

What To Do Over RHO's Michaels Cue Bid 01/06/2020

When your partner opens One of a suit and your right-hand opponent (RHO) makes a Michaels cue bid, you have several options available to you. What you do over the cue bid will depend upon the strength and shape of your hand, and also upon your partnership agreements. Today we will discuss some of these possibilities.

First, a quick review of the Michaels cue bid: Over an opening bid of One Club or One Diamond, a Michaels cue bid (Two Clubs or Two Diamonds) shows at least 5 – 5 in the majors. Over an opening bid of One Heart or One Spade, a Michaels cue bid (Two Hearts or Two Spades) shows at least 5 – 5 in the other major and an unspecified minor. The strength of the cue bid hand can vary, but most partnerships play that it shows either a preemptive (weakish) hand or a very strong hand.

Note that when your opponent makes a Michaels cue bid of Two Clubs or Two Diamonds, you know both of your opponent's suits (hearts and spades). But when your opponent makes a Michaels cue bid of Two Hearts or Two Spades, you know just one of your opponent's suits (the other major). This will be important later, when we talk about cue bidding over a Michaels cue bid.

Here are some of the options that are available to you over your opponent's Michaels cue bid:

- 1. You can pass.** If your partner makes a Michaels cue bid (or any cue bid, for that matter), then you are obligated to bid. But if your RHO makes a Michaels cue bid, you are certainly allowed to pass.
- 2. You can raise partner's suit.** A simple raise of partner's suit over the Michaels cue bid is a non-forcing constructive raise, showing 7 – 10 HCP and support for partner's suit (3+ cards in a major, 4+ in a minor). You might raise with a bit less strength with favorable vulnerability and/or with longer trump support.
- 3. You can jump in partner's suit.** A jump raise to the 4-level in partner's suit over a Michaels cue bid is weak and preemptive, showing at least 5-card support.
- 4. You can bid Two No Trump.** Bidding Two No Trump over the Michaels cue bid is invitational and shows a balanced hand with 10 – 11 HCP and stoppers in the opponent's known suit(s). (Jacoby Two No Trump is NOT on over interference.) If partner has opened a major, then bidding Two No Trump will typically show less than three cards in that major.
- 5. You can bid Three No Trump.** Jumping to Three No Trump over the Michaels cue bid is to play, showing a balanced hand with 12+ HCP and stoppers in the opponent's known suit(s). If partner has opened a major, then bidding Three No Trump will typically show less than three cards in that major.

6. You can bid a new (unbid) minor suit. Most partnerships play that bidding a new minor suit over a Michaels cue bid is natural and non-forcing, showing a good 5-card suit or longer and 7 – 10 HCP. Note that if your opponent makes a Michaels cue bid, then there is NO unbid major suit!

7. You can double. A double over a Michaels cue bid is penalty-oriented, showing 9+ HCP, usually without support for partner's suit, with an interest in penalizing the opponents in at least one of their suits. With most hands, your partner (the opening bidder) should pass at his next opportunity to give you the option of doubling the opponents' contract.

8. You can cue bid. Yes, you can cue bid over a Michaels cue bid! You do this by bidding your opponent's known suit. But things can get a bit tricky because sometimes you know just one of your opponent's suits, and sometimes you know both of your opponent's suits. In both cases, please keep in mind that cue bids are ALWAYS forcing.

- If partner opens a major and RHO makes a Michaels cue bid of Two Hearts or Two Spades, you know just one of your opponent's suits (the other major). In this case, a cue bid of your opponent's major shows a limit raise or better in partner's major.

So if partner opens One Heart and RHO cue bids Two Hearts, then you should cue bid Two Spades (your opponent's known suit) to show a limit raise or better in hearts. Partner can rebid Three Hearts with a minimum opening hand or jump to Four Hearts if he has a bit extra.

Similarly, if partner opens One Spade and RHO cue bids Two Spades, then you should cue bid Three Hearts (your opponent's known suit) to show a limit raise or better in spades. Partner can rebid Three Spades or jump to Four Spades, depending upon the strength of his hand.

- If partner opens a minor and RHO makes a Michaels cue bid of Two Clubs or Two Diamonds, now you know both of your opponent's suits (Hearts and Spades). In this case, you have TWO cue bid options – Two Hearts or Two Spades. You should certainly use a cue bid to show a limit raise or better in partner's suit. But which cue bid?

Bottom line: You and your partner have to decide what a cue bid of Two Hearts means, as opposed to a cue bid of Two Spades. You could cue bid the suit in which you're stronger, or the suit in which you're weaker. Or you could cue bid Hearts with 4-card support of partner's minor, and Spades with 5+ card support. As with so many things in bridge, it doesn't matter what your agreement is, as long as you have an agreement.

Note: There is a convention known as "Unusual over Michaels", a variation of "Unusual over Unusual", which defines what the two cue bids mean over a Michaels cue bid of Two Clubs or Two Diamonds. Unusual over Michaels and Unusual over Unusual can be very confusing and they don't come up very often. Therefore, I am NOT!!! suggesting that you play them. However, if you want to do some research and look them up – be my guest.