

CUEBID TO SLAM

You are sitting in the South position and plan to open this hand 1♦:

South
♠Q
♥KQ103
♦KQJ6
♣J943

However, East is the dealer in front of you, and decides to open a “weak two” in diamonds: 2♦.

What would you do now? If you overcalled 1♥ you would be promising your partner 5 hearts. If you doubled, your partner would surely respond with 2♠; what now? The best call you can make is “pass.” You hope you can come back in the bidding later. That’s the beauty of being the opening bidder; you make it harder for the opponents.

West passes and your partner bids 3♦. That is a conventional bid used in duplicate bidding and it’s called the Michaels Cuebid. It was named for its inventor, Mike Michaels. It is very popular and because it is a minor suit Michael’s cuebid, it shows at least 5-5 in both majors. It is made with either a weak hand or a very strong hand. With an intermediate strength hand, partner would have bid his two major suits naturally.

The bid comes back to you and you jump to 4♥. Your 13 HCP have now increased in value to about 18 points. This takes into account your quality heart suit, the quality 4-card diamond side suit and the singleton spade. Best of all, you have a known 9-card trump suit fit.

If partner’s Michael’s cuebid was the weak type, he would have passed your game bid. Your partner was energized by your response and asks for aces. That means he has more than 17 points and you have more than enough strength for slam. You show him you have no aces and he rebids 6♥.

This is the entire bidding sequence:

West	North	East	South
		2♦	Pass
Pass	3♦	Pass	4♥
Pass	4NT	Pass	5♣
Pass	6♥	All Pass	

West leads the ♦5 and you see this dummy:

	North ♠ A10987 ♥ AJ874 ♦ ---- ♣ AQ7	
West		East
♦ 5		
	South ♠ Q ♥ KQ103 ♦ KQJ6 ♣ J943	

You notice the void in diamonds and wonder why your partner asked for aces. Even if you had one ace, it would be in diamonds where it wouldn't have done any work.

You count 1 spade, 5 hearts, 3 diamonds and 1 club trick; 10 in all. You can get 2 more by ruffing clubs in the dummy or by ruffing spades in your hand. Ruffing clubs is dangerous because you can't afford to pull all the trump before you execute the ruffs, and one of the opponents might overruff you. Also, since you are using dummy's trumps, you need an extra trick, which you don't have. Plus there is a lot of work to do to set up the clubs. It seems safer and easier to ruff the dummy's losing spades in your hand.

You usually don't benefit by ruffing in your hand. But here, dummy's trumps are longer than yours. You will actually be ruffing in the short hand, which is what the dummy usually is. This technique is called a "dummy reversal." That is, you are playing the dummy's hand as the master hand and your hand as the "dummy" hand.

Your first decision is what to do with the ♦5 lead. You can ruff it or discard a loser from the dummy. You are positive that the ♦A is sitting in East and you want to get that played quickly so you can discard losers on the ♦KQJ. So your very best approach is to discard the losing ♣7. East plays the ♦A, under which you play your ♦6. East plays back a diamond which you win with the ♦K. How will you play the rest of the hand?

You must win the rest of the tricks. You have three good diamonds for discards in the master hand, North. You have already discarded one club. You plan to discard the ♣Q on this second trick, thereby eliminating the need for a club finesse; and 2 spades. However, since East is known to hold 6 diamonds for his preempt, West holds only 3 diamonds, and he will trump the last diamond lead. That means you will have to trump 3 spades in your hand. Since you hold 4 trump, it is safe to pull one round of trump. That way you will see if they are split 4-0 against you.

Furthermore, you will need 3 trips to the dummy, excluding the lead to the ♠A. You will use the ♥A and the ♣A and a ruff for the entries. You have a choice of diamonds or clubs for the ruff. It is safer to ruff the last diamond. You know that East will have a diamond and you know that you can overruff whatever heart West uses to ruff with.

This is the full deal:

14	N North		W	N	E	S
	♠ A10987	♥ AJ874	P	3♦	P	4♥
	♦ AQ7	♣ AQ7	P	4NT	P	5♣
			P	6♥	P	P
			D			
W West			E East			
♠ K653			♠ J42			
♥ 62			♥ 95			
♦ 754			♦ A109832			
♣ K1082			♣ 65			
	S South					
	♠ Q					
	♥ KQ103					
	♦ KQJ6					
	♣ J943					
			6♥ S NS: 0 EW: 0			

If you would like to see the whole hand played out click on this link: <http://tinyurl.com/lqwvksm> or copy and paste it into your browser. Click on the "Next" button on the bottom to advance through each trick.