

The Unusual NoTrump

There are times you have a 5-5 hand and bidding has progressed such that you can't use Michaels Cuebid to show your suits. Michaels can show (1) both Majors and (2) Other Major and a Minor. There are no options to show (1) both Minors. Example: you hold ♠A7 ♥5 ♦KQJ83 ♣AQJ92 and your RHO Opens 1♥. You can't use Take-Out Double because you can't support ♠'s. Enter the Unusual NoTrump Bid (**UNT**) – and it is Conventional but not Alert-able. It shows 5-5 in the Minors or the two lowest suits .

What makes this bid Unusual? If you wanted to bid NT because you had a strong hand you can first Double and then rebid NoTrump on your rebid. That is why the jump to 2NT is Unusual and OK as a Convention.

Rather than both Minors some play that **UNT** can be used to show the two lowest unbid suits. For example RHO Opens 1♦ an UNT bid could be used to show ♥'s and ♣'s. See the Convention Card [in the NoTrump Overcalls Block].

What about point count and responses. They are identical to those of the Michaels Cuebid. We will repeat them here.

It should go without saying that this Cue Bid is a **Forcing bid**. You might say "you didn't say how many points one needs to bid a **UNT** Cuebid." That is because it really is dependent on Partnership agreement.

There are pros and cons to both approaches for required points for **UNT**. The two options are:

6+ HCP - Ignore the 5-5 distribution and bid the Stronger suit.

A Mini-Max Approach.

a) <11 HCP or >14 HCP: Cuebid Opponents suit.

b) 11–14 HCP: OverCall your Higher ranking suit with the intention of rebidding lower

The rationale behind this approach is this. In (2a) with a Minimum hand you want partner to have an option to choose between the suits. Regardless of the choice you Pass; you have achieved your purpose of finding the Magic-8 fit even with a weak hand. With a strong hand you can show support by bidding 1-level higher, and if Partner has the points, now knowing you have 14+ HCP, she can bid Game. Using this approach Partner knows your point range which is not available under option (1).

In option (2b) by bidding the higher ranking suit and following up with the lower ranking suit shows a 5-Cards in the first (higher ranking) suit and 4-Cards in the second suit. Since it is the lower ranking suit you might have the opportunity to rebid that suit which confirms the 5-5 status of your hand.

Responding to UNT

With a fit for one of Partners suits simply raise the suit to the appropriate level based on your hand. Partner will carry on if she has a strong hand.

Unlike Michaels there is no 'undisclosed Minor'; both suits, based on Partnership agreement, are known.

Defense Against UNT and Michaels (UvU)

More than just showing two suits both Michaels and UNT provide interference against an Opening bid, and ... they surely require the Responder to bid at a higher level than would normally be necessary; so it might be desirable to have an effective counter to this intrusion. It is primarily up to the Responder to effect the defense. A simple foil to the two-suited Cue is called Unusual vs Unusual (UvU) meaning Responder is going to make an Unusual bid over the opponents Unusual NoTrump. First, normally UNT shows 5-5 in the two lowest suits or both Minors. Based on this

we will consider the suits defined by the UNT to be 'their suits' and the other two suits to be 'our suits'. We will then start with the Cue bid that Responder uses to show holdings in 'our suits' If the bidding goes : 1♠ – 2N – ? Their two suits are the Minors, ♦'s and ♣'s. So we “Cue” bid 'their suits' to show:

- 3♣ – shows support for the lower of our suits
- 3♦ – shows support for the higher of our suits

An easy mnemonic for the Cue of 'their suits'; is Lower-Lower, The Lower of 'their suits' shows *support* for the Lower of 'our suits'; the Higher of 'their suits' shows *support* for the Higher of 'our suits'. We must consider what is meant by *support*.

If the supported suit is the Openers bid suit *support* means a **limit** type **raise** with at least 3-Card support. In a Take-out situation Opener should bid 3-of-his-suit. If the supported suit is not the Openers bid suit: *support* means a 6-Card suit in 'our' unbid suit and **game force values**. After considering responsive Cue Bids there are 4 additional bids that can be made Pass, X, and 'our suits'.

3-of-Opened suit – is competitive showing 3-Card support and 5-9 PP. It is **non-forcing!**

3-of-'our other suit' – shows 6+ in 'our other suit' and 5-9 PP. It is **non-forcing!** As a memory aid note that Responder's support for our unbid suit, be it via Cue or a direct bid shows 6+. As usual the Cue is the stronger response.

Pass – The Responder could have very few values, no support for partner's suit, and no wish to compete, but rather defend. Continuing this logical approach, a pass followed by a X by Responder after Opponents settle on a suit can only be for penalty. The Opener is required to pass.

X – All conditions other than those already described. Must be considered competitive and Opener should consider further action. Effectively a stronger hand, unable to support either of our suits, and ready to defend against which ever suit Opponents arrive at. Strength is likely to be on our side.

MICHAELS

In UNT there is no unknown suit as there is in the Michaels Cue bid case. Considering that in both 1♥ – 2♥ – ? or 1♠ – 2♠ – ? there is an unspecified Minor which confuses thus eliminating the tidy compartmentalization of 'our suits' and 'their suits', so we need to adjust. Now there is only one known suit. When Michaels is used over a Minor suit opening we know the 'their two suits' so the same scheme as over UNT is in play. It is only When Michaels is invoked over our Major suit opening that we have to give up the full structure employed against UNT. In the case of the Michaels over Majors we can still use the direct raise to show the simple weak raise and the Cue bid of the one known suit (the other Major) to show the limit raise with one addition.

3-of-either unknown suit – natural, showing 5+Cards and 7-10 HCP. It is **non-forcing!**

Then there is the *standard* UvU

3-of-Openers suit – is competitive showing 3-Card support and 5-9 PP. It is **non-forcing!**

Cue of “known suit” – shows limit-raise or better **It is non-forcing!**

After UvU, either Michaels or UNT, any rebid by Opener is natural.