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IN the last issue we looked at the use of the Michaels cue-bid to show two-suited hands after the opponents have opened one of a suit. Now let's consider how the responder can deal with such intervention.

### How does the opener's partner cope with a Michaels overcall?

The responder has various positive options, including double, supporting partner's suit, bidding a new suit and bidding one of the opponent's suits. It is generally a practical approach to ignore the intervention, but the first option we shall consider is the use of double. Most partnerships use a double to show a hand that lacks primary support for the opener, but with sufficient values to give the partnership the balance of points (9+ HCP). The doubler also expresses an interest in taking a penalty.

A point for agreement is the subsequent use of doubles when the overcaller or his partner bid a suit, with common practice being to play that the opener's side are now in penalising mode and therefore subsequent doubles show a desire to defend (usually with four good trumps).

It is also a good idea to discuss how far the partnership are forced following the responder's double. A sensible agreement is to say that you are in a forcing auction unless the overcaller's partner makes a jump in response.

### What should the responder do if he has primary support for the opener?

A direct raise of the opener's suit is consistent with a hand that wishes to compete and is assumed to have insufficient values for a limit raise to the three level (similar to jump support after the opponents make a take-out double of

# Defending against the Michaels cue-bid

partner's one-level opening).

When holding a hand with invitational or better values, the responder can cue-bid one of the suits shown by the Michaels bidder. When the opening bid is 1♥/1♠, only one of the opponents' suits is known, so bidding this suit (the other major) shows a high card raise to at least three of the opener's major. However, when the opening bid is 1♣/1♦, both of the opponent's suits are known, leaving responder with two possible cue-bids.

Again it is important to agree the difference between bidding each suit. One cue-bid will show a raise of the opener's suit, but what should the other cue-bid show?

### What other hand types need to be dealt with?

Before deciding which cue-bid shows support for the opener's suit, it is worth considering the other potential problem hand types. The final option that we need to address is that of bidding a new suit as responder. When only one cue-bid is available, e.g. 1♥ – (2♥) – ? a bid of 3♣ or 3♦ is natural and forcing, with responder unable to show a more competitive hand immediately. However, when there are two cue-bids available, e.g. 1♣ – (2♣) – ? a cue-bid can also be used to show length in the unbid suit.

A popular treatment is to play that the lower cue-bid links to the lowest suit, and the higher cue-bid links to the higher suit. Thus, after the auction begins 1♣ – (2♣), a 2♥ response would show a good hand with clubs (an invitational or better raise), and 2♠ would show a good hand with diamonds (forcing to game). A 2♦ bid would simply be an attempt to compete and would not be forcing.

Similarly, when the auction begins 1♦ – (2♦), a 2♥ response shows a good hand with clubs (forcing to game), and a 2♠ response shows a good hand with dia-

monds (an invitational or better raise).

Here is an example of how one might cope with an opposing Michaels cue-bid:

♠ A 7 4		♠ 5
♥ 8		♥ Q 6 5 2
♦ K Q J 9 3		♦ A 8
♣ K 9 6 2		♣ A Q J 7 5 4

West	North	East	South
1♦	2♦ <sup>1</sup>	2♥ <sup>2</sup>	2♠
4♥ <sup>3</sup>	Pass	4NT <sup>4</sup>	Pass
5♥ <sup>5</sup>	Pass	6♣	All Pass

<sup>1</sup> Michaels, majors; <sup>2</sup> Clubs, game-forcing;

<sup>3</sup> Splinter; <sup>4</sup> Roman Key-card Blackwood;

<sup>5</sup> Two 'aces' without the ♠Q.

If responder had a weaker hand, without the ♦A for example, he would bid 3♣ after the 2♦ overcall, to show a competitive hand. With great support for clubs, opener can still make a splinter bid of 4♥, but responder would now sign off in 5♣.

### In summary:

- With no primary fit for the opener, the expectation that the partnership have the balance of points, and an interest in taking a penalty, the responder can start by doubling the Michaels cue-bid.
- When the opening bid is 1♣/1♦, the responder can cue-bid the lower-ranking major (hearts) to show a good hand with the lower minor suit (clubs), or cue-bid the higher major (spades) to show a good hand with the higher minor suit (diamonds).
- When the opening bid is 1♥/1♠, the responder can cue-bid the opponents' major to show a good raise, or bid 3♣/3♦ to show a good hand with length in the suit bid. □