

# The Interplay between Unusual 2N Bids and Michaels Cuebid Conventions

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Both of these defensive preemptive bidding conventions generally show two 5-card suits and are usually made by the overcaller (left-hand opponent of opener), but may also be made by the advancer (right-hand opponent of opener) as discussed later in this article; or if responder has bid, the takeout double may be used for the unbid suits. Keep in mind that you will be playing 3-level contracts based primarily on trick taking potential via Law of Total Tricks, rather than high card points (HCP). All aspects of these conventions require partnership agreement—especially any modifications that you may want to use. With modifications, you will need to verify whether they need to be alerted.

Since the holder of two 5-card suits has a distributional hand one may consider it worthwhile to split the range of HCP into three classifications, being applicable for primarily the Michaels convention when using the min-max version:

- ♠ Weak 6-10 HCP (some recommend 5-10, 6-11, or 6-12 HCP)
- ♠ Intermediate 11-15 HCP (some recommend 12-16, or 13-16 HCP)
- ♠ Strong 16+ (some recommend 17+) shown by the rebid of overcaller

You and your partner need to define what range you are going to use depending on your system. Although not generally recommended for Michaels, you may make no distinction in HCP range. However this makes it more difficult for partner to know the strength of your hand.

In terms of vulnerability you may want to also consider your Losing Trick Count (LTC), that is, how many losing tricks there are in the hand, because both of these bids are generally preemptive with weak hands:

- ♥ Equal or unfavorable vulnerability maximum of 4 TLC
- ♥ Favorable vulnerability upwards to 7 TLC

Using the classifications of hands both of these conventions are applied as follows

- ♦ With either a weak or strong hand use the conventions; the strong hand in its rebid will make that known.
- ♦ With an intermediate hand bid the higher ranking suit first and then if the opportunity presents itself bid the lower ranking suit.

Should these conventions be used with 5-4 or 6-4 hands? No, as partner is expecting 5-cards in each suit and with only 4-cards you may end-up playing in a 4-2 fit. With 6-4 hands bid the 6-card suit first, and then the 4-card suit, and return to the 6-card suit on the next bid showing that distribution.

May these conventions be extended to 6-5 or 6-6 or 7-5 hands? Yes, although partner will be expecting 5-5, but further rebids using your judgment will disclose whether they are longer suits and where the contract should be placed. Some recommend bidding these individually, so your partnership agreement is critical.

The Unusual 2N is usually the first of these conventions learned, it is:

- ♠ A jump to 2N over an opening of one of a suit.
  - ♥ Some may play 2N over 1N as Unusual, however other no trump interference conventions are more commonly used for 5-5 card hands.
- ♠ The jump to 2N conveys either one of the following depending on partnership agreement:
  - ♥ 5-5 in the minors, convention card is marked "minors".
    - ♦ Advancer bids his better minor.
  - ♥ 5-5 in the two lowest unbid suits, convention card is marked "2Lowest".
    - ♦ If either major is bid, then the minors are the 2-lowest.
      - ♣ Advancer bids his better minor.
    - ♦ If ♦'s or ♣'s have been bid, then ♥'s and the other minor are the 2-lowest.
      - ♣ Advancer bids ♥'s with support.
      - ♣ If lacking tolerance for ♥'s, advancer bids 3♣ asking for the minor.
        - If the minor is ♣'s, overcaller may pass or bid further.
        - If the minor is ♦'s, the overcaller bids 3♦.
  - ♠ Thus a 5-card spade suit with another 5-card suit cannot be shown except by overcalling in spades and next bidding the other 5-card suit.

The Michaels Cuebid comes to the rescue in this latter case.

- ♠ It is made:
  - ♥ Over a natural suit bid.
  - ♥ Over an implied suit, such as following a transfer bid.
  - ♥ **NOT** over any artificial bid, such as Precision 1♣.
- ♠ It is a cuebid showing two 5-5 card suits by bidding at the 2-level in the same suit as the opening bid.
  - ♥ After an opening bid of 1♣ or 1♦; the overcaller bids 2♣ or 2♦, respectively, to show both majors.

- ♦ Advancer bids his better major.
- ♥ After an opening bid of 1♥; the overcaller bids 2♥ showing ♠'s and an undisclosed minor.
  - ♦ Advancer bids 2♠ with ♠ support
  - ♦ Lacking ♠ support, advancer bids 2N asking for the minor.
    - ♣ Overcaller bids the minor.
- ♥ After an opening bid of 1♠; the overcaller bids 2♠ showing ♥'s and an undisclosed minor.
  - ♦ Advancer bids 2♥ with ♥ support
  - ♦ Lacking ♥ support, advancer bids 2N asking for the minor.
    - ♣ Overcaller bids the minor.
- ♠ Growing in popularity is the "International Michaels Cuebid", which is not alertable, so you should be aware of this convention as well as other Michaels' versions; it has the following bidding and response meanings:
  - ♥ After an opening bid of 1♣, the overcaller bids 2♣ to show diamonds and an undisclosed major.
    - ♦ Advancer bids 2♦ with ♦ support.
    - ♦ Lacking ♦ support, advancer bids 2♥ asking for the major.
      - ♣ Overcaller corrects to the other major or accepts the ♥'s either by passing or by further bidding.
  - ♥ After an opening bid of 1♦; the overcaller bids 2♦ to show clubs and an undisclosed major.
    - ♦ Advancer bids 3♣ with ♣ support.
    - ♦ Lacking ♣ support, advancer bids 2♥ asking for the major.
      - ♣ Overcaller corrects to the other major or accepts the ♥'s either by passing or by further bidding.
  - ♥ After an opening bid of 1♣ or 1♦; the overcaller bids 2N to show both majors.
    - ♦ Advancer bids his better major.
  - ♥ After an opening bid of 1♥; the overcaller bids 2♥ showing ♠'s and an undisclosed minor.
    - ♦ Advancer bids 2♠ with ♠ support.
    - ♦ Lacking ♠ support, advancer bids 3♣ asking for the minor.
      - ♣ Overcaller corrects to the other minor or accepts the ♣'s either by passing or by further bidding.
  - ♥ After an opening bid of 1♠; the overcaller bids 2♠ showing ♥'s and an undisclosed minor.
    - ♦ Advancer bids 3♥ with ♥ support.
    - ♦ Lacking ♥ support, advancer bids 3♣ asking for the minor.
      - ♣ Overcaller corrects to the other minor or accepts the ♣'s either by passing or by further bidding.
  - ♥ After an opening bid of 1♠ or 1♥; opening bid, the overcaller bids 2N showing both minors.
    - ♦ Advancer bids his better minor.

Note: I think there is a disadvantage to this system with its undisclosed major suits when the preferred options are majors, no trump and then minors.

If there is no interfering bid by responder, advancer is forced to bid:

- ♠ With 0-9 HCP, makes a minimum bid; with 10+ HCP, make a jump bid.
- ♠ Bid the better of these two suits, with a minimum of 3-card support as that is sufficient for a 5-3 fit.
- ♠ Advancer may bid his own suit only if strong, realizing that overcaller may be void in the suit.
- ♠ If there is an undisclosed suit and you have at least 3-card in both suits, make the asking bid for the undisclosed suit. If only one of the undisclosed suits, probability says overcaller will be short in that suit and you run the risk of getting too high. These cards may take care of losers in overcaller's hand, an undisclosed asset.

If there is interference by responder, then advancer should consider primarily whether a sacrifice is worth it based on playing length and secondarily on strength and depending on vulnerability.

May you use after opener bids a weak-two bid and or a preemptive 3- or 4- level bid?

- ♠ Yes, providing you:
  - ♥ Have a partnership agreement for the various bids
    - ♦ For example, what would 4N mean over a preemptive 4-level major suit bid, the minors?
  - ♥ Have the added values for game-level suit bids, remembering you are bidding on length not strength.
- ♠ A bid of 2N over a weak-two needs special clarification in your system as to which of these you are using.
  - ♥ Some play 2N is Unusual 2N asking for minors
  - ♥ Some play 2N is the equivalent to a 1N opener with stoppers in the bid suit.

Another consideration: What does a double say by responder to either a Michaels cuebid or an Unusual 2N?

- ♠ Is it for penalty promising strength, saying, "Opener, I also have strong HCP values"?
- ♠ Or is it takeout in the other unbid suit, as three suits now have been bid, the opener's suit and two by the overcaller?