

BRIDGE – INTERMEDIATE LESSONS II – 14

The Meaning of Cue-Bids - Bidding the Opponent's Suit

It is imperative for any Partnership to understand the significance of a bid of a suit that was previously bid by an Opponent. Bidding the Opponent's suit, under most circumstances, is *not* natural. Rather, it is a “*cue-bid*” which means one of two things.

a. In lower levels of bidding, when it is a bid of a suit previously bid by the Opponents, it is a *forcing bid*, with specific conventional meaning, depending upon the bidding environment in which it is presented; i.e., a bid showing an interest in contesting the contract and forcing Partner to bid. (Examples 1-5)

b. In higher levels of bidding, it usually represents the presence or absence of control of a suit, and is more commonly referred to as a “*control-seeking*” or “*control-evidencing*” bid, searching for either a Game-level, or a Slam-level, final contract. (Examples 6-8).

1. Michaels Cue-Bid by an Overcaller: A convention which utilizes a cue-bid of the same suit bid by an Opponent in order to show a two-suited overcall. It exhibits either a very weak (5-10 HCP's), or a very strong (16 + HCP's), holding with two specifically-referenced suits as follows: Michaels cue-bids are *forcing* but are *not alertable*.

- (a) 1C (“2C”) = 5-5 or better in both Major suits
- (b) 1D (“2D”) = 5-5 or better in both Major suits
- (c) 1H (“2H”) = 5 or more Spades + an unspecified 5-card or longer Minor suit
- (d) 1S (“2S”) = 5 or more Hearts + an unspecified 5-card or longer Minor suit

2. A Cue-Bid of an Opponent's Bid Suit, Used in Competition in Response to Partner's Opening Bid or Overcall: To show a limit-raise or better, in support of Partner's bid suit, with Partner having bid either as an Opening Bidder or as an Overcaller.

(a) 1H (2D) “3D” = a forcing limit-raise or better in support of Partner's opening Heart suit.

(b) 1H (1S) 2C (“2H”) = a forcing limit-raise or better in support of Partner's Spade suit.

(c) 1C (1H) 1S (“2S”) = a forcing limit-raise or better in support of Partner's Heart suit {**Note:** 1C (1H) 1S (“2C”) is not a cue-bid, but a natural 6-card or better Club suit. Here, a cue-bid of “2S” would have shown Heart support for Partner's overcall of 1H.

3. A Cue-Bid in Response to Partner's Opening 1-NT Following an Opponent's Overcall: Used as a forcing, game-seeking “*Stayman*” call, searching for a 4-4 Major suit fit. (See Lesson “*The Lebensohl Convention*”).

(a) 1-NT (2H) “3H” = Game-forcing, seeking a 4-4 Spade suit fit

(b) 1-NT (2D) “3D” = Game-forcing, seeking either a 4-4 Heart or Spade suit fit, or both.

4. **A Cue-Bid of an Opponent's Overcall suit, Used in Response to Partner's Take-Out Double:** A forcing bid with at least invitational values and no definitive suit preference.

(a) **1C (Double) Pass ("2C")** = equal support in both Majors with at least invitational or Game-level values.

5. **A "Western" Cue-Bid:** Used as a forcing auction, by bidding the Opponent's suit below the level of **3-NT** asking for a "**stopper**" in the Opponent's bid suit, seeking a **3-NT** final contract.

(a) **1D (1H) 1S (2H)**
3D (Pass) "3H" = seeking A Heart "**stopper**" for a **3-NT** final contract.

6. **A "Splinter" Bid:** A double-jump shift, "*control-evidencing*," *game-forcing* bid by either an Opening Bidder or a Responder to an opening bid, showing game-values, support for Partner's last bid suit and a singleton or void in the "**Splinter**" suit.

(a) **1H (P) "4C"** = Heart support, game values (opening count or better), and either a singleton (not an Ace), or a void in the "**Splinter**" suit, Clubs, in this instance.

(b) **1C (P) 1S (P)**
"4D" = Spade support, game values (20 HCP's or more), and either a singleton (not an Ace) or a void in the "**Splinter**" suit, Diamonds, in this instance.

Note: Since these cue-bids are game-forcing, a Responder (as in example a) must hold at least opening count, and an Opener (as in Example b), must hold at least 20 HCP's or its equivalent.

7. **A Cue-Bid of any New Suit Other than the Presumed Trump Suit, Bid Above Game-Level, after a Golden Fit Has Already Been Agreed-Upon:**

(a) **1D (P) 1S (P)**
4S (P) "5H" = Shows first-round "*control*," either an Ace or a void in Hearts in this instance, seeking a possible Slam-level contract in Spades. Such bids are forcing asking Partner to show his/her first round control of any other suit at the cheapest level, "**Up-the-Ladder**," if such a control is present, else to go back to the agree-upon suit. Used as a Slam-seeking exploration in lieu of any of the Ace-Asking Conventions when the asking Bidder, testing for the feasibility of a Slam, holds either a void or a worthless doubleton, or both.

8. **A Cue-Bid Overcall, Subsequent to 2-Level, Pre-emptive Opening Bid by an Opponent:** This bid shows 17-18 HCP's, or more, seeking a "**stopper**" in the Opponent's opening suit as an attempt at a Game-level **3-NT** final contract.

(a) **2H ("3H")** This Cue-Bid, used in such a bidding scenario, asks Partner for a "**stopper**" in the Heart suit, in this instance, seeking a final **3-NT** contract.