

USING MICHAELS TO ADVANTAGE

S	South
♠	QJ43
♥	A7642
♦	97
♣	J9

This is your hand when East, the dealer, opens 1♣. You might consider just passing, but there is another bid that is available and is popular to duplicate players. It is the Michaels Cuebid of 2♠. This cuebid in the direct seat promises 5-5 or 5-4 in the major suits. It doesn't promise points, just 9 or 10 cards in the two major suits. It is a type of takeout bid, asking your partner to pick one of the major, expecting to play there at the 2-level.

I've always taught that the Michaels Cuebid it should be made with either weak hands of 5-10 points or very strong hands of more than 15 points. These two ranges are called "mini-Michaels" and "maxi-Michaels." Partner assumes the overcall is a "mini" version unless you bid again after his advance. Then he knows it is a "maxi". Intermediate hands should be opened in one of the suits, rebidding the other suit if appropriate. But lately, I have been convinced by bridge writer Mike Lawrence, that the Michaels convention should be used with any strength hand. The importance of getting two suits mentioned early in the auction is too great not to take advantage of this handy convention – even with intermediate hands.

West passes your cuebid and your partner jumps to 3♥. He must have a strong hand and is inviting to game in hearts. Your hand is a real minimum and your heart suit isn't very great either. I would pass this invitation.

East leads the ♠10. Take over the North hand and plan the play:

N	North
♠	K2
♥	QJ5
♦	Q108
♣	AK753

East leads ♣10

S	South
♠	QJ43
♥	A7642
♦	97
♣	J9

You have a spade and two diamond losers. You plan to finesse against the ♥K but even if it successful you will probably lose a heart. The club suit is the problem suit. You must not lose any clubs.

You play low from the dummy and notice that West plays the ♣Q on his partner's ♣10. This must be a singleton club since he can see the ♣J in the dummy. You must pull trump before playing any more clubs. You win the ♣K in your hand and run the ♥Q. East covers with the ♥K won by your ♥A. You lead another heart to your ♥J and both opponents follow. The master trump is still outstanding, but you will not waste two of your trump to eliminate the outstanding ♥9. You will just run clubs until either West trumps in or if East, with the long club holds the master trump, you will discard the losing diamonds.

West does trump the next club lead and switches to diamonds. You lose the two diamonds and then, the ♠A. But you have taken 9 tricks with a total of only 21 points.

This is the entire deal:

10 _D	N North	W	N	E	S
	♠ K2 ♥ QJ5 ♦ Q108 ♣ AK753	P	3♥	1♠	2♣
W West		P		P	
♠ 1076 ♥ 983 ♦ K65432 ♣ Q	E East				
	♠ A985 ♥ K10 ♦ AJ ♣ 108642				
	S South				
	♠ QJ43 ♥ A7642 ♦ 97 ♣ J9				
		3♥ N		NS: 0 EW: 0	

You can see how this hand should be played by clicking on this link:

<http://tinyurl.com/y8gd9nv3>, or copy and paste it into your browser. Click on the "Next" button on the bottom to advance through each trick. Alternatively, by clicking on "Play" you can play all four hands and see if you can make the hand on your own.

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