

“MICHAELS WEEK”



“ Two suits”

It was in the Open New Zealand trial last week-end when Michaels Ware and Whibley won the head to head match, to be followed by Michael Cornell’s selection in the third pair. It was once more a couple of days’ later when on this website, we looked at a poor result from a weak version of the Michaels cue-bid in action. So, where else to finish the week with more “Michaels”...if only because sensibly used versions of this convention seemed to produce good results.

How do you like them, weak, strong or in-between..or even some combination thereof? Weak is not for me which means that partner will have reasonable values when they enter the fray:


West	North	East	South
1♣	2♣	Pass	?

South held ♠ 765 ♥ AK ♦ 8 ♣ KJ98732

What action would you take, with 2♣ showing both majors, Michaels style, and just your side vulnerable?

As long as your partner shows at least some value (a 9 count would be absolute minimum) and that most of their high card points were in their two suits, then 4♠ cannot be far from making. A maximum 3 hcp in hearts means plenty in that spade suit. It seems a good idea to find out whether game can make:

Board 28 ♠ K Q 8 4 3
 West Deals ♥ Q J 9 8 5
 N-S Vul ♦ K 5 3
 ♣ —

♠ A 2 ♥ 10 7 4 2 ♦ A Q 4 ♣ A 10 5 4		♠ J 10 9 ♥ 6 3 ♦ J 10 9 7 6 2 ♣ Q 6	
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♠ 7 6 5
 ♥ A K
 ♦ 8
 ♣ K J 9 8 7 3 2

<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>
1 ♣	2 ♣	Pass	4 ♠

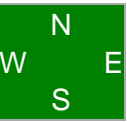
All pass

West has a choice of aces, any of which either help or at least do not hinder South. Even left to do a bit of work after a passive heart lead, South has enough entries to the South hand to lead up to the ♦K and also to play trumps. Making 10, even 11 tricks, proved fairly straightforward.

Yet, only 5 of the 12 tables managed to reach game with one North-South pair collecting 500 from 5♦x. At Teams forms of scoring, it would be rather unwise to press on to 5♠.

That last comment rang very true on Board 5 where another Michael's opportunity arose.

Board 5 ♠ K Q 3
 North Deals ♥ K Q 6
 N-S Vul ♦ A K 7 4 2
 ♣ J 8

♠ J 9 7 5 ♥ 8 7 ♦ Q 10 9 ♣ K 7 6 5		♠ 2 ♥ A 10 9 4 2 ♦ J ♣ Q 10 9 4 3 2	
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♠ A 10 8 6 4
 ♥ J 5 3
 ♦ 8 6 5 3
 ♣ A

<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>
	1 ♦	Pass	1 ♠
Pass	2 NT	3 NT	Dbl
4 ♣	4 ♠	5 ♣	Dbl
Pass	5 ♠	All pass	

Maybe some East players just overcalled in hearts and left it at that, not a success on this deal. The East hand does not qualify for an Intermediate Michaels bid but it did not stop one East from entering the auction second time round, with the vulnerability in their favour.

Perhaps West should jump immediately to 5♣ which North would surely have taken to with a red card though, strangely, above, North pulled their partner's penalty double. As you can see, pulling to 5♠ was not a good idea as there was a certain loser in every suit except clubs. Pulling 5♣, if you must, need be to 5♦ this time, as that contract has no spade loser. 5♣x is a wonderful sacrifice over 4♠, -300 instead of -620. Guessing which hand is more likely to have three clubs may not be straightforward, though the correct guess was not needed this time.

What was needed was some way of East showing their two suits even if your initial Michaels bid showed a stronger hand. 5 East-West pairs failed to bid higher than 4♠ while 4 North-South pairs tried a spade contract at the 5 or 6 level. At Pairs, their action is more understandable but, especially at Teams, and it has been said so many times before, "the 5 level belongs to the opposition". With more silent opposition, 6♦ may well be the spot to be, though with Michaels type bids appearing, the chance of a friendly diamond break seems more unlikely.

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