

Michaels

Whenever you have 10 or more cards in 2 suits, HCP become a poor way of evaluating your trick taking ability. With at most 3 cards in the other 2 suits the question is far more which high cards your partner has rather than how many. When you have a single long suit you usually focus on that suit and either preempt or bid it a lot. When you have 2 five card suits it's harder to get that information across since partner naturally assumes that you will bid your longest suit first.

There aren't a lot of gadgets to describe these hands when opening the bidding, but there are when the opponents have opened the bidding. This is a good strategy for a several different reasons including:

- You are more likely to have a fit if the opponents have length in one of your short suits
- In a competitive auction you might not have the strength to bid your 2nd suit at the level the auction gets back to you
- You are less likely to want to be the declarer since you will have shown most of your shape and it's your partner's hand that will be harder to count

One of the earliest gadgets to utilize this idea is the Michaels cuebid convention. Simply stated the Michaels cuebid says "I have at least 5 cards in every unbid major and if there's only 1 unbid major I have 5 cards in an unknown minor"

Michaels applies when the opponents have opened 1 of a suit naturally and partner has not bid.

Examples:

- 1C-2C - 5/5 in the majors
 - 1S-2S - 5 hearts and 5 clubs or diamonds
 - 1H-P-1N-2H - 5 spades and 5 clubs or diamonds
- Note: NT is not a suit
- 1C-P-P-2C - Typically on in balancing
 - 2H-3H - Need discussion with partner before playing vs preempts, my recommendation is not to
 - 1H-P-2H-3H - Need discussion with partner before playing after a bid and raise.
 - 1C-P-1S-2S - Warning, this is not Michaels except by special agreement. This is customarily natural with long spades and a good hand. Bid 2N with 5-5 in the unbid suits

Some common ways of playing Michaels:

Only Weak

Treat this bid like a preempt. Only make this bid if you aren't strong enough to overcall and show your suits. Remember that you typically want to go slow with strong hands and strong hands often want to be the declarer. So plan on bidding both of your suits naturally with good hands and Michaels only with the weak ones.

Anything goes

If you have the right shape and you feel like bidding, then bid. This typically treats the bid as more preemptive than constructive in nature as you are far more likely to have a bad hand than a good hand after the opponents open

Mini-Maxi

Bid Michaels only with weak or strong hands, not intermediate ones. Common ranges are 6-10 or 15+.. When bidding with the weak hands you do not take another call. When bidding with the strong hands you will raise whichever suit partner picks at least once.

Opening Hand

Only bid Michaels if you would have opened the hand. Using the rule of 20 this implies 10+ HCP.

Based on Vulnerability

Consider the vulnerability when making your bid.

Favorable - Sacrifices are most likely to be successful, weakest requirements

Equal - Unclear who's got the advantage, have medium requirements

Unfavorable - By far the most dangerous, have strong requirements

Suggestions 7/9/11 HCP

As with everything in bridge there's a tradeoff with bidding. How useful is the information that I am giving to the opponents vs how useful it is to partner. The more precise we make our bids the more information we give to both parties. Similarly how effective is this bid at derailing the opponents auctions. The more effective we are at annoying them the better off we're going to be in the long run. I recommend picking the style that is effective for you and your partner. This will likely depend upon the strength of your opponents and your partner. Play around and see what works for you.

As with all hand evaluation in bridge, the better your suit quality the more aggressive you should be. So if your points are in your suits you should be more aggressive and if your points are outside your suits the more conservative. Also consider the spot cards in your suits. Tens and nines take tricks especially in trump or long side suits. Even if they aren't worth any HCPs they often make the difference between a successful and unsuccessful contract.

Responding to Michaels

When your partner makes a Michaels cuebid and RHO passes what should you do? Well, it is important to consider your combined strength and the presence or absence of a fit. Also, a lot depends upon whether both of partner's suits are known (1C-2C) or only the major (1H-2H).

I'll go into this in more depth next week

A Michaels Variation - Top and Another

It can be frustrating not to be able to describe both of your suits when the opponents don't open a major. For instance holding ♠KJT87 ♥3 ♦KJ832 ♣T5 you might want to describe both diamonds and spades which you can do if they open 1H, but not if they open 1C. You can use Michaels to show the highest unbid suit + a lower unbid suit (rather than always showing both majors) to allow for this possibility.