

Bailey Cue Bids with Unusual No-Trump (“BUNT”)

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Bailey cue bids were purportedly invented by Evan Bailey and Ed Barlow and have achieved considerable popularity in some areas of the bridge world. The approach neatly solves the spades-and-another two-suited problem.

A few years ago, I explained them in an internet discussion group and, since then, most of the discussions of advances and rebids of Bailey cue bids have been taken from that post (whether they were attributed to me or not).

Two-suited Bids

Michaels cue bids with Unusual No-Trump cover most of the two-suited overcall possibilities, but cannot show spades and the other minor when opponents open 1♣ or 1♦. With this holding, Overcaller must bid spades (sometimes with only 4 cards) and then hope to bid the minor later.

Sadly, this plan fails when, as is usually the case, Overcaller is short in Opener's suit and in hearts. It is extremely likely Responder (Opener's partner) will make a simple 2♦ raise, or make a preemptive 3♣ or 3♦ raise or bid 2♥, especially if opponents play non-forcing free bids. If any of that happens, Overcaller's bid of the other minor must come at the 3-level or even at 4♣. This requires Advancer (Overcaller's partner) to correct to 3♠ (or even 4♠) without values and only a preference.

Bailey Cue Bids with Unusual No-Trump (BUNT) neatly solve the problem as follows:

- Over 1♣, a direct cue bid shows spades and either diamonds or hearts (reds)
- Over 1♦, a direct cue bid shows spades and either clubs or hearts (rounds)
- Over 1♥ or 1♠, a direct cue bid is Michaels.
- A jump to 2NT (or 1NT by a passed hand) shows the two lowest unbid suits.

Here is the quick summary:

Auction	Shows
(1♣)-2♣	♠ and either ♦ or ♥
(1♣)-2NT	♦ and ♥
(1♦)-2♦	♠ and either ♣ or ♥
(1♦)-2NT	♣ and ♥
(1♥)-2♥	♠ and either ♣ or ♦
(1♥)-2NT	♣ and ♦
(1♠)-2♠	♥ and either ♣ or ♦
(1♠)-2NT	♣ and ♦

Shape Requirements

Some partnerships require 5-5 in order to show a 2-suiter. Most require at least 5-4. A few are adventurous enough to allow 4-4 (which was Michaels's original requirement). I recommend you require at least 5-4 unless you hold 4-4-4-1 or 5-4-4-0 shape with 4 or 5 cards in Opener's suit. 5-4 hands show up about ten times as often as 5-5s.

Regardless of your shape, you should not have more than 7 losers when vulnerable nor more than 8 when not vulnerable. With 5-5, 6-5, and 6-6 or even 7-6 shapes, you can actually have very few high cards. In fact, in order to fit the loser rule, you need no high cards at all with 6-6 or 7-6 shape regardless of vulnerability, nor 6-5 when not vulnerable.

In order to fit the loser requirements with 4-4 shape, you generally need full opening values, usually with values concentrated in the two 4-card suits. The advantage of using BUNT with such 4-4 hands is that your best alternative, a takeout double, is likely to be followed by a jump bid in the suit you don't have to a level that gives you trouble in correcting.

I am not advocating use of BUNT with most 4-4 shapes – Only those where you were 3-suited and Opener bid one of them and when your alternative is a flawed takeout double with a singleton or a void in one of the unbid suits.

A 4-4-3-2 shape is balanced, not two-suited. If you don't have the proper values for a no trump overcall and opener has bid your three-card suit, you must lie in wait. Hopefully, your partner will make a protection double or, with good luck, bid one of your 4-card suits.

Strength Requirements

Some authorities advocate showing two-suited hands conventionally only with either a weak hand or with a very strong hand. I believe this approach is, at best, misguided. The way I count, if Opener has around 12-17 HCP and you have 13-17 HCP, it is hardly outside of the realm of possibility your 1♠ overcall will end the auction. Yes, you might make 1♠ in your 5-2 spade fit, but wouldn't you rather have played a makable game in your 4-5 heart fit?

Also, while it is fairly common for Opener to be able to show his two-suiter naturally and separately,

it is extremely rare for Overcaller ever to have the chance. Either the auction dies or the Opening side gets the auction, whether by preemptive bid or fit showing jump, to a level where it is uncomfortable for overcaller to introduce a second suit (especially holding 4 cards).

My position is if any sort of hand should be excluded from a conventional 2-suit showing bid, it should be the very strong hands, not the intermediate ones. With a very strong or very shapely 2-suited hand, Overcaller will feel free to bid his second suit comfortably at almost any level. In fact, the more shapely hands with few losers but also few high cards are better for this because Overcaller can not only disregard the level of the bidding, but also most of the high cards shown by opponents.

With 19-21 HCP, it would hardly be surprising both Responder and Advancer are broke and Opener has already overbid his hand, so a second bid may not be available. The way to avoid this would be to make an off shape takeout double.

So, I advocate the following maxim: When you have a 2-suited hand, make a 2-suited bid, subject, of course, to holding sufficient offensive strength to avoid a massacre.

Advancing the Cue Bid

The 2NT advance of a Michaels Cue Bid is used usually employed to get Overcaller to rebid his second suit. There are several distinct disadvantages of this practice:

- First and foremost, this gives Opener, the opponent who is known to (or at least claims to) hold opening strength two chances to double (or cooperate in doubling) the final contract.

It is very reasonable for a double of a 2NT asking bid to mean “You hit ‘em high and I’ll hit ‘em low” or vice-versa. In fact, it gives Opener two bites at the apple. It can give Opener a chance to say “don’t bid over Opener’s rebid, but double, if he names your short (or long) suit.”

- It removes 2NT, which may be a perfectly playable contract, from consideration.
- It gives Advancer no real way to show strength with a likely misfit.
- While not as true with Michaels, but certainly true with BUNT, after (1♠)-2♠-(P) and (1♦)-2♦-(P), 2NT unnecessarily commits the auction to the 3-level.
- It gives Overcaller no good way to clarify his strength.

So, how do you advance when Overcaller might have a variety of hand strengths? I recommend the following guidelines:

- A bid of an unknown suit are *pass or correct*.
- A bid of Overcaller’s known suit is a *desperation* bid.
- Cue bids by Advancer show an invitational or better hand (say 13+HCP) and a probable fit.
- 2NT shows an invitational or better hand, a stop in Opener’s suit, and a probable misfit.

If Responder raises, Double substitutes nicely for the Cue Bid, Pass substitutes nicely for the Desperation bid and other bids (while made a little more robust because Pass is available) retain their meanings.

Over an Unusual 2NT overcall, there is always a “free” suit. This bid can, of course, be used to show Advancer has an *Agenda* in the Free suit, but is more useful as showing a good hand with stops in both the Free suit and Opener’s suit with partial support for the suits shown by the Unusual No Trump bid. A direct Advance of 3NT is almost always an offer to play.

Here is a summary of advances after a Bailey Cue Bid:

After (1♠)-2♠-(P)

- 2♦ 6+♦ or ♦+♥/♠ NF (Pass or Correct)
- 2♥ 6+♥ or ♥+♠ NF (P/C)
- 2♠ ♠ NF (Desperation)
- 2NT ♣ Stop INV+
- 3♣ Likely 2+fits INV+
- 3♦ 7+♦ or Good fits ♦+♥/♠ (P/C)
- 3♥ 7+♥ or Good fits ♥+♠ (P/C)
- 3♠ Good ♠ Fit

After (1♦)-2♦-(P)

- 2♥ 6+♥ or ♥+♠ NF
- 2♠ ♠ NF (Desperation)
- 2NT ♦ Stop INV+
- 3♣ 6+♣ or Fits ♣+♥/♠ NF (P/C)
- 3♦ Likely 2+fits INV+
- 3♥ 7+♥ or Good fits ♥+♠ (P/C)
- 3♠ Good ♠ Fit

After (1♥)-2♥-(P)

- 2♠ ♠ NF (Desperation)
- 2NT ♥ Stop INV+
- 3♣ 6+♣ or Fits ♣+♦/♠ NF (P/C)
- 3♦ 6+♦ or Fits ♦+♠ NF (P/C)
- 3♥ Likely 2+fits INV+
- 3♠ Good ♠ Fit

After (1♠)-2♠-(P)

- 2NT ♠ Stop INV+
- 3♣ 6+♣ or Fits ♣+♦/♥ NF (P/C)
- 3♦ 6+♦ or Fits ♦+♥ NF (P/C)
- 3♥ ♥ NF (Desperation)
- 3♠ Likely 2+fits FG (or almost)

Overcaller's Second Call

Most rebids by Overcaller are corrective, but 2NT, when available, and Cue Bids are not. When Advancer makes the Desperation bid), Overcaller’s bid shows his unknown suit and a strong hand.

When Advancer makes a correctable bid, I advocate a 2NT rebid by Overcaller shows Advancer bid the right suit and Overcaller has a strong hand, while a second cue bid shows Advancer bid the wrong suit and Overcaller is strong.