

Captain and Slave

PLAYA BLANCA (PANAMA), MAY 23RD, 2013



NIB's Jan van Cleeff is in Panama where he and Elisabeth van Ettinger are to produce the Daily Bulletin for the [CACBF Zonal Championships](#) and the Transnational teams. In tomorrow's bulletin you will find five questions for **Louk Verhees**, world champion from The Netherlands, who is playing the Transnationals in Panama.

Tell us something about yourself.

I am 48 years old, married and I have two daughters. My parents taught me to play bridge in 1974. I used to work as a software engineer but in 2011, after we won the WC in Veldhoven, I became a full-time professional bridgeplayer. As a professional I have different sponsors and of course winning the Bermuda Bowl adds to your economic value.

Which are the most important results in your bridge career?

- The Bermuda Bowl in 2011, with Ricco van Prooijen as my partner.
- The Spingold in 2009, with both Ricco and Jan Jansma as partners.
- The Open European Championships in 2005 and 2nd place in the Olympics in 2004, both with Jan Jansma.

How did you end up in this area?

Our sponsor, Mike Levine suggested it and it looked very promising. My partner Russ Ekeblad and I only play the teams, Mike played the pairs too.

How do you judge the level of bridge in this Zone?

Let's say it is relaxing and not very competitive to play here. The people are extremely nice and polite. There are some good players in this region. Last year for instance we lost 25-1 from Guadeloupe at the Mind Games in Lille.

You don't exactly play a standard system. Please enlighten us.

True. Ricco and I play Ultimate Club. Here I play another version of UC with Russ Ekeblad. UC first was designed by Russ and Ron Rubin, his former partner. Nowadays Russ plays with Peter Weichsel, his new partner. They do play UC, a very complicated version by the way. Russ loves to improve on the system almost every day. So the version I play here with Russ really differs from the version I play with Ricco. Still in general its characteristics are similar: strong club (17+ HCP), canapé and lots of relays. Slam-bidding goes along the 'Voting' principle: one partner is the Captain - he does all the relays. The other partner is the Slave - he gives all the answers, but with room for hand evaluation, i.e. the Voting.

I like the system and as far as I can see it we will stick to it. It brought us lots of success. We gain quite a few points because there are not many opponents who truly understand our methods. So there is always the surprise element, which works in our favour. On the other hand I believe that one could become a worldchampion with *any* acceptable bidding system.