ K Q 8 4 ♥ A 8 3 ♦ K 7 4 ♣ K 8 2		5) ♠ K 10 5 4 2 ♥ 6 5 3 ♦ Q 7 6 5 ♣ 10	6) ♠ 10 7 ♥ 6 ♦ A J 9 8 3 ♣ A K 10 6 2

**Exercise Three Answer — Advancing After a Michaels Cuebid**

- 1) 2♠. East is showing at least five spades and five cards in a minor suit. West puts the partnership in its eight-card fit at the cheapest available level.
- 2) 3♠ (or 4♠). There is at least a nine-card fit in spades and also a nine-card fit in whichever minor suit East holds. 3♠ may not make, but if that's the case, the opponents can probably make, at least a game in hearts. West should not leave room for them to find their best spot. If West is aggressive, West might jump to 4♠.
- 3) 2NT. West doesn't like spades; 2NT asks which minor suit East holds. West intends to pass whether East bids 3♣ or 3♦.
- 4) 3♥. With an excellent fit in spades and a strong hand, West expects to make at least 4♠. Slam is still a possibility, since West also has a useful king in whichever minor suit East holds. Cuebidding the opponent's suit shows at least game-invitational values. If East makes a minimum bid, 3♠ for example, West bids game. By bidding game in this manner, West shows interest in slam. If East shows a good hand by jumping to 4♠, West can investigate bidding slam. East-West might make a slam, if East has as little as:

♠A 10 9 7 2   ♥7 2   ♦A Q 10 6 3   ♣6.

- 5) 4♠. The partnership has at least a ten-card fit in spades. If East's other suit is diamonds, there is a good fit in two suits. If East's other suit is clubs, there isn't more than one loser in that suit, and East won't have many hearts and diamonds. If 4♠ doesn't make, the opponents will have at least a game — and maybe a slam — in hearts.
- 6) 4NT. Whichever minor suit East holds, there is a tremendous fit. West asks East to show the minor suit at the game level.

## More About the Michaels Cuebid

### Introduction

“Once the partnership is familiar with the basic form of the Michaels cuebid, its use can be extended to other situations.”

### Instructions

“Remove the North hand and change the South hand.

“In spades: add the ace, the jack and a low card.

“In clubs: take away the ace, the queen and a low card.

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
1♦	Pass	Pass	2♦

SOUTH

♠ A J x x x

♥ K J x x x

♦ x

♣ x x

“**Suppose West opens the bidding 1♦ and both North and East pass. What call does South make? (2♦.)** The Michaels cuebid can be used in the balancing position. By cuebidding 2♦, South shows both major suits.

“**Suppose South is the dealer and decides to pass. West opens 1♣, North passes and East responds 1NT. What call can South make? (2♣.)** Even though South is a passed hand, North should be able to work out that a cuebid of 2♣ is the Michaels convention, showing both majors.

“Change the South hand.

“In hearts: add the ace.

“In clubs: take away a low card.

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
		2♦	3♦

SOUTH

♠ A J x x x

♥ A K J x x x

♦ x

♣ x

“**You hold the South hand, and East opens the bidding with a weak 2♦ bid. What call can South make? (3♦.)** The immediate cuebid over a weak two-bid could be used to show a very strong hand or given some other meaning by the partnership. However, most partnerships that use the Michaels cuebid would assume that a 3♦ cuebid was showing both major suits.

“In this situation, South would promise a reasonably good hand with both major suits. When the opponents open with a preemptive bid, you should not also make an obstructive bid.

**“Suppose West deals and opens the bidding 1♣. North passes, and East raises to 2♣. What call does South make? (3♣.)** You could simply overcall 2♥, but it will be awkward to show the spades later if West or East compete further in clubs. Instead, a cuebid of 3♣ will likely be interpreted by partner as the Michaels cuebid convention, showing both major suits.

**“Suppose East is the dealer and opens 3♣. How might South describe this hand? (4♣.)** Again, most partnerships would assume that a bid of 4♣ would be the Michaels cuebid convention, showing both major suits.”

## Summary

“The basic concept of the Michaels cuebid convention can be extended into areas of the auction other than a direct cuebid at the two level. Before doing this, however, the partnership should discuss the various sequences that might occur. Otherwise, it’s possible for the partnership to have some misunderstandings.”

➡ “Let’s do Exercise 4 in the student text to review what we have just discussed.”

**Exercise Four — More about the Michaels Cuebid**

What call does West make with each of the following hands after an opponent has interfered?

1)	♠ Q 8 6 ♥ J 3 ♦ Q 9 6 3 ♣ K 10 7 4	<b>WEST</b> ?	NORTH 1♣	EAST 2♣	SOUTH 3♣
2)	♠ 7 3 ♥ 4 ♦ A J 7 4 2 ♣ A Q 8 6 3	<b>WEST</b> ?	NORTH 1♥	EAST 2♥	SOUTH 4♥
3)	♠ 2 ♥ Q J 8 6 4 ♦ 9 3 ♣ A Q 10 7 5	<b>WEST</b> 2♠ ?	NORTH 3♠	EAST 3NT	SOUTH 1♠ Pass
4)	♠ Q 2 ♥ 10 8 6 3 ♦ 7 5 2 ♣ 9 7 5 3	<b>WEST</b> Pass ?	NORTH 1♦ 4♦	EAST 2♦ Double	SOUTH 3♦ Pass
5)	♠ K J 10 8 6 3 ♥ 6 ♦ A Q 8 7 5 2 ♣ —	<b>WEST</b> ?	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH 2♥

**Exercise Four Answer — More about the Michaels Cuebid**

- 1) Pass. The opponent's 3♣ bid has let West off the hook. It's no longer necessary for West to give preference to one of East's major suits.
- 2) 4NT. East is showing spades and a minor suit. West asks East to bid the minor suit at the five level. Even if East–West can't make 5♣ or 5♦, the opponents can probably make 4♥.
- 3) Pass. East's 3NT is to play. East would have bid 4♣, if interested in playing in a minor suit.
- 4) 4♥. East's initial Michaels cuebid showed a weak hand with both major suits. The subsequent cuebid, however, shows a strong hand. East wants to play in a major suit at the game level. West shows preference for hearts. Even though West has only 2 points, there is a good chance to make a game.
- 5) 3♥. This is an extended form of the Michaels cuebid, showing spades and a minor suit — if that is the partnership's agreement. When not certain of the agreement, it's safer to overcall 2♠ and hope to show the diamonds later.

## The Unusual Notrump

### Introduction

“A convention similar to the Michaels cuebid is the unusual notrump convention. It was introduced to the game in 1948 by Al Roth and Tobias Stone, and this convention is considered a standard part of the game today — even by many people who don’t play tournament bridge.”

### Instructions

“Pick up all the cards and put them into suits. Construct the following hand in front of South.

“In spades: a low card.

“In hearts: a low card.

“In diamonds: the king, the queen and three low cards.

“In clubs: the king, the jack, the ten and three low cards.

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
		1 ♥	2NT

SOUTH

♠ x

♥ x

♦ K Q x x x

♣ K J 10 x x x

“**East is the dealer and opens the bidding 1 ♥. What call does South make?** (2NT/Pass/2 ♣.) You could simply pass or overcall your long suit, 2 ♣. Neither of these bids describes your hand very well. If you were to choose to overcall 2 ♣ and West jumped to 4 ♥, for example, you might miss a big fit in diamonds.

“To show this type of two-suited hand, Roth and Stone suggested that, over an opening bid of 1 ♥ or 1 ♠, a jump to 2NT should be used to show both minor suits. They reasoned that the jump overcall of 2NT didn’t have much practical use as a natural bid. It’s rare to hold a balanced hand with more than 20 points when an opponent opens the bidding. If you ever do, there are other ways to handle the auction — by starting with a takeout double and then bidding 2NT, for example.

“Similar to the Michaels cuebid, the unusual 2NT bid tends to show a very distributional hand with at least five cards in each suit. It tends to be obstructive — not much in the way of high-card strength — while giving your side a good chance to compete in one of the suits. The partnership may be able to find a cheap sacrifice if the opponents reach game. Occasionally, the partnership might reach a good game or slam based on having an excellent fit.

“**What call would South make if East opened 1 ♠ instead of 1 ♥?** (2NT.) The unusual notrump shows both minor suits over an opening bid of either 1 ♥ or 1 ♠.

- “Change the South hand.
- “In spades: take away a low card.
- “In diamonds: add the ace.

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
		1 ♥	2NT

SOUTH

♠ —

♥ x

♦ A K Q x x x

♣ K J 10 x x x

“**East opens 1 ♥. What call does South make?** (2NT.) With quite a strong distributional hand and both minor suits, you can still start with 2NT. Partner will assume you have the weaker type of hand, but you can show the added strength and distribution by bidding again after partner shows a preference for one of the minor suits. If partner bids 3 ♣, for example, you can raise to 4 ♣ or 5 ♣, or you could now cuebid 3 ♥ or 3 ♠ — showing interest in reaching a slam if partner has just the right cards.

“Cuebidding, after using a convention such as Michaels or the unusual notrump, requires good partnership trust and cooperation. Otherwise, there’s always the possibility that partner will get confused about what is going on and you might land in a poor contract.

- “Change the South hand.
- “In spades: add a low card.
- “In hearts: add the queen and a low card.
- “In diamonds: take away the king.
- “In clubs: take away two low cards.

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
		1 ♠	Dbl/2 ♦

SOUTH

♠ x

♥ Q x x

♦ A Q x x x

♣ K J 10 x

“**What call would South make if East opens 1 ♠?** (Double/2 ♦.) This would not be a good hand for an unusual 2NT overcall. You only have four-card support for clubs, and you have an intermediate-strength hand. You wouldn’t be sure what to do if partner responded 3 ♣ or 3 ♦, for example. Partner will be assuming you have a weak distributional hand. Besides, you might belong in a heart contract.

“Instead, you’ll have to choose between making a takeout double or making a simple overcall of 2 ♦. Either call would be reasonable.



“If East opened the bidding 1♥, what call would South make? (2♦/Pass.) Again, bidding 2NT to show both minor suits would be a poor choice. You would be committing the partnership to at least the three level, and you don’t have a very distributional hand. The opponents might start doubling, and you could suffer a large penalty while the opponents may not even be able to make game.

“Instead, choose between overcalling 2♦ or passing. Your decision might depend on the vulnerability. Overcalling 2♦ is a little risky if your side is vulnerable and the opponents are not, but most players would overcall 2♦ at any other vulnerability.

“Change the South hand.

“In hearts: add three low cards.

“In clubs: take away the king, the jack and a low card.

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH	
		1♣	2NT	SOUTH
				♠ x
				♥ Q x x x x x
				♦ A Q x x x
				♣ 10

“Suppose East opens the bidding 1♣? What call would South make? (2NT/1♥.) You could make a simple overcall of 1♥, perhaps hoping to get to show the diamond suit later. With a fairly weak distributional hand, however, you may not get a second opportunity. The opponents might be at a high level in spades or clubs when the auction comes back to you, and your side might miss a good diamond fit.

“Most modern partnerships have extended the use of the unusual notrump to show the two lowest-ranking unbid suits rather than specifically showing clubs and diamonds. Over a 1♣ opening, a jump to 2NT would then show hearts and diamonds, the two lower-ranking suits excluding clubs. That would be a very descriptive bid, allowing your partnership to compete and create some obstruction for the opponents.

“If East opens the bidding 1♠ rather than 1♣, what call would South make? (2♠.) You can’t use the unusual notrump, because that would show the two lowest-ranking unbid suits, clubs and diamonds. Instead, you could use the Michaels cuebid to show a distributional hand with hearts and an unspecified minor suit.

“You can see how the Michaels cuebid and the unusual notrump are very similar. Depending on whether East opens 1♣ or 1♠, you have different ways to show a two-suited hand, and partner will be picking a suit at the three level or higher in this case.

**“Is there any disadvantage to using the Michaels cuebid or the unusual notrump on hands such as this? (Too high / Give away information.)** There’s always the risk that partner will not have a fit with either of your suits. You could get the partnership too high on a misfitting hand — and the penalty doubling might start. In describing your hand to North, you also are describing your hand to the opponents. This is likely to help the opponents during the play. You’ll have to weigh the advantages of entering the bidding and disrupting the opponents’ auction against the possible disadvantages.”

### **Summary**

“When the opponents open the bidding one of a suit:

- A jump to 2NT shows a two-suited hand with at least five cards in each of the two lowest-ranking unbid suits.
- The unusual 2NT usually promises a relatively weak distributional hand, although it can occasionally be used with a strong hand.”

➡ “Let’s do Exercise 5 in the student text to review what we have just discussed.”

**Exercise Five — The Unusual Notrump**

What call would East make with each of the following hands after North opens 1♥?

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
	1♥	?	
1) ♠ 7 ♥ 5 ♦ K J 8 7 6 5 ♣ A J 10 8 5		2) ♠ 8 4 ♥ 7 3 ♦ A K J 8 7 ♣ A K 10 2	3) ♠ A J 9 8 7 ♥ 8 6 ♦ 3 ♣ K Q 10 8 5

**Exercise Five Answer — The Unusual Notrump**

- 1) 2NT (unusual 2NT). This shows the two lower-ranking unbid suits, clubs and diamonds. If West has a fit for one of the suits, East–West should be safe at the three level.
- 2) 2♦. The unusual 2NT shows at least five cards in both lower-ranking unbid suits. Also, it tends to show a weak hand. Bidding 2NT with this hand would send the wrong description to West. East settles for an overcall in the good five-card diamond suit.
- 3) 2♥ (Michaels cuebid) or 1♠. 2NT would show the two lower-ranking unbid suits, clubs and diamonds. The Michaels cuebid is available to show spades and a minor suit by bidding 2♥. Another option is a simple overcall of 1♠.

## Advancing After the Unusual Notrump

### Introduction

“When partner makes an unusual 2NT bid, you respond in a fashion similar to a Michaels cuebid. You assume partner has a fairly weak distributional hand and typically choose one of the suits as the trump suit. You make a further obstructive bid by jumping in one of the suits and look for a game or slam contract with an excellent fit.”

### Instructions

“Leave the South hand face up on the table and construct a hand in front of North.

“In spades: the king and three low cards.

“In hearts: a low card.

“In diamonds: the jack and two low cards.

“In clubs: the ace, the jack and three low cards.

NORTH	<table style="border-collapse: collapse; width: 100%;"> <tr> <td style="padding: 2px 10px;">WEST</td> <td style="padding: 2px 10px;">NORTH</td> <td style="padding: 2px 10px;">EAST</td> <td style="padding: 2px 10px;">SOUTH</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="padding: 2px 10px;">♠ K x x x</td> <td style="padding: 2px 10px;"></td> <td style="padding: 2px 10px;">1 ♣</td> <td style="padding: 2px 10px;">2NT</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="padding: 2px 10px;">♥ x</td> <td style="padding: 2px 10px;">3 ♦</td> <td style="padding: 2px 10px;">Pass</td> <td style="padding: 2px 10px;">Pass</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="padding: 2px 10px;">♦ J x x</td> <td style="padding: 2px 10px;">Pass</td> <td style="padding: 2px 10px;"></td> <td style="padding: 2px 10px;"></td> </tr> <tr> <td style="padding: 2px 10px;">♣ A J x x x</td> <td style="padding: 2px 10px;"></td> <td style="padding: 2px 10px;"></td> <td style="padding: 2px 10px;"></td> </tr> </table>	WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH	♠ K x x x		1 ♣	2NT	♥ x	3 ♦	Pass	Pass	♦ J x x	Pass			♣ A J x x x				SOUTH
WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH																			
♠ K x x x		1 ♣	2NT																			
♥ x	3 ♦	Pass	Pass																			
♦ J x x	Pass																					
♣ A J x x x																						
		♠ x																				
		♥ Q x x x x x																				
		♦ A Q x x x																				
		♣ 10																				

“**East opens 1 ♣. What call does South make?** (2NT.) South can show both red suits — diamonds and hearts — by jumping to 2NT.

“**Assuming West passes, what call does North make?** (3 ♦.) Even though most of North’s strength is in the black suits, North shouldn’t pass 2NT. The partnership is unlikely to get many tricks in notrump when the hands don’t fit well together and there aren’t many entries back and forth. Instead, North should support one of South’s suits — diamonds in this case.

“**If East passes North’s 3 ♦ bid, what should South call?** (Pass.) South has said everything — and then some — with the 2NT bid. If partner isn’t interested in going any higher, South should leave well enough alone. In fact, the partnership is probably too high already. North may have difficulty taking more than five or six tricks in 3 ♦. It’s probably best to hope that the opponents don’t double the 3 ♦ contract. Even better, they may continue bidding and reach some poor contract for their side.

“**Suppose East opens 1 ♣, South jumps to 2NT and West bids 3 ♠. What should North call?** (Pass.) West’s bid has taken North off the hook. North can sit back and defend. North will have the advantage of knowing what South’s hand looks like when defending.

“Change the South hand.

“In hearts: take away the queen and three low cards.

“In clubs: add the king and three low cards.

NORTH ♠ K x x x ♥ x ♦ J x x ♣ A J x x x	<table style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <td style="width: 25%; text-align: center;">WEST</td> <td style="width: 25%; text-align: center;">NORTH</td> <td style="width: 25%; text-align: center;">EAST</td> <td style="width: 25%; text-align: center;">SOUTH</td> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td></td> <td style="text-align: center;">1 ♥</td> <td style="text-align: center;">2NT</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;">Double</td> <td style="text-align: center;">4/5 ♣</td> <td></td> <td></td> </tr> </table>	WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH			1 ♥	2NT	Double	4/5 ♣			SOUTH ♠ x ♥ x x ♦ A Q x x x ♣ K 10 x x x
WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH											
		1 ♥	2NT											
Double	4/5 ♣													

“**East opens the bidding 1 ♥. What call does South make?** (2NT.) South can show both minor suits — the lowest two unbid suits — by jumping to 2NT.

“**Suppose West doubles. What call does North make?** (4♣/5♣.) North could pass the double, since South will get another chance to bid, but that would be a poor tactic. Since South won’t have many hearts, North knows that East–West probably have a 10-card fit or more in that suit. With an excellent fit in clubs and a partial fit in diamonds, North should be willing to compete in clubs. A bid of 3♣ is unlikely to interfere very much with the opponent’s auction. Since the partnership has at least a 10-card fit in clubs, North should be willing to go to at least the four level. North can make a preemptive jump to 4♣ or, more aggressively, to 5♣.

“How high North bids will depend on the vulnerability. At favorable vulnerability — North–South non vulnerable and East–West vulnerable — North should probably jump right to 5♣. This puts the maximum pressure on East–West to decide what to do. They might overbid and go down or choose to defend when they would have done better to bid. When vulnerable, North might be a little more cautious and jump to only 4♣ — hoping that will be enough to interfere with the opponents’ bidding.

“**How would North–South fare in a club contract?** (10 or 11 tricks.) With South’s singleton spade and North’s singleton heart, they will probably only lose two tricks in the majors. With no likely loser in the club suit, everything will hinge on the diamond suit. The ♦ 10 is an important card. If North–South have it, they may take 11 tricks with the help of a successful finesse. Without it, they probably — but not definitely — will have to lose a diamond trick and be held to 10 tricks.

“**How would East–West fare in a heart contract?** East–West have no losers in the heart suit and at most one loser in the club suit. They might have to lose one trick in spades, depending on the location of the ♠ A. They might have two diamond losers — depending on the location of the ♦ K. On balance, they should take at least 10 tricks in a heart contract.

“As you can see, it won’t be clear exactly how many tricks each side can take until the play. That’s what makes competitive bidding exciting — especially when both sides have distributional hands. Both the Michaels cuebid and the unusual notrump can lead to interesting results.

“Change the North hand.

“In hearts: add the ace and the queen.

“In diamonds: take away a low card and add the king.

“In clubs: take away two low cards.

NORTH	<table style="border-collapse: collapse; width: 100%;"> <tr> <td style="padding-right: 10px;">WEST</td> <td style="padding-right: 10px;">NORTH</td> <td style="padding-right: 10px;">EAST</td> <td>SOUTH</td> </tr> <tr> <td>♠ K x x x</td> <td></td> <td>1 ♥</td> <td>2NT</td> </tr> <tr> <td>♥ A Q x</td> <td>3NT</td> <td>Pass</td> <td>Pass</td> </tr> <tr> <td>♦ K J x</td> <td>Pass</td> <td></td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>♣ A J x</td> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> </tr> </table>	WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH	♠ K x x x		1 ♥	2NT	♥ A Q x	3NT	Pass	Pass	♦ K J x	Pass			♣ A J x				SOUTH
WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH																			
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			♦ A Q x x x																			
			♣ K x x x x																			

“East opens the bidding 1♥. What call does South make? (2NT.) South can show both minor suits with a jump to 2NT.

“West passes. What call does North make? (3♥/3NT/5♣/5♦.) Despite the fit with both of partner’s suits, the practical call is 3NT. It will probably be easier to take nine tricks than 11. As when advancing after a Michaels bid, 3NT by the advancer is usually a natural bid (unless the advancer is a passed hand, for example).

“North has other options. North could simply jump to game in one of the minor suits, or North could start with a cuebid of 3♥. That would allow North to explore for a possible slam contract or the best minor-suit game contract — but it figures to take the partnership past 3NT, which may be the best contract.

“Is there any disadvantage to a bid of 3NT by North? (Yes.) Since South bid notrump first, South will become the declarer. The lead will come from West, through the North hand. A lead of either major suit by West would be unfavorable, but is unlikely to be fatal to the contract. South should still be able to take at least nine tricks on most layouts.”

## Summary

“When partner makes an unusual 2NT bid, your advances follow a pattern similar to those after a Michaels cuebid:

- A simple preference to one of partner’s suits shows no interest in game.
- A jump in one of the suits is preemptive if it is below the game level.
- A jump to the game level could be a weak preemptive bid or a bid with the intention of making the contract.
- A cuebid of the opponent’s suit is forcing for one round and shows at least game-invitational values.
- 3NT is to play.”

➡ “Let’s do Exercise 6 in the student text to review what we have just discussed.”

**Exercise Six** — Advancing After the Unusual Notrump

What call would West make with each of the following hands after North opens 1♥, and East overcalls 2NT?

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
?	1♦	2NT	Pass
1) ♠ K 9 7 5 3 ♥ Q 10 8 ♦ K 5 2 ♣ J 4		2) ♠ K Q 7 4 ♥ 5 ♦ Q 8 6 5 ♣ J 9 6 3	3) ♠ J 8 3 ♥ A 8 7 5 3 ♦ 9 4 ♣ K 10 2
4) ♠ A J 8 3 ♥ K 8 3 ♦ 10 7 4 ♣ Q J 2		5) ♠ 6 ♥ Q 2 ♦ 10 9 7 6 ♣ K 9 8 7 4 2	6) ♠ A K J 10 8 7 3 2 ♥ 4 ♦ 8 3 ♣ A 2

**Exercise Six Answer** — Advancing After the Unusual Notrump

- 1) 3♥. East's unusual 2NT shows the two lower-ranking unbid suits, clubs and hearts. Since West prefers hearts to clubs, the suit is bid at the cheapest available level.
- 2) 3♣. East is showing hearts and clubs. West has a distinct preference for clubs.
- 3) 4♥. East is showing hearts and clubs, so West has an excellent fit for both suits. If East holds as little as ♠7 ♥Q 10 9 6 4 2 ♦10 ♣A J 9 6 4, there could be game. In the meantime, the opponents will do well in spades or diamonds, if there is any room to explore.
- 4) 4♥. West has only three hearts, but East has at least five. There also are some fitting cards in clubs and the useful ♠A. Game is likely, if East holds something like ♠4 ♥A Q 10 5 2 ♦9 3 ♣K 10 7 6 4.
- 5) 5♣. West has a tremendous fit in clubs and some help in hearts. Although West doesn't have much in high cards, West also doesn't have much defense against a spade or diamond contract by the opponents. 5♣ may be a good sacrifice.
- 6) 4♠. West isn't interested in either of East's suits, but doesn't need much from East to make game, even if East is void in spades. West's jump to game in spades says, "This is where I'd like to play."

## More About the Unusual Notrump

### Introduction

“Like the Michaels cuebid, the concept of the unusual notrump can be extended to other situations once the partnership is comfortable with the basic idea.”

### Instructions

“Leave the South hand face up on the table. Pick up the North cards and put them back into suits.

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
		1 ♠	Pass
2 ♠	Pass	Pass	2NT

SOUTH  
 ♠ x  
 ♥ x x  
 ♦ A Q x x x  
 ♣ K x x x x

“**Suppose East deals and opens 1 ♠. Would South jump to 2NT?** (Maybe.) It would probably depend on the vulnerability and how aggressive you are. Jumping to 2NT would commit the partnership to the three level and, with your suits lacking a lot of intermediate cards, you might elect to pass.

“**Suppose you do pass, and West raises to 2 ♠. North and East pass. Now what does South call?** (2NT.) Now you are in the balancing position. East and West have stopped at the two level and you have only 9 high-card points. You can infer that partner has some of the missing strength. Your side might be able to make a partscore or, by bidding, you might push the opponents higher. You can’t afford to double, since you don’t have support for hearts.

“Most partnerships would treat a bid of 2NT by South as unusual at this point, showing the minor suits, even though you didn’t jump to 2NT. It’s highly unlikely that you have a natural 2NT bid, having passed over 1 ♠. You can’t be expected to have much strength.”

With a more advanced group, you can discuss that 2NT at this point would show a two-suited hand but not necessarily both minors. If South had hearts and diamonds, for example, South might balance with 2NT. If North bid 3 ♣, South would correct to 3 ♦, asking North to choose between diamonds and hearts.

“**Suppose East deals and opens the bidding 1NT. Now what does South do?** (Pass/2NT.) It may not be advisable to come into the auction over the opponent’s 1NT bid, but the modern style is to compete aggressively. If you are not vulnerable, you might decide to bid. Instead of making a simple overcall of 2 ♦, you could bid 2NT. This would certainly be unusual, and partner would assume that you are showing both minor suits. Whether you will be safe at the three level — who knows?”



Again, with a more advanced group, you can point out that 2NT might show a variety of distributional hands. Many partnerships have conventional methods that specify the meaning of 2NT in this sequence.

**“Suppose South is the dealer. What call would South make? (Pass.)** You don’t have quite enough to open the bidding.”

Some students might want to open a slightly off-center weak 2♦. There is nothing wrong with that, but it isn’t the “standard” call since South doesn’t have a six-card suit.

**“Suppose South passes and West now opens 1♥. North passes and East responds 1♠. Now what can South call? (1NT/2NT/Double/2♦/Pass.)** You could simply pass or overcall 2♦, but you might want to show both of your minor suits. One way to do that would be to make a takeout double. Partner isn’t going to expect too much strength since you passed originally.

“You also could jump to 2NT to show both minor suits and create some disruption to the opponents’ auction at the same time. This might be a little dangerous, however, since both opponents are bidding and partner may have little or no strength. If you don’t find a good fit, you may get into trouble.

“One other choice is to bid 1NT. This is certainly unusual, since you didn’t open the bidding. Partner should assume that you are showing a distributional hand with both minor suits. This allows you to enter the bidding, show both suits and avoid getting higher than the two level.

“As you can see, sometimes there are a variety of competitive choices once you incorporate the unusual notrump into your repertoire. An experienced partnership usually draws a fine distinction between the various bids you can make in a situation like this.

“For example:

- Double would tend to show more high-card strength and less in terms of distribution. You could have only four cards in each of the unbid suits, clubs and diamonds.
- 1NT would be a “lighter” takeout based on good distribution, probably at least five cards in both minors.
- 2NT would be a very distributional takeout for the minors — perhaps 6–5 or 6–6 in the minors.
- 2♦ would conceal your distribution from both partner and the opponents. It might be the best choice if you don’t think your side can compete effectively, but you would like partner to lead a diamond rather than a club if partner ends up on lead.”

With a more experienced group, you can point out that some partnerships have a similar agreement even if South is not a passed hand. The partnership would have to discuss this beforehand, however. Otherwise, an overcall of 1NT by South would be treated as a natural bid, showing a balanced hand with 15 to 18 points.

“Change the South hand.

“In hearts: take away two low cards.

“In diamonds: add the jack.

“In clubs: add the ace.

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
		4♥	4NT

SOUTH

♠ x

♥ —

♦ A Q J x x x

♣ A K x x x x

“**Suppose East is the dealer and opens the bidding 4♥. What call could South make?** (4NT.) The standard agreement here is that 4NT would be unusual for the minor suits. It would not be the Blackwood convention, asking for aces.”

With a more experienced group you could discuss that a bid of 4NT over an opening bid of 4♠ would show a two-suited hand, but not necessarily both minor suits. With hearts and clubs, for example, South might bid 4NT intending to correct partner’s 5♦ bid to 5♥.

“**Suppose East opens 3♥ instead of 4♥. What call could South make?** (4NT.) A jump to 4NT would be considered as unusual, showing both minor suits. Be careful not to bid 3NT. That would not be unusual. It would simply show a strong balanced hand with the desire to play in notrump.

“**If East opens with a weak 2♥ bid, what call does South make?** (4NT.) Again, a jump to 4NT would be considered unusual, asking partner to pick a minor suit. A bid of 2NT, or 3NT, would not be unusual. Either of those bids would be natural.

“**Suppose East opens 1♥. What call could South make?** (4NT/2NT.) A jump to 4NT would be considered unusual in most partnerships and would get partner to choose a minor suit at the five level. It also would have the effect of interfering with the opponents’ auction, since East–West may have a big fit in the major suits.

“If you are uncertain how partner would interpret a jump to 4NT, you could start with a jump to 2NT. That would certainly be the unusual notrump showing both minor suits. Of course, if partner bids only 3♣ or 3♦, you plan to bid again ... perhaps simply raising to game or cuebidding to look for a possible slam.

**“Suppose East opens 1♥ and South does choose to jump to 2NT. West now jumps to 4♥ and both North and East pass. What call does South make? (Double/4NT.)** A bid of 4NT would be unusual and it insists that partner pick a minor suit. In an experienced partnership, you might double. That would say you have a very good hand with both minor suits. Partner will still pick a minor suit most of the time, but will have the additional option of defending for penalty with shortness in both minor suits and some strength in the major suits. That is getting fairly subtle.”

### **Summary**

“Once the partnership is familiar with the principles of conventional two-suited overcalls, there is a large variety of situations in which the concept can be applied. The partnership needs to be careful, however, that there has been some discussion beforehand. Otherwise, there is potential for a major misunderstanding when a conventional bid is used in an unfamiliar situation.”

➡ “Let’s do Exercise 7 in the student text to review what we have just discussed.”

**Exercise Seven — More About the Unusual Notrump**

What call would West make with each of the following hands after the auction goes as indicated?

1)	♠ J 8 7 4 ♥ 3 ♦ A Q 8 7 3 ♣ K 5 2	<b>WEST</b>  ?	<b>NORTH</b> 1♥	<b>EAST</b> 2NT	<b>SOUTH</b> 4♥
2)	♠ Q 9 8 6 3 ♥ K 8 4 ♦ Q 2 ♣ Q 10 5	<b>WEST</b>  Pass ?	<b>NORTH</b> 1♥ Pass	<b>EAST</b> Pass 2NT	<b>SOUTH</b> 2♥ Pass
3)	♠ K J 7 2 ♥ J 8 5 3 ♦ 7 2 ♣ Q 6 3	<b>WEST</b>  Pass ?	<b>NORTH</b>  1♠	<b>EAST</b> Pass 1NT	<b>SOUTH</b> 1♣ Double
4)	♠ J 8 4 ♥ Q 10 8 6 4 ♦ J 10 2 ♣ Q 8	<b>WEST</b>  ?	<b>NORTH</b> 1NT	<b>EAST</b> 2NT	<b>SOUTH</b> Pass
5)	♠ Q J 8 7 6 3 ♥ J 8 4 ♦ Q 9 4 ♣ 10	<b>WEST</b>  ?	<b>NORTH</b> 4♥	<b>EAST</b> 4NT	<b>SOUTH</b> Pass

**Exercise Seven Answer — More About the Unusual Notrump**

- 5♦. East's jump to 2NT shows diamonds and clubs. With an excellent fit for diamonds and some help in clubs, West bids game. Even if 5♦ doesn't make, the opponents quite likely can make their game.
- 3♣. East passed over 1♥, so the 2NT bid is certainly unusual! East is unwilling to pass the hand out in 2♥ and is making a competitive call with diamonds and clubs. With support for all three unbid suits, East would have doubled. With a preference for clubs, West bids 3♣.
- 2♥. East passed originally, so the 1NT bid can't be natural. It is a light takeout for the unbid suits, hearts and diamonds, and tends to show at least five cards in each suit. West has a preference for hearts.
- 3♦. With a strong hand, East would have doubled the opponent's 1NT opening, so the 2NT bid is unusual. West assumes it is for the lower two unbid suits, diamonds and clubs, and shows the slight preference for diamonds.
- 5♦. The standard agreement is that East's 4NT bid is unusual, showing the two lower-ranking unbid suits — diamonds and clubs in this case. West shows a preference for diamonds.



## Suggested Bidding

When it appears that all of the tables have completed the auction, review how the bidding should have gone. Have all tables play a contract of 2♥ by West.

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
	1♦	2♦	Pass
2♥	Pass	Pass	Pass

“With a balanced hand but only 13 high-card points, North opens in the longest suit. East could make a simple overcall of 1♠, the higher-ranking of the two five-card suits. Playing the Michaels cuebid convention, however, East can show both major suits by cuebidding 2♦.

“South doesn’t have enough strength to take any action at the two level. West has a hand of opening-bid strength, but doesn’t have a very good fit with East’s announced suits. With three-card heart support for East’s “known” five-card suit, West can put the partnership in its eight-card fit by bidding 2♥. Since the Michaels cuebid typically shows less than the strength for an opening bid, West has no reason to go any higher than partscore. With some strength in the minor suits, West might consider bidding 2NT, but distributional hands should usually be played in the partnership’s best trump fit. Developing tricks and getting back and forth between the two hands may be difficult in a notrump contract.

“West’s 2♥ bid should end the auction. North has nothing extra; East’s hand has already been described with the cuebid, and South is content to defend with some length and strength in the majors and no fit in North’s suit.”

## Suggested Opening Lead

“Turn up all of the cards and put each hand dummy style at the edge of the table in front of each player. Let’s review the play and defense.

“North doesn’t have a clear-cut choice of leads. South hasn’t shown any strength during the auction, and leading an ace may help declarer establish tricks. Leading a spade may not be successful, since that is one of the suits shown by East. A reasonable option is to lead a trump. This won’t give much away and may prevent declarer from ruffing some of dummy’s spade losers.”

## Suggested Play

“Playing contracts from the short side, the side with the fewer trumps, requires a shift in perspective. From the West point of view, declarer has a lot of losers — one possible heart loser, five diamond losers and three club losers. It is usually better to view things from the side with the most trumps, East in this case. Dummy has four spade losers, one heart loser, one diamond loser and one club loser. From that angle, a plan is easier to form. Declarer has to eliminate two losers. Declarer plans to ruff one

or two spades with the trumps in the West hand. Then declarer can lead spades to establish a trick through length if the missing spades are divided 4–3.

“For example, if North leads a trump, declarer might try playing the ♥J from dummy, although it is unlikely North has led a heart holding the ♥Q. Whichever heart is played from dummy, declarer will have to win the first trick with the ♥A. West can then lead a spade to dummy’s ♠A and ruff a spade. With no quick entry back to dummy, West can lead the ♣K to establish the ♣Q as a winner. North will win the ♣A and probably lead another heart to prevent declarer from ruffing another spade loser. Declarer can win this with dummy’s ♥K, in order to lead a third round of spades and give the trick to the opponents.

“The defenders won’t be able to prevent declarer from eventually getting back to dummy to lead another spade and establish dummy’s fifth spade as a winner. Playing as suggested above, declarer will lose two spade tricks, one trump trick, one diamond trick and one club trick — taking exactly eight tricks.”

### **Suggested Defense**

“The defenders do best to lead trumps at every opportunity to try to prevent declarer from ruffing spades in the West hand. If they don’t lead trumps, declarer may make nine tricks by ruffing two spade losers in the West hand and then establishing the fifth spade. If declarer takes the approach of trying to ruff diamond losers in the dummy, the defenders may be able to hold declarer to six or seven tricks. Declarer should get at least one spade trick, four heart tricks and one club trick.

“Partscore hands like this are complex, because both declarer and the defenders have a number of options at each trick.

“If West plays in a notrump contract, the defenders should be able to take at least four diamond tricks, one heart trick and the ♣A — limiting declarer to at most seven tricks.”

**Bid and Play** — Deal 2: Responding to a Michaels Cuebid

**Guidelines for Teachers:** On this second deal, the concept is again to establish dummy’s side suit by using a dummy reversal. Walk through the line of play that will bring declarer ten tricks.

**Introduction**

“Let’s play a deal where the cuebid can be used to best describe the advancer’s hand.”

**Instructions**

“East is the dealer. Take your hands and start the bidding. Stop when you have completed the auction.”

*(E–Z Deal Cards: #4, Deal 2 — Dealer, East)*

Dealer: East	♠ Q 10 6					
Vul: N–S	♥ K 9 2					
	♦ K Q J 8					
	♣ A J 4					
♠ K 9 7 4 3		<table border="1" style="margin: auto; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr><td style="padding: 5px;">N</td></tr> <tr><td style="padding: 5px;">W E</td></tr> <tr><td style="padding: 5px;">S</td></tr> </table>	N	W E	S	♠ A 8 5 2
N						
W E						
S						
♥ A 10 8 7 6 3			♥ 4			
♦ 3			♦ 10 9 7 5 2			
♣ 5			♣ 9 8 3			
	♠ J					
	♥ Q J 5					
	♦ A 6 4					
	♣ K Q 10 7 6 2					

**Suggested Bidding**

When it appears that all of the tables have completed the auction, review how the bidding should have gone.

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
		Pass	1 ♣
2 ♣	3NT	4 ♠!	Pass
Pass	Double	Pass	Pass
Pass			

“After South opens the bidding 1 ♣, West uses a Michaels cuebid to show both major suits. North isn’t interested in defending at a low level and simply jumps to game in notrump. Now it’s up to East. East should appreciate the value of a fit with partner’s spade suit and the lack of defensive prospects against North–South’s contract. Since East–West aren’t vulnerable and the



opponents are, East might bid 4♠ as a sacrifice bid. East isn't planning to make the contract, but the penalty may be less than the value of North-South's game.

“South doesn't want to double East's contract, but North has a good hand with good defensive prospects. North's penalty double ends the auction. If West had passed or overcalled 1♥, the auction would have gone very differently. East-West would be unlikely to uncover their spade fit, and North-South would be left to play in 3NT.”

When everyone understands the proper bids and the final contract, the students can proceed to play out the cards in a contract of 4♠ by South.

### **Suggested Opening Lead**

“Turn up all of the cards and put each hand dummy style at the edge of the table in front of each player. Let's review the play and defense.

“South is on lead and will probably start with the ♣K, top of a sequence. South might also consider leading a trump, hoping to prevent East-West from getting too many tricks through ruffs.”

### **Suggested Play**

“East has a lot of losers: one or more potential spade losers, if the suit doesn't divide 2-2, five diamond losers and three club losers. East should look at establishing West's hand as winners, rather than trying to eliminate all of those losers in the East hand. This is referred to as a dummy reversal.

“From the point of view of the West hand, there is only one loser in diamonds, one in clubs and a lot of heart losers. Declarer may be able to establish the heart suit by ruffing some of those losers.

“Suppose South leads a club and continues with another club, forcing dummy to ruff. Declarer should immediately play the ♥A and ruff a heart, starting to establish the suit. East can then play the ♠A and a spade to dummy's ♠K. The missing trumps divide 3-1, leaving declarer with a spade loser, but another heart can be led from dummy and ruffed with declarer's last trump. With the defenders' hearts dividing 3-3, dummy's remaining hearts are now established as winners. Declarer can ruff a club to dummy and start leading the heart winners. North can ruff a heart and take a diamond trick, but the rest of dummy's hand is all winners. Declarer makes the contract, losing one spade, one diamond and one club.

“Declarer is very lucky to actually make this contract. If the defenders' hearts weren't divided exactly 3-3, declarer would have to lose a heart trick. On the other hand, the defenders' spades might have divided 2-2, leaving declarer no losers in that suit. The deal illustrates the power of a trump fit. North-South are unlucky to be unable to defeat 4♠, even when holding 29 high-card points. Favorable distribution will often overcome a lack of high cards.

“East must be careful to use the entries wisely. Suppose South leads a trump initially. East must win this trick with the ♠A, leaving the ♠K in dummy. East must immediately lead hearts before drawing any more trumps. After ruffing a heart, declarer uses West’s ♠K as an entry to dummy to ruff another heart. If declarer draws trumps right away or tries ruffing some of the club or diamond losers in dummy, establishing the heart suit may become impossible.”

### **Suggested Defense**

“Due to the lucky lie of the cards, the defenders can’t defeat the contract if declarer plays as previously mentioned. South should probably lead a trump initially, hoping to prevent declarer from ruffing heart losers, but that won’t work. The defenders also can try leading two rounds of clubs, forcing dummy to ruff and hoping to run dummy out of trumps before the hearts can be established. Again, declarer can still succeed with the lucky division of the hearts.

“North–South’s best result is to push on to 4NT if East sacrifices in 4♠. That’s difficult to do. North has no reason to expect East–West to make their contract. South, however, might think that the penalty derived will not be enough compensation for a vulnerable game and that the sixth club will produce a tenth trick in notrump. South, therefore, might bid 4NT to play. If North–South bid 5♣, that contract can be defeated at least one trick if East gets a heart ruff.

“East–West’s use of the Michaels cuebid convention gives them an opportunity to compete for the contract. Without the intervention, North–South would make 3NT easily with an overtrick.”

**Bid and Play** — Deal 3: Michaels Cuebid Over a Major

**Guidelines for Teachers:** This deal provides an opportunity for the teacher to start getting the students to think about the location of the missing cards. It also demonstrates the modern use of Michaels over a major to show the other major and an unidentified minor.

**Introduction**

“Let’s play a deal where Michaels is used to show the modern use of the bid.”

**Instructions**

“South is the dealer. Take your hands and start the bidding. Stop when you have completed the auction.”

*(E–Z Deal Cards: #4, Deal 3 — Dealer, South)*

Dealer: South	♠ 4				
Vul: E–W	♥ K Q 7 6 5				
	♦ A J 7 3 2				
	♣ 10 7				
♠ K Q J 7 5	<table style="margin: auto; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr><td style="padding: 2px 10px;">N</td></tr> <tr><td style="padding: 2px 10px;">W E</td></tr> <tr><td style="padding: 2px 10px;">S</td></tr> </table>	N	W E	S	♠ A 10 9 8 2
N					
W E					
S					
♥ J 9 4 3 2		♥ 10			
♦ K		♦ 10 9 8			
♣ A 8		♣ Q 4 3 2			
	♠ 6 3				
	♥ A 8				
	♦ Q 6 5 4				
	♣ K J 9 6 5				

**Suggested Bidding**

When it appears that all of the tables have completed the auction, review how the bidding should have gone.

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
			Pass
1 ♠	2 ♠	4 ♠	4NT
Pass	5 ♦	Pass	Pass
Pass			

“After South’s pass, West opens the bidding in the higher-ranking of two five-card suits. North uses the Michaels cuebid to show at least five hearts and a five-card or longer minor suit. East jumps to 4 ♠, a preemptive raise,

to try to keep North–South out of the auction. South knows the partnership has a fit in one of the minor suits, but can't be sure which one. With 2NT no longer available to ask for North's minor suit, South uses 4NT instead. North shows the diamond suit and that ends the auction. East–West are vulnerable, so it's better to defend and hope to defeat the contract, rather than to bid higher."

When everyone understands the proper bids and the final contract, the students can proceed to play out the cards in a contract of 5♦ by North.

### **Suggested Opening Lead**

"Turn up all of the cards and put each hand dummy style at the edge of the table in front of each player. Let's review the play and defense.

"East starts by leading the suit bid by East–West. East should lead the ♠A. Against a suit contract, leading low when holding an ace is dangerous."

### **Suggested Play**

"The deal involves careful handling of a suit combination when taking a finesse. You can emphasize the concept of not leading a high card unless you can afford to have it covered. Review the auction for clues as to the location of missing cards. Most declarers are likely to guess the deal correctly without giving much thought to the auction – but that won't be the case on the next deal. So, this is a good opportunity to get the students to start thinking about the location of the missing high cards.

"Declarer has one spade loser, two heart losers, one diamond loser and two club losers. There's nothing that can be done about the spade loser, but declarer should be able to avoid a heart loser. The hearts might divide 3–3, declarer could ruff a heart loser in dummy or declarer can discard one or more heart losers by establishing club winners in the dummy. Declarer might be able to avoid a diamond loser with the help of a successful finesse against the ♦K. A club loser could be avoided by leading toward dummy and hoping to guess whether East holds the ♣A or ♣Q.

"The first critical decision is in the trump suit. Suppose East wins the ♠A and shifts to the ♥10. North wins this with dummy's ♥A and has to decide how to play the trump suit. It might appear tempting to lead the ♦Q, so that the finesse can be repeated if West has the ♦K and doesn't cover. Without the ♦10, however, declarer can't afford to lead the ♦Q. West would play the ♦K on the ♦Q, and after declarer wins tricks with the ♦A and ♦J, East gets a trick with the ♦10. Missing both the ♦K and the ♦10, declarer should lead a low diamond from dummy. This works, since West's ♦K appears, and declarer can draw trumps without losing a trick. It also would work if West started with the doubleton ♦K. Declarer could finesse and then play the ♦A. If West started with three diamonds including the ♦K, there's no way for declarer to take all of the diamond tricks.

“Having handled the diamond suit successfully, North needs to guess how to play the club suit. Since West opened the bidding and East has already turned up with the ♠A, it’s more likely that West holds the ♣A than East. Declarer’s best hope is that East started with the ♣Q. North should lead the ♣10, and if East doesn’t cover, take the finesse by playing a low club from dummy. Once this is successful, declarer should be able to take the rest of the tricks, losing only a spade trick and one club trick.”

### **Suggested Defense**

“After leading the ♠A, East should switch to the singleton ♥10. If West can win a trick before trumps are drawn, East may get a heart ruff. Declarer can draw trumps before letting West gain the lead, but may make a mistake.

“If declarer does successfully draw trumps and later leads the ♣10, East should play low. Looking at the clubs in dummy, there’s nothing for East to promote by covering with the ♣Q. If East plays low, declarer may misguess and play dummy’s ♣K, hoping East started with the ♣A. If declarer does that, East will eventually get a third trick for the defense with the ♣Q.

“Note that North–South did well to get into the auction with their diamond fit by using the Michaels cuebid convention. If East–West were allowed to play in 4♠, they might make that contract. If North–South don’t lead trumps often enough, West might get away with losing only one heart, one diamond and one club trick.”

**Bid and Play** — Deal 4: The Unusual Notrump

**Guidelines for Teachers:** This deal uses the bidding to help declarer drop an offside king when missing three cards in the suit.

**Introduction**

“Let’s play a deal where we can see how the unusual notrump helps the overcaller and the advancer find the right contract.”

**Instructions**

“West is the dealer. Take your hands and start the bidding. Stop when you have completed the auction.”

*(E-Z Deal Cards: #4, Deal 4 — Dealer, West)*

Dealer: West		♠ 4			
Vul: Both		♥ J			
		♦ Q J 8 6 5			
		♣ A Q J 7 6 3			
♠ Q J 9 6 3			♠ A 10 8 7 5		
♥ A K 10		<div style="border: 1px solid black; width: 40px; height: 40px; margin: 0 auto; display: flex; flex-direction: column; align-items: center; justify-content: center;"> <span>N</span> <hr style="width: 80%;"/> <span>W</span> <hr style="width: 80%;"/> <span>E</span> <hr style="width: 80%;"/> <span>S</span> </div>	♥ 9 7 6 3 2		
♦ K			♦ 9 7		
♣ 10 9 4 2			♣ 8		
		♠ K 2			
		♥ Q 8 5 4			
		♦ A 10 4 3 2			
		♣ K 5			

**Suggested Bidding**

When it appears that all of the tables have completed the auction, review how the bidding should have gone. Make sure everyone gets to a contract of 5♦, before you let them play out the hand.

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
1♠	2NT	4♠	5♦
Pass	Pass	Pass	

“After West’s opening bid, North enters the auction by using the unusual notrump. Over the 1♠ bid, North’s 2NT shows at least five cards in each of the two lowest-ranking unbid suits, diamonds and clubs. East makes a preemptive jump raise to 4♠, to try to buy the contract and keep North-South out of the auction. This shouldn’t deter South. South knows from the unusual notrump bid that the partnership has at least a 10-card fit in

diamonds. South also has a useful card in North's other suit, clubs. It looks best to compete to 5♦, rather than quietly defend 4♠.

“Neither West nor East have enough to safely bid to the five level, and neither has enough to double 5♦. Their best hope is that the contract can be defeated.”

### **Suggested Opening Lead**

“Turn up all of the cards and put each hand dummy style at the edge of the table in front of each player. Let's review the play and defense.

“West will probably start with the ♥A, top of touching high cards. After seeing the singleton heart in dummy, West will probably switch to the ♠Q, top of touching cards in the partnership's agreed suit.”

### **Suggested Play**

“The only way to drop the offside singleton king on this hand – which goes against the odds if the suit is played in isolation – is to pay attention to the bidding. Counting the missing high-card points is a difficult concept, but most of the students should be able to follow the logic on this deal – once it is explained.

“Declarer has to lose a spade trick and one heart trick for sure. The rest of declarer's heart losers can be ruffed in dummy or discarded on the extra club winners. The success of the contract hinges around avoiding a loser in the trump suit.

“Declarer is missing the ♦K, and the normal play would be to take a diamond finesse, hoping that East holds the ♦K. Declarer has some indications, however, that the finesse won't work. West opened the bidding and there are very few high cards in the East–West hands. East has shown up with the ♠A. That leaves only 10 high-card points for West to hold — the ♠Q, the ♠J, the ♥A and the ♥K — unless West also holds the ♦K. It's unlikely West would have opened the bidding. Further, East might not have made a preemptive raise to 4♠ with both the ♠A and the ♦K. Everything points to West holding the ♦K.

“If that's the case, declarer's best chance to make the contract is to play the ♦A, hoping West's ♦K is a singleton. Playing the ♦A results in a spectacular success for declarer. Declarer avoids a diamond loser and makes the contract.

“Even if declarer does lose a trick to West's ♦K, North–South shouldn't be too disappointed. East–West can make the 4♠ contract by guessing how to handle the heart suit. So, down one should still be a good result.”

### **Suggested Defense**

“There’s little the defenders can do once North–South bids to 5♦, except to keep quiet and hope that declarer misguesses the diamond suit. If they bid on to 5♠, the defenders will get at least one spade trick, one diamond trick and one club trick. West can restrict the heart losers to one by playing one high heart and finessing against South’s ♥Q when North’s ♥J appears.”