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This Week in Bridge

(481) 2-Suited Overcalls: Unusual 2NT

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Level: 4 of 10 (1 of 6)

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General

After a 1-level opening bid from the opponents we want to as many ways as possible to compete in the bidding. Overcalls, Jump Overcalls, and Takeout Doubles are our fundamental tools for competing in these auctions. Michaels Cuebids are focused on showing 2-suited hands (two 5+card suits) that contain at least one Major suit. *Unusual NT* is another conventional bid used to show hands with two 5+card suits and designed to make the bidding more difficult for the opponents. Let's see how we use Unusual NT to describe low-ranking 2-suited hands.

Unusual NT Overcall

We have the Michaels Cuebid available to preempt the bidding with 2-suited hands that contain "high-ranking suits" (both Majors OR the unbid Major and a minor). We also want to have a way to preempt the bidding and show "low-ranking suits" (both minors OR the unbid minor and ♥). This is done by making another conventional call, *Unusual 2NT*. This is a direct seat jump to 2NT after a 1♣, 1♦, 1♥, or 1♠ opening bid.

Unusual 2NT Auctions

1♠	2NT	5+ and 5+cards in the minors, 5-11 pts.
1♥	2NT	5+ and 5+cards in the minors, 5-11 pts.
1♦	2NT	5+♣ and 5+♥, 5-11 pts,
1♣	2NT	5+♦ and 5+♥, 5-11 pts.

We are free to define this jump to 2NT as a preempt since we do not need it for a natural call. We overcall 1NT with 15-18 pts and double and then bid notrump with 19+ pts. So using a jump to 2NT to show these "unusual" hands does not give up anything.

Example

♠ 64
♥ 5
♦ AJT93
♣ KQT83

After a 1♠ opening bid we use Unusual 2NT to describe this hand.



Unusual 2NT Shape with Stronger Hands

It is best to think of this jump to 2NT like a 3-level preempt with two suits, instead of just one long suit. We do not use Unusual NT with strong hands because if we play in game, we are likely to play in 3NT (since we have minors). In this case we usually want partner, the player who is long in the opponent's suit, to be the declarer, but if we bid 2NT to show our hand we will have wrong-sided the contract. Thus, with these 2-suited hands that have 12+ points we just overcall our suits naturally (hoping that we get an opportunity to show both our suits below 3NT) and not make use of the Unusual 2NT convention.

Conclusion

When the opponents open the bidding and we have a shapely hand, it is important for us to compete in the auction immediately. This is particularly true when we have the lower-ranking suits. We want to show partner as much information about our hand as possible on the first round of the bidding. A simple overcall or a preemptive jump overcall allows us to show a hand with one long suit and a variety of different strengths. When we have two long suits, we try to show both of our suits to partner on the first round of the bidding so that we can find our fit and compete to the appropriate level as quickly as possible. Both Michaels Cuebids and Unusual 2NT do this. With a weak hand and lower-ranking suits we are likely to get outbid, so we want to be as destructive as possible as quickly as possible. Add Unusual NT to your list of tools for attacking the opponents when they open the bidding.