

USING THE MICHAELS CONVENTION

North dealt and passed. East opened 1♦ and it is your turn to make a call:

| | |
|---|--------|
| S | South |
| ♠ | AQJ95 |
| ♥ | AKQ854 |
| ♦ | 10 |
| ♣ | 5 |

This is a powerful hand. You have only 15 HCP but your shape is worth another 3 or more points. It is too strong for an overcall. Overcalls should show between 7 and 17 total points. You could double and then bid one of your major suits over partner's probable club bid. But will that be the best major? Your partner might prefer the other major but not have the ability to show it.

A better option is to use a conventional two-suited overcall. Cue bidding the opener's suit in the direct seat, is called Michaels Cue Bid. Since it is a cue bid of a minor suit, it promises at least 5-5 in the majors. If it was a cue bid of a major suit, it would promise 5-5 in the other major and one of the minor suits. Partner can ask you what minor you have by bidding 2NT.

Most of the time, a Michaels cue bid will be made with a weak hand, 6-11 points. When partner names one of the majors, you will normally pass with this weak hand. However, the cue bid can also be made with the very strong hand – 16 or more points. The first type of cue bid is called the Mini Michaels, the second or strong cue bid, is called the Maxi Michaels. How does partner know which it is? If you take another bid, you are promising a strong Maxi Michaels type hand. By the way, with an intermediate hand (12-15 points) it is advised to overcall in the higher ranking suit and to rebid the second lower suit on the next round.

After your 2♦ Michaels cue bid and West's pass, North advances 2♠. East passes and it is back to you. What are you thinking.

You should be thinking slam. But you don't have to make an immediate slam invitational bid. By bidding again, partner, with even a moderate hand will be forced to bid again. You have the ability to show your hearts and let partner choose which suit is best for him. After rebidding 3♥, partner raises to 4♥.

Notice that you have two minor suit losers and a possible spade loser. If you ask partner for aces and he shows 1 ace, you have a slam dependent on the

spade finesse. If he shows 2 aces, you have a cold slam no matter where the ♠K lies.

Your rebid of 4NT is answered with 5♦, indicating only 1 ace. You rebid 6♥ and you are off to the races.

West leads the ♣K and you partner tables this hand:

| N | North |
|---|-------|
| ♠ | K82 |
| ♥ | J73 |
| ♦ | 6543 |
| ♣ | A32 |

West leads ♣K

| S | South |
|---|--------|
| ♠ | AQJ95 |
| ♥ | AKQ854 |
| ♦ | 10 |
| ♣ | 5 |

You win the A and pull trump in two rounds. Since partner obligingly holds the K, you can claim your 12 tricks, giving the opponents the ♦A.

This is the entire deal:

| | | |
|---------|----------|------------------|
| D 1 | N North | W N E S |
| | ♠ K82 | P 1♦ 2♦ |
| | ♥ J73 | P 2♠ P 3♥ |
| | ♦ 6543 | P 4♥ P 4NT |
| | ♣ A32 | P 5♦ P 6♥ |
| | | D D D |
| W West | | E East |
| ♠ 1064 | | ♠ 73 |
| ♥ 109 | | ♥ 62 |
| ♦ 972 | | ♦ AKQJ8 |
| ♣ KQ764 | | ♣ J1098 |
| | S South | |
| | ♠ AQJ95 | |
| | ♥ AKQ854 | |
| | ♦ 10 | |
| | ♣ 5 | |
| | | 6♥ S NS: 0 EW: 0 |

You can see how this hand should be played by clicking on this link: <http://tinyurl.com/y7ozhy8k> , or copy and paste it into your browser. Click on the "Next" button on the bottom to advance through each trick. Alternatively, by clicking on "Play" you can play all four hands and see if you can make the hand on your own.

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