

THE MICHAELS CUEBID; A HANDY CONVENTION

You are South and your Right Hand Opponent opens 1♠. This is your hand:

South
♠J98
♥QJ987
♦
♣96542

Most would pass his hand. You have only 4 HCP and they are all worthless "quacks"; queens and jacks.

But putting on your competitive hat you should recognize the great opportunity this hand presents. You have two 5-card suits. If your partner has at least 3 cards in either of them, you have a fit and safety when playing in a part score.

You can show this unique type of hand by cue bidding their suit; by bidding 2♠. This is called the Michaels Cuebid. It is a convention invented by Mike Michaels in early days of bridge to describe a two suited hand of less than opening strength. The cuebid of a major suit opening, says you have five cards in the other major and five in one of the minors. Partner can either bid the other major if he has three of them; or bid 2NT, which asks you to bid your long minor. Since its invention, players extend the definition to describe, as well, the two suited hand that is very strong; 17+ points. Intermediate hands use simple overcalls and try to mention the second suit in a subsequent round of the bidding.

Since your 2♠ overcall forces your partner to the 3-level, you should have a better hand, not like the one above. But you are a very competitive bidder. Using Michaels over 1♣ or 1♦ diamond can be done with much fewer HCP. A Michaels cuebid over a minor suit opening promises five cards in BOTH majors.

How does your partner know if your Michaels Cuebid is the weak variety or the strong one? He doesn't. He assumes it is weak and makes the minimum advance. If you bid again, that means the cuebid was of the very strong variety.

On the hand above, West passed and your partner advanced to 4♥, which became the final contract.

West led the ♣A and the dummy descended:

North
 ♠K4
 ♥AK106
 ♦K85
 ♣QJ103

South
 ♠J98
 ♥QJ987
 ♦
 ♣96542

West	North	East	South
Pass	4♥	1♠ All Pass	2♠

You have 2 immediate club losers and 2 possible spade losers. If the A is in West, this can be reduced to a total of only 3 losers. As it turns out, East holds the Ace and captures your ♠K. The contract goes down by 1 trick.

In case you think this is a bad result, look at the complete deal. East is cold for 5♦. Even a 3♠ part score will score better than the -50 North/South received for being set 1 trick. Notice that South made the Michaels Cuebid with only 4 HCP. That is living dangerously but certainly not unheard of in these days of intense competitive bidding.

This is the entire hand:

14 ^p	N North	W N E S
	♠ K4 ♥ AK106 ♦ K85 ♣ QJ103	P 4♥ P P P
W West	E East	
♠ 102 ♥ 543 ♦ AQJ742 ♣ 87	♠ AQ7653 ♥ 2 ♦ 10963 ♣ AK	
	S South	
	♠ J98 ♥ QJ987 ♦ ♣ 96542	4♥ N NS: 0 EW: 0

A similar two-suited overcall convention is called the Unusual Notrump. I will talk about this convention in a future article.

You can see how this hand should be played by clicking on this link: <http://tinyurl.com/ll5dgvf>. 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.