

Leaping and Non-Leaping Michaels

Pete Matthews Jr – <http://3nt.xyz> – © August 27, 2015

Leaping Michaels is a bridge convention used to show a strong two-suited hand, after opponents have opened the bidding, and *partner has no more than passed*. It works well in all seats, either direct or reopening. It may be employed in these situations:

1. When an opponent opens a natural, weak 2♦, 2♥, 2♠, or 3♣, whether or not it promises a side suit.
2. When an opponent opens a natural, intermediate (e.g. Precision) 2♣.
3. When an opponent opens 1♥ or 1♠ and is raised to 2♥ or 2♠.
4. When an opponent opens 1♣ or 2♣ and is raised preemptively to 3♣.

This is as far as most partnerships go. An extension, called **Non-Leaping Michaels**, gives up minor suit overcalls over 3-bids, to permit bidding strong 2-suiters using the same methods. It may be applied in these cases:

5. When an opponent opens a natural weak bid of 3♦, 3♥ or 3♠.
6. When an opponent opens 1♦, 1♥ or 1♠ and is raised preemptively to 3♦, 3♥ or 3♠.
7. When an opponent opens a natural, weak 2♦, 2♥ or 2♠ and is raised to 3♦, 3♥ or 3♠.

The Leaping Michaels Bids

The Leaping Michaels bids show strong hands, not just distributional. They are **forcing**, show two suits of at least five cards each, and are always made at the four level:

- A four level cue bid shows two suits of the same rank: either both majors or both minors, whichever applies. For example, after a weak 2♥ opening, bid 4♥ holding ♠ A3 ♥ - ♦ KQJT73 ♣ AKJT5.
- Four of an unbid minor shows that minor, plus an unbid major. For example, after a weak 2♥ opening, a minimum 4♣ bid would be ♠ KQT73 ♥ 9 ♦ A3 ♣ AKJT5.

Continuations

- Advancer usually places the contract.
- When the opponents bid a minor, and the overcaller bids four of the other minor, his major will not be known.
 - 4♥ asks overcaller to pass with hearts, or correct to 4♠. Advancer may have slam interest in spades (with heart tolerance) for this bid.
 - 4♠ asks opener to pass with spades or correct to five of the minor. Advancer may have slam interest in hearts (with spade tolerance) for this bid.
- After a Leaping or Non-Leaping Michaels bid, *advancer may only play in his own suit if he jumps immediately in it*. This rare bid shows a great suit and slam interest.
- Other than the preceding cases, advancer's bid of a new suit is a slam try in support of one of overcaller's suits, to be named later.

The Rest of the System

- The takeout double is used with a three-suited hand, or a strong one-suiter.
- Make an overcall (or a stronger non-game jump overcall, if available) with a lesser one- or two-suiter. For example, after a weak 2♥ opening, bid 3♦ holding ♠ A3 ♥ K7 ♦ KQT743 ♣ Q53 or ♠ A3 ♥ - ♦ KJT743 ♣ AJT53.
- A three-level cue bid is used with a fistful of tricks but not necessarily points. It asks partner to bid 3NT with a stopper. Should 3NT not be bid, cuebidder's new suit is non-forcing. For example, over a weak 2♦, bid 3♦ with ♠ K4 ♥ A76 ♦ 2 ♣ AKQJ962. (You don't have a three-level cue bid over 3♣ or higher, so either double or bid your suit.)
- A *jump* to 4♥ or 4♠ is natural, an attempt to make game on distribution, typically with the high card strength of a normal opening bid. For example, over a weak 2♠, bid 4♥ on ♠ - ♥ AKT9653 ♦ K732 ♣ Q9. Advancer should seldom try for slam.
- If Non-Leaping Michaels applies, you won't have a natural overcall in a minor below game. You will need to bid 3NT with a stopper, jump to game, or pass. Treat the jump to game as the jump to four of a major, and double with stronger hands.
- A jump to 4NT means whatever it would, had the opponents never bid. I recommend that it ask for specific aces, typically a huge one-suiter with a void: 5♣ = none, 5♦/5♥/5♠/6♣ = that ace, 5NT = two.

Further Considerations

According to the Encyclopedia of Bridge, 7th Edition, "*The Bridge World Standard 1994* expert consensus is that the cuebid over any three-bid is Michaels." If you play it, Non-Leaping Michaels supersedes that consensus.

You could choose to play these modifications to Non-Leaping Michaels:

- Over 3♥ or 3♠, 4NT shows both minors.
- A cue bid asks partner to bid 4NT with a stopper in the enemy suit.

While an efficient use of the bids, this departure from the rest of the system could easily lead to error.

The Multi 2♦ opening shows a preempt in either major. (Some play that it could also be a strong hand.) Leaping Michaels may be played at the three level over Multi: three of a major shows that major and an unspecified minor. Multi is beyond the bounds of the General Convention Chart in North America; if you will play in events that permit Multi, you should study the matter. Also look for Multi-over-Multi.

References

1. Encyclopedia of Bridge, 7th Edition.
2. Discussions with Gary Schwartz, Andrew Hanes, and others.
3. Sources readily available on the Internet.