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This Week in Bridge

(323) 2-Suited Overcalls: Michaels Cuebid and Unusual 2NT

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Level: 1

Robert S. Todd

robert@advinbridge.com

General

When RHO opens the bidding with a suit bid at the 1-level (1♣, 1♦, 1♥, or 1♠), we often compete in the bidding with one long suit by making a simple overcall or preemptive jump overcall, but there are bids available that will allow us to compete in the bidding and show two suits with just one bid. These bids are the *Michaels Cuebid* and *Unusual 2NT*. These are powerful competitive bidding tools because they allow us to take away some of the opponents' valuable bidding space, preempting the auction, and show partner our two 5+card suits. Let's see how to make use of these conventions to show our 2-suited overcalls.

The Michaels Cuebid Overcall

When RHO opens the bidding with a suit at the 1-level, an immediate bid of that suit is not natural but is used as a conventional call called a *Michaels Cuebid*. We use this cuebid to show two 5+card suits, either both Majors (if neither Major has been bid) or a Major and a minor (if a Major is bid).

Michaels Auctions

1♣	2♣	5+/5+ in the Majors
1♦	2♦	5+/5+ in the Majors
1♥	2♥	5+♠ and a 5+ card minor
1♠	2♠	5+♥ and a 5+ card minor

These bids usually show 2-suited preemptive strength bids, normally about 5-11 HCP.

Example 1

♠ KQ843

♥ KQ532

♦ 93

♣ 5

After a 1♣ opening bid, we make a Michaels Cuebid of 2♣ with this hand.



What if we have the shape for a Michaels Cuebid, but a stronger hand?

- With 12-15 pts, we overcall our suits naturally. We start by bidding our higher-ranking suit first and bid our lower-ranking suit later if we get a chance.
- With 16+ pts, we can use Michaels as well. This treatment is called “Max-Michaels” and is far less common. When we bid Michaels, partner will always assume we have a “Min-Michaels” (5-11 HCP) unless we do something to demonstrate we have this rare maximum hand. This approach is called Min-Max Michaels.

Examples of Strong Michaels Bids

1♥ 2♥ P 2♠ 16-19 HCP, 6+♠, 5+minor
P 3♠

1♥ 2♥ P 2♠ 16-19 HCP, 5♠, 5+♣
P 3♣

The 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+/5+ minors, 5-11 pts.
1♥ 2NT 5+/5+ minors, 5-11 pts.
1♦ 2NT 5+♣/5+♥, 5-11 pts,
1♣ 2NT 5+♦/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.

Example 2

♠ 64
♥ 5
♦ AJT93
♣ KQT83

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



What if we have the shape for the Unusual 2NT, but a stronger hand?

We do not use the Unusual NT with strong hands because if we play in game then 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.

Conclusion

When the opponents open the bidding and we have a shapely hand, it is important for us to compete in the auction immediately. We want to show partner as much information about the 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 1-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 the Unusual 2NT do this. Add these to your bidding agreements to allow you more options when making an overcall.