

Michaels & Top & Bottom Cuebids

Michaels is the use of an immediate cuebid in the opponent's suit to show a two-suited hand. It was devised by the late Mike Michaels of Miami Beach. If RHO opens with a minor suit the cuebid promises 5-5 in the majors. The strength requirements are a matter of partnership agreement where a consensus of experts in the mid-nineties favored a split range so that Michaels is either weak or strong. I do not care for this agreement and would also employ the cuebid with opening bid values. As always vulnerability is a critical factor and it is always best to have your HCP concentrated in the two long suits.

If the opponents open a major then the cuebid promises the other major and an undisclosed minor. Partner can ask for the minor by advancing with an artificial 2NT. This action is only recommended when advancer owns length in both minors.

<i>W</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>E</i>	<i>S</i>	<i>South holds:</i>		
-	-	1♦	2♦	♠AJ543		♠KQJ108
				♥KQ1072	<i>or</i>	♥QJ1096
				♦9		♦AK
				♣Q8		♣J
<i>W</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>E</i>	<i>S</i>	♠A9862		♠KJ765
-	-	1♥	2♥	♥98	<i>or</i>	♥2
				♦KQ1087		♦95
				♣7		♣AKQJ3

Advancer should be aggressive when a good fit exists but cautious otherwise and always be aware of the vulnerability. One of the problems associated with Michaels is the minor is not identified when the opponents open in a major and partner offers a cuebid.

If the opponents have bid two suits, an overcall by the fourth player in one of those suits is natural & not a Michaels cuebid. The fourth player has a takeout double or an Unusual NT overcall available to show the unbid suits. Cuebids are not alertable except in the scenario where the overcall is natural.

<i>W</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>E</i>	<i>S</i>
1♦	P	1♠	2♦ or 2♠ is natural

	<i>W</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>E</i>	<i>S</i>		<i>W</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>E</i>	<i>S</i>
a)	1♦	2♦	P	?	b)	1♥	2♥	P	?

South holds: 1. ♠102 ♥K104 ♦QJ764 ♣K109

South holds: 4. ♠AK43 ♥95 ♦109864 ♣K7

2. ♠98654 ♥A73 ♦J765 ♣A

5. ♠63 ♥K87 ♦AQ73 ♣J987

3. ♠J4 ♥Q9 ♦KQ97 ♣K8632

6. ♠QJ986 ♥Q9753 ♦K4 ♣6

Leaping Michaels: A special type of Michaels bid after an opponent's weak two-bid in a major. A jump to four of a minor shows the other major and the bid minor. Over 2♣, a leap to 4♦ would show 5-5 in hearts and diamonds with a good hand. This agreement frees up a cuebid of the weak two-bid to function as a Western Cuebid asking partner to bid 3NT with a stopper. In this scenario, the cuebidder would own a long running minor with a strong hand guaranteeing success as long as advancer holds a guard in the major.

Example: 2♣ - 3♠ - P - 3NT

Top & Bottom Cuebids: An immediate cuebid of opener's suit reveals five cards each in the highest and the lowest ranking unbid suits. The advantage of this method is that both suits are immediately identified. After 1♥ - 2♥ the cuebidder has disclosed spades and clubs. Some partnerships employ Michaels when the opening bid was a minor but Top & Bottom when the opening bid was a major.

It is rarely a good idea to employ the cuebid with 5-4 in the two long suits.

Quiz

1. W N E S
 P P 1♥ ?

What call would you make with each of the following:

a)	b)	c)	d)	e)	f)
♠KJ864	♠3	♠Q92	♠A5	♠Q	♠QJ4
♥7	♥J108	♥2	♥4	♥53	♥AJ9
♦J3	♦AQ432	♦KQJ104	♦AKQJ1082	♦AK842	♦K63
♣AQ1092	♣KQ95	♣AJ74	♣QJ7	♣K10986	♣AKQ2

2. W N E S
 1♦ 2♦* 3♦ ?
 * majors

What call would you make with each of the following?

g)	h)	i)	j)	k)	l)
♠KJ3	♠5	♠972	♠73	♠Q76	♠864
♥1097	♥QJ1082	♥94	♥64	♥QJ5	♥J987632
♦A64	♦J987	♦K103	♦QJ1092	♦974	♦
♣J863	♣A106	♣KQ975	♣A953	♣A432	♣863

3. W N E S
 1♦ P 1♠ ?

What call would you make?

m)	n)	o)	p)	q)	r)
♠KQ10984	♠K54	♠2	♠3	♠KJ97	♠54
♥A2	♥QJ863	♥AQ74	♥86	♥2	♥K8
♦74	♦	♦Q862	♦AQJ974	♦KJ109	♦A6
♣AJ3	♣A10752	♣AK95	♣KQJ2	♣AKJ8	♣AKQ10972

4. W N E S
 1♠ 2♠* dbl ?
 * Top & Bottom

What action would you take with each of the following?

s)	t)	u)	v)	w)	x)
♠J987	♠2	♠QJ983	♠KQ62	♠Q105	♠764
♥1083	♥J10964	♥J2	♥97	♥3	♥65
♦J10984	♦876	♦7	♦75432	♦AJ9874	♦KQJ10982
♣8	♣K973	♣A10643	♣104	♣1086	♣3

Answers

- a) *2♥. If Michaels is your agreement, you are promising spades and a minor. If you employ Top & Bottom, you are showing spades & clubs.*
- b) *Pass. You own sufficient strength for a call but what action is suggested? A takeout double with a singleton spade cannot be a consideration and a two diamond overcall with a weak five-bagger makes no sense. If LHO responds one spade and RHO raises, you could issue a takeout double.*
- c) *Double. The takeout double is superior to a simple overcall since it also brings play in spades or clubs into the mix.*
- d) *3♥ which functions as a Western Cuebid asking partner to bid 3NT if he holds a stopper. This action discloses a strong hand with a long & solid minor suit. Remember that Leaping Michaels is available to reveal spades & a minor.*
- e) *2NT. The Unusual NT overcall promises 5-5 in the minors- the two lowest-ranking unbid suits.*
- f) *Double. Your intention is to rebid NT at the minimum level to show a hand that is stronger than a 1NT overcall. (18+ to 20 HCP)*
- g) *3♠. You want to compete and bidding spades will tell partner which major to lead should LHO become the declarer. This action does not invite partner to bid game.*
- h) *4♥. Partner is marked with a singleton or void in diamonds. There is a ten-card fit and game should be a viable proposition. You would of course double any advance to five diamonds since you cannot be certain of success in the major suit game.*
- i) *Pass. All of your values are concentrated in the minors. You should remain silent in the hope of defeating three diamonds.*
- j) *Double. The opponents have erred and you should punish them by issuing a penalty double. Partner should trust you and pass even though he holds a diamond void.*
- k) *3♦. The return cuebid is a game invitation which suggests 3 cards in each major. Partner is asked to make an informed decision regarding level and strain.*
- l) *5♥. A 12 card heart fit is present and you own absolutely zero defense against any contract. You will not speak again of course regardless of what happens in the auction.*

- m) *2♠. This call is natural and discloses that your spades are longer and stronger than responder's.*
- n) *1NT. The Sandwich 1NT overcall reveals 5-5 in hearts and clubs- the unbid suits. This call is alertable because you are an unpassed hand.*
- o) *Double. The takeout double hits the mark since you have length in the unbid suits and a solid 15 HCP.*
- p) *2♦. This call is natural since the opponents have bid two suits. It is **NOT** a cuebid.*
- q) *Pass. You cannot issue a takeout double or overcall*
The opponents are bidding your suits where silence is golden.
- r) *3♠. This action is a Western Cuebid asking partner to bid 3NT with a spade stopper.*
You reveal a running club suit with a strong hand.
Partner requires nothing but a spade guard to advance to 3NT.
- s) *3♥. This is simply a preference indicating that you prefer hearts over clubs.*
- t) *4♥. There is a double fit – ten hearts and nine clubs. This action jams the bidding and makes life difficult for the opponents. You will not bid again since the opponents may be icy for a slam.*
- u) *5♣. The opponents own a huge undisclosed diamond fit. You might even make the minor suit game on a good day. The opponents may misjudge by doubling or possibly bid five spades which you will happily pass.*
- v) *Pass. You hold no preference for either suit. The pass does not mean that you wish to defend a doubled partscore.*
- w) *3♣. Do not bid three diamonds because partner will hold shortness.*
- x) *3♦. This action indicates the contract that you want to play. Partner should pass even if he owns a diamond void since you have shown a self-sufficient suit..*