

# Invitational & Constructive Raises

## After Partner's Michaels for the Majors

By Mike Savage

While discussing responses to a Michaels cue-bid with some local club players, I realized that there was a way to perhaps improve them by including constructive “raises.” In response to 1S-2S Michaels, it is common practice to use **2NT**—which forces partner to bid his minor—and then bidding 3H as the only way to make a game try, as a direct 3H bid just shows a heart preference. Of course, using **2NT** as an artificial bid over major-minor Michaels means it can't be used for an extremely rare natural, invitational bid. However after a 1H-2H or 1S-2S Michaels cue-bid, playing **2NT** as an artificial bid, asking for overcaller's minor is a basic part of the convention. A lot of expert partnerships also use **2NT** over 1S-2S as the only method to (eventually) invite game in hearts.

You almost *never* would have a hand that you would want to make a natural, invitational **2NT** bid with after your partner has shown a 5-5 two-suited Michaels hand. Therefore, why not also use the **2NT** response over the Michaels cue-bids showing both majors as a conventional bid as well?—one that shows a fit in a major and has strongly invitational values. Using **2NT** this way in order to show an invitational major raise, would allow your partnership to use the *jump* to three of a major to show a constructive raise. Here is a basic outline of how this would work:

### Michaels for both majors

1C-2C or 1D-2D: **2H** or **2S** = The worst hand, preferring the major bid

1C-2C or 1D-2D: **3H** or **3S** = A *constructive* raise with 4 trumps, usually to an honor

1C-2C or 1D-2D: **2NT** = Invitational raise or better in one of the two majors

#### Suggested Responses:

**3C** or **3D** = Shows a stiff or void, *might* be with a minimum

**3H** = Shows a bare minimum (pass, correct or bid game)

**3S** = Shows slam interest

**4H** = Shows values for game (pass or correct)

### Michaels for the other major and a minor

1H-2H-**2S** = The worst hand, with a spade fit or tolerance

1H-2H-**3S** = A *constructive* raise with 4 trumps, usually to an honor

1H-2H-2NT-3m-**3S** = Strongly invitational

This extra way to show a *constructive* raise would not be available over 1S-2S as there are only two ways to show heart support below game: 3H and 2NT-3m-3H. However, using **2NT** as an artificial response to a Michaels cue-bid would be consistent throughout and therefore easier on memory. A couple of examples of what you might have for a *constructive* raise after Michaels for the majors are #1: A, K or Q fourth of trumps and not much more or #2: four small trumps and a side ace.

The advantage of this method is that you can now make a *constructive* raise, which requires four trumps while only losing the ability to make a very rarely occurring natural, invitational 2NT bid (which is already unavailable as a natural bid after 1H-2H and 1S-2S—as **2NT** is used as an artificial bid, asking the Michaels bidder to show his minor suit). Sometimes the Michaels bidder will have a good hand that only needs four trumps to an honor to make game and having a *constructive* raise available in your partnership will enable him to bid a close game that might not otherwise be bid.