

# Learning Points – Tales From the NAP 8

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Declarer Play Level: Intermediate

West Deals NS Vul MPs	♠ ♥ ♦ ♣		
♠A3 ♥106 ♦KQ98432 ♣KJ	N W 28 E S	♠K54 ♥K73 ♦J6 ♣A9652	
Mike	♠ ♥ ♦ ♣	Steve	

Cincinnati Sectional and North American Pair Qualifier - Session 2 of 2 sessions. My partner is Mike Purcell. We play a 2/1 version of Precision.

We find 2 good friends at the table. (We sit EW this session). We need a good start in our 1<sup>st</sup> round after the break. Our 1<sup>st</sup> half was 53+%, only slightly above average. We need a strong round (and the leaders to falter) to have any chance of playing in Louisville. Is this too much to ask?

## The Bidding

West opens a normal looking 1♦ (in Precision this bid is limited to 11-15 HCP and could be as short as 2♦ cards). North announces a Michaels Cuebid for the majors and East makes the value bid of 2N, showing both majors stopped and at least invitational values (11+ HCP). West had no problem bidding game after South's pass.

West	North	East	South
1♦ <sup>1</sup>	2♦	2N	Pass
3N	All Pass		

South leads ♠Q  
1= 11-15 HCP and at least 2♦ cards.

West's hand has only 5 losers in a 13 HCP hand. ♦ length promises

tricks if partner has as little as ♦Jx. The ♠A and ♣KJ suggest EW will have time to set up ♦s. Since ♥s have not been explicitly mentioned, NT looks to be a good gamble. This hand is not about HCP.

## The Play

As often happens, the opening lead determines whether we succeed or not. South's ♠Q is very reasonable given partner showed both majors. Declarer wins the ♠A (though the ♠K is known to be in East's hand) and plays the ♦2 toward hand. Whether North wins or ducks is irrelevant. The damage is done. Without a ♥ opening lead, NS give up precious tempo and EW can make 10 tricks in NT. Making 10 tricks for +430 was worth 15 of 17 MPs and a very lucky start indeed. If we are to get to the top 2 spots in this field we need more luck. One down 26 to go.

West Deals NS Vul MPs	♠ 10962 ♥AQJ42 ♦A10 ♣87		
♠A3 ♥106 ♦KQ98432 ♣KJ	N W 28 E S	♠K54 ♥K73 ♦J6 ♣A9652	
	♠QJ87 ♥983 ♦75 ♣Q1043		N: 1♠ EW: 2N,3♣ 5♦

Pair	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
MP		2	12.5	17	11	7	0.5	15	0.5		7
Result		120	400	490	170	150	-50	430	-50		150

The NAP scores cross two different sections. Results from the rest of the field:

Pair	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
MP		7	15	7	15	12.5	3	7	7			7
Result		150	430	150	430	400	130	150	150			150

## Post Mortem

Perhaps South should insert a 3♠ bid over East 2N advance. This bid however does nothing to solve the prime issue: what suit should South lead? Looking at North's hand we are not tempted by the Michael's Cue bid convenience. Instead a 1♥ overcall better places NS values and the length of NS ♠s. ♠s are not lost. South still can introduce them if appropriate. With a 1♥ overcall, South will know what to lead against 3N. If NS did bid ♥s, EW should bid to the minor suit game. Yes, this hand was won by the cost of a convention.

Mike and I play a natural approach over their Major Suit Michaels. A double shows one major suit controlled (4 trumps to an honor) and invitational or better values – a desire to penalize them regardless of which major they choose. A Major suit cuebid is a search for NT stoppers or a ♦ raise. This cuebid shows a stopper (1-ask, 2-show) and asks partner to cuebid stoppers up the line for NT purposes. Partner complies or declines by making a natural rebid. 2 NT shows both majors stopped and invitational strength (11+ HCP). NT implies a 3-card holding at most in the majors. 3♣ by East in this auction would be Invitational + with ♣s. With good ♣s and a weak hand we pass, or bid 4♣ (preemptive) if right.

Other methods might work better for you (e.g. Michaels over Michaels – a version that mimics Unusual over unusual). Be sure you and your partner have your agreements finalized.

### **Learning Points**

1. Be sure you and your partner are on the same page when responding over opponent's Michaels Cuebids.
2. Avoid the convenience of a convention when a natural bid is a better description of your hand. The score you save might be your own!
3. When deciding whether to bid game, HCP are one guide. Be sure to check tricks and stoppers. Sometimes they offer an opportunity for a sound risk.

*Keywords: Michaels Cuebids, Competitive Bidding. Key Opening Lead*