

Balancing Michaels

Bare/Savage Version by Mike Savage

A standard Michaels cue-bid occurs immediately after your RHO has opened one of a suit. You might have a pre-emptive hand (the norm) or you might have a much better hand. But what about a Michaels cue-bid in the balancing (pass-out) seat? You surely wouldn't use it with a pre-emptive hand, you'd just pass and let them play one of their suit. What then, should a Balancing Michaels bid show?

Just as a jump-shift in the pass-out seat shows sound opening values and a good suit, logically a Michaels cue-bid in the balancing seat should also show sound opening values but with a two-suiter.

There are three unbid suits but the cue-bid only shows two. Which two suits should it show? Our recommendation is that after a minor opening, a Balancing Michaels cue-bid should show both majors and after a major suit opening, Balancing Michaels should usually show both minors—but it also could be a strong major-minor 2-suiter. In some partnerships there *might* be different choices as to which suits Balancing Michaels should show as well as different responses but here's how our version works:

Basic Structure:

1C or 1D-P-P: **2C** or **2D** = 5-5+ in the majors with a sound opener or better with two decent suits.

Responses: **2 of a major** = To play

2NT = Natural and invitational

2D after 1C p p-2C or **3C** after 1D p p-2D = Natural, to play

Cue bid = Slam interest with an unknown fit; asks for more info.

Jump to 3 of a major = Invitational with a fit

3NT = Natural and to play, denying a major fit

4NT = Blackwood (best to use Six-key Roman Key-Card)

1H or 1S-P-P: **2H** or **2S** = A 5-5+ two-suiter, almost always the minors, with at least opening values.

If you use it with a major-minor two-suiter, you need a very strong hand.

Responses: In general, all bids of a new suit are meant as pass or correct.

2NT = Artificial, invitational+ values, asks strength/shape

3C = Minimum opening hand with both minors

3D = Strong opening hand with both minors

3H = Shows the *unbid major* and clubs

3S = Shows the *unbid major* and diamonds

4C = Shows clubs and the other major, very strong

4D = Shows diamonds & the other major, very strong

3NT = Natural and to play (rarely bid)

Corollarys:

A. With a 5-5 major-minor two-suiter without strength to force to the 3-level, just overcall the major.

B. 1X(any suit)-P-P-**2NT** = Shows a balanced hand with around 20 HCP (not takeout for the minors).

The responses shown above to 2NT after a major suit Michaels cue-bid allow the partnership to play in 3C or 3D when the cue-bidder has minimum opening values and the minors and also allows the cue-bidder to show a *strong* minor two-suiter and still be able to play 3NT if his partner wants to. When the cue-bidder has a strong major-minor 2-suiter, this structure usually allows him to show which minor he has at the 3-level at or *below* his major suit—allowing the partnership to sign off in three of his major 75% of the time (rarely done) but *always* able to play 3NT. With a really big major-minor 2-suiter, over 2NT the cue-bidder just jumps to four of his minor—just like Leaping Michaels over a weak 2H/2S.