

MICHAELS CUEBID

Excerpt from 25 Bridge Conventions You Should Know:
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RHO opens

1♣	2♣ shows spades and hearts
1♦	2♦ shows spades and hearts
1♥	2♥ shows spades and a minor
1♠	2♠ shows hearts and a minor

This can really simplify partner's life. It also makes hands that are otherwise difficult to describe much easier to bid. Since bidding offers a very limited vocabulary, any time you can use a bid to tell partner a great deal about your hand all in one go it must be a good thing. Let's say you have the following hand:

♠ A J 8 5 3 ♥ K J 10 7 2 ♦ 3 2 ♣ 6

Your RHO opens 1♣. If you have no way to show both suits, you would presumably overcall 1♠ hoping to get to bid hearts later on. That's all well and good except when the auction proceeds 1NT on your left, 'pass' from partner and 3NT from opener. Clearly this is the opponents' hand and bidding 4♥ will lead to a large penalty, so you have to pass. Perhaps partner has something like

♠ 10 6 ♥ Q 9 8 4 ♦ Q 10 6 ♣ J 9 5 2

Of course, he leads your suit — spades. The effect of this is to establish declarer's ninth trick in spades whereas 3NT would have no chance on a heart lead. Clearly, if you had overcalled 2♣ over RHO's 1♣, showing at least 5-5 in the majors, partner would have had an easy heart lead against 3NT and you would comfortably defeat the opponents' game.

Of course, the information that you have two suits is not only useful when defending. It will sometimes enable partner to bid a low-point-count game that makes because he has a fit with both of your suits. It may also enable him to find a profitable sacrifice. On the hand we just looked at, partner needs very little more to make a partscore in hearts, yet you may never have a chance to bid the suit. The playing strength of two-suited hands is well known to all bridge players and with two suits it is much easier to find a fit in partner's hand.

Our preference is to have our high cards located in the long suits. This makes for better playing strength. Remember that when the opponents bid a suit, you never bid that suit to show that you also have five cards in this suit. So your cuebid always shows other suits.

What do you need to use Michaels?

Let's start with the shape requirements for a Michaels Cuebid. *You must be at least 5-5 in your two suits.* Never use Michaels with 5-4 shape as partner will bid his hand expecting two five-card suits and will be very disappointed to find that he has misjudged because you are one short. Using Michaels with a 5-4 shape is a surefire way to be minus 1100 when all the opponents can make is a game. For the same reason (i.e. partner is likely to misjudge), don't persuade yourself that it's all right to use Michaels with a 6-4 shape just because you have ten cards in your two suits. It's not.

You must have at least five cards in each of your two suits.

The most common method is to play that the Michaels bidder must have either a weak hand (8-12 including distribution) or a very strong hand (16+ points). This is known as 'Mini-Maxi Michaels'. If you have a hand in the 13-15 point range (i.e. too good for a weak Michaels bid, but not powerful enough for a strong Michaels) then overcall the higher-ranking suit. With luck, you will get the chance to bid your second suit later. Partner now knows that you are 5-5 in the 13-15 range. How weak is 'weak', you may ask? Well, not vulnerable against vulnerable opponents after a 1♣ opening on your right, you can bid 2♣ on as little as:

♠ Q 10 8 5 4 ♥ K J 4 3 2 ♦ 6 3 ♣ 7

We cannot promise you will never get hurt, but it is highly unlikely.

How do I respond to Michaels cuebid?

With a fit for one of partner's known suits, simply raise to the appropriate level. Bid assuming that partner has a weak hand — he'll carry on if he actually has a Maxi. It is easy to see that after a minor is opened by your opponents, both suits are known when Michaels is used.

What about over a major — e.g. 1♥-2♥? Now you know partner has spades, but don't know whether his second suit is clubs or diamonds. That's fine if you have a spade fit, but what about this hand:

♠ 5 2 ♥ Q 10 7 ♦ 7 5 4 3 ♣ 8 6 3 2

LHO	Partner	RHO	You
1♥	2♥	pass	?

You don't much care for partner's spades, but you do know that you have at least a 9-card fit in one of the minors. To find out which one, you bid 2NT now; this is artificial, and tells partner you are not thrilled with spades and would prefer to play in his minor suit (which he will now reveal).

PLAYING 2H TO SHOW A BUST HAND IN RESPONSE TO A 2C OPENER by Barbara

Alex and I do not like this approach because what if the auction goes:

2C – 2H

And opener's real suit is Hearts. The weak, weak hand becomes Declarer. The strong hand becomes dummy.

Dummy (North) has

S KJ
H AKQJ95
D KJ10
C AQ

South becomes Declarer in 3H with this hand.

S 432
H 43
D 432
C 65432

A Spade or a C or a Diamond is led by the player on his left (West). You don't know what to play from Dummy

But wouldn't it be nice if South had bid 2D waiting. 2H by partner. 3C (2nd negative showing a lousy hand: No ace or king and no fit with partner's suit) by South and opener now bids 3H. Partner of the 2C bidder is now allowed to pass, having given a second negative response.

2C - 2D
2H - 3C
3H - Pass

SOUTH becomes the Dummy and the opening lead of a S, D or a C comes from EAST up to Declarer, giving her an extra trick on the go.

i.e. North (the strong hand) is LAST to play to trick one. AND the strong hand is not exposed.

TWO reasons not to play this: NOT playing 2H as a super negative means the opening lead is made by the player to the left of the strong hand and thus is coming UP to the strong hand AND the strong hand is not exposed.

Whatever you like to play, just make sure you discuss this with partner so that you are both on the same page.
