

Western Cuebids

Asking for a Stopper in Opponent's Suit

By Mick Riccio

dynamick747@gmail.com



During a competitive auction, bidding a suit that the opponents have bid is called a cuebid. This use of cuebids at an early point in the bidding usually has a very specific meaning.

THE CUEBID LIMIT RAISE:

North	East	South	West
1♥	1♠	2♠	

In this auction, the bid of the opponent's suit, Spades, by South is a cuebid and promises a limit raise or better in Hearts.

North	East	South	West
1♠	2♥	3♥	

In this auction, the bid of the opponent's suit, Hearts, by South is a cuebid and promises a limit raise or better in Spades.

THE MICHAELS CUEBID or TOP AND BOTTOM CUEBID

North	East	South	West
1♦	2♦		

In this auction, the bid of the opponent's suit, Diamonds, by East is a Michaels cuebid and promises 5/5 in Hearts and Spades. If the opponents play Top and Bottom Cuebids, 2♦ promises 5/5 in Spades and Clubs, the Top and Bottom unbid suits.

North	East	South	West
1♣	2♣		

In this auction, the bid of the opponent's suit, Clubs, by East is a Michaels cuebid and promises 5/5 in Hearts and Spades. If the opponents play Top and Bottom Cuebids, 2♣ promises 5/5 in Spades and Diamonds, the Top and Bottom unbid suits.

North	East	South	West
1♥	2♥		

In this auction, the bid of the opponent's suit, Hearts, by East is a Michaels cuebid and promises 5/5 in Spades and an unknown minor. If the opponents play Top and Bottom Cuebids, 2♥ promises 5/5 in Spades and Clubs, the Top and Bottom unbid suits.

North	East	South	West
1♠	2♠		

In this auction, the bid of the opponent's suit, Spades, by East is a Michaels cuebid and promises 5/5 in Hearts and an unknown minor. If the opponents play Top and Bottom Cuebids, 2♠ promises 5/5 in Hearts and Clubs, the Top and Bottom unbid suits.

These cuebids are examples of direct or immediate cuebids. When cuebids appear later in the auction they might be the **Western Cuebid**.

THE WESTERN CUEBID

Western Cuebids originated on the West Coast of the United States and were once referred to as California Cuebids. Broadly speaking, when the opponents bid a suit and you and your partner have bid two different suits, a cuebid of the opponent's suit at the 3 level, is a Western Cuebid and asks partner to bid No Trump if they have a stopper in the opponent's suit.

Conversely, if partner does NOT have a stopper in the opponent's suit they would not bid No Trump but would make a natural bid describing their hand.

What does a stopper look like? Let's assume the opponents are bidding hearts when partner opens the bidding with 1♦.

North	East	South	West
1♦	1♥	1♠	2♥
3♦	P	3♥	

In this auction, the bid 3♥ by South asks North for a stopper in the Heart suit. Any of the holdings shown below are stoppers.

A, Ax, Axx, Axxx

Kx, Kxx, Kxxx

Qxx, Qxxx

Jxxx

Consider the following hand. North is the dealer and opens 2♥. East Doubles, South passes and West bids 3♣. North passes and East needs to know if West has a stopper in Hearts. East would like to play in 3NT if West has a stopper in Hearts. East now bids 3♥ as a **Western Cuebid**.

North (Dealer)

♠4
♥AQJT63
♦875
♣Q54

West

♠QJ8
♥K97
♦J64

East

♠AKT9
♥8
♦KQT9

♣KT82

♣AJ97

South

♠76532

♥542

♦A32

♣632

The bidding would go like this:

North	East	South	West
2♥	X	P	3♣
P	3♥?	P	3NT

? this is a **Western Cuebid** asking partner to bid 3NT if they have a stopper in Hearts, which they do, so they did.

Consider this next hand. East is the dealer and opens 1 Club. South overcalls 1♥. West responds 1♠. North advances 2♥. East bids 3♥ as a **Western Cuebid** asking for a Heart stopper by West. West confirms the Heart stopper by bidding 3NT.

North

♠Q743

♥976

♦T96

♣K65

West

♠K8652

♥A3

♦J842

♣93

East(Dealer)

♠AT

♥JT2

♦AK3

♣AQT87

South

♠J9

♥KQ854

♦Q75

♣J42

The bidding would go like this:

North	East	South	West
	1♣	1♥	1♠
2♥	3♥?	P	3NT

? this is a **Western Cuebid** asking partner to bid 3NT if they have a stopper in Hearts, which they do, so they did.

Consider this next hand. South is the dealer and opens 1♦. West passes. North responds 1♠. East overcalls 2♥. South bids 3♦. West passes. North Bids 3♥ as a **Western Cuebid** asking for a Heart stopper by South. South denies a heart stopper by bidding 4♦.

North	
♠AQ52	
♥T87	
♦J3	
♣AJ92	
West	East
♠8763	♠JT9
♥K5	♥AQJ63
♦5	♦Q64
♣QT8765	♣43
South (Dealer)	
♠K4	
♥942	
♦AKT9872	
♣K	

The bidding would go like this:

North	East	South	West
		1♦	P
1♠	2♥	3♦	P
3♥?	X	4♦	All Pass

Sometimes the answer is NO!

? this is a **Western Cuebid** asking partner to bid 3NT if they have a stopper in Hearts, which they do not, so they bid 4♦.

CAUTIONS

When is a cuebid most likely **NOT** a Western Cuebid asking for a stopper?

When you have established a **major suit fit**

When you make a **jump cuebid**

When the cuebid is **not at the 3 level**

When the opponents have bid **2 different suits**

When you are responding to a **takeout double**

SUMMARY

When both sides are bidding and we have forward going values, but no major suit fit, we sometimes think that No Trump might be the right place to land. With control in the opponent's

suit then we would bid 3NT. But without a stopper in the opponent's suit, we need a forcing bid that makes an inquiry of partner as to a stopper in the enemy suit. That bid is a **Western Cuebid**. Bidding the opponent's suit to ask partner if they can bid notrump. This is a useful bid that applies to many auctions. ♣