

Strong 2-Suiter -- Problem

Board 17
 North Deals
 None Vul

♠ 10 8

♥ A K Q 9 3

♦ —

♣ A Q J 6 4 2



West	North	East	South
<i>PeteM</i>	<i>lakeegan</i>	<i>ptownsd</i>	<i>sosberg2</i>
	2♦	Pass	Pass
?			

Join me as West in this online club game. North's weak two bid comes around to us. Without any special agreements, most people would play 3♦ as a Michaels cue bid showing both major suits -- not a good idea lacking spades.

Suppose we double. If partner bids two, three or four spades, we could:

Pass -- hope partner can bring it home, definitely unpalatable.

Bid hearts or clubs -- partner will not expect us to have a second suit

Cue bid diamonds -- In the old days, partner might understand that cue bid as saying, pick again. In the modern style, the second cue bid shows a huge hand, usually in support of partner's suit.

A double is a poor idea in the modern style (even if we play Lebensohl 2 NT over the double).

What should we do?

Lots of strong pairs do have special agreements here. What are they, and what should we bid with them?

Strong 2-Suiter -- Solution

Board 17
North Deals
None Vul

♠ Q J 6		♠ A K 4 2									
♥ J 10 7		♥ 8 5									
♦ A Q 7 5 4 2		♦ J 9									
♣ 3		♣ K 10 9 7 5									
♠ 10 8	<table border="1" style="border-collapse: collapse; width: 40px; height: 40px; margin: auto;"> <tr><td></td><td style="text-align: center;">N</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">W</td><td style="background-color: #cccccc;"></td><td style="text-align: center;">E</td></tr> <tr><td></td><td style="text-align: center;">S</td><td></td></tr> </table>		N		W		E		S		♠ 9 7 5 3
	N										
W		E									
	S										
♥ A K Q 9 3		♥ 6 4 2									
♦ —		♦ K 10 8 6 3									
♣ A Q J 6 4 2		♣ 8									

West	North	East	South
<i>PeteM</i>	<i>lakeegan</i>	<i>ptownsd</i>	<i>sosberg2</i>
	2♦	Pass	Pass
4♣ ¹	Pass	4♦ ²	Pass
4♥	Pass	5♣	All pass

1. Clubs and a major, forcing.

2. Which major?

5♣ by West

Made 7 — EW +440

With standard methods, all we can do is bid one of our suits. If we pick hearts, partner will probably raise, but may guess to pass. We will take the same 13 tricks as everybody who did not wander into 3 NT.

If we pick 3♣, partner should cue bid 3♦, showing a good club raise, and we are off to the races. Even over a belated 5♦ bid by South, we will surely reach 6♣, and bidding the grand slam is possible. Although major suits are important, there are two reasons to bid 3♣: it's normal to bid the longer suit first, and partner will be more excited when holding the ♣K and other slammish values.

Many strong pairs play leaping Michaels over a weak two bid. 4♦ would show both majors, and 4♣ would show clubs and a major; both bids are forcing. (Some experts play 3♦ asks for 3 NT with a diamond stopper, and others play it as a weaker Michaels.)

Here we see leaping Michaels in action. While it's a scary bid with no diamond stopper, we agreed in the post mortem that East should have bid 6♣, not just 5♣. Once East decides to bid 6♣, he might as well bid 4♠ showing a control on the way. (It's best to play that one of the Michaels bidders suits will be trump, except perhaps if jumps.) The top spades and club support are superb, opposite a 4-level force. After that 4♠, the grand slam is likely to be reached.

Leaping Michaels is not a clear advantage on this deal. However, change East's hand to

♠ 9 7 4 2 ♥ 8 5 ♦ J 9 6 3 ♣ K 10 7

and it's a huge winner. 5♣ is virtually laydown, while East would pass a standard 2♥ or 3♣ overall.

The story would be different, had South made a normal raise to 5♦. As West, we might well try 6♣, and again a grand slam might be reached. I've seen those types of slams set on top tricks, though. Preempts work.