

DR. DARTS' NEWSLETTER

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BREXIT IS BAD NEWS FOR DARTS

By the time you read this edition of *DDN* we here in the UK will all know what is (or isn't) happening as regards the exit of Britain from the European Union.

Now, I'm not a man to rant and rave about politics. I leave that to our incompetent, self-centred, elected Members of Parliament BUT I must have a little rant about the impact Brexit is going to have on the sport of darts whether we leave with a deal or not.



Many *DDN* readers will recall that, back in 2016, (*DDN* #71) the EU bureaucrats tried to introduce a Europe-wide ruling that all target games, including darts, should be standardised by ensuring that the bullseye be the highest scoring point of the target (EU Regulation 1420/16). This would have meant that, on a dartboard, all trebles that scored over 50 would have to be removed. In preparation for the approval of this crazy rule, the WINMAU Dartboard Company's research and development section came up with what would have become the EU revised design (see photo, left). (Image © 2016 WINMAU Dartboard Co. Ltd. Used with permission.)

Fortunately, after representations from all sides involved in darts (fans (via numerous petitions on social media), manufacturers and major darts organisations and organisers), Regulation 1420/16 was never introduced. At that time the UK Government was going to introduce a Health and Safety Order (No. 9102/01/AF), that all darts venues should have a large, clear Perspex 'wall' between the players and officials and spectators. It was believed that this Order had been shelved permanently but, sadly, this was not the case and thus will now become law when we leave Europe.

The current EU Regulation 47/5f/16 sub-paragraph 4(b), sub-section (a) (5) (Darts and Variants Thereof) was agreed in the late 1980s following months of negotiations between the Government's representative of all of the UK's darts leagues and manufacturers, Archie Crumlin (pictured right.), and the European Commissioner for Sports and Games, Sweden's Olaf Prilo.



This important rule, under the heading *Healthy Darts Environments*, related to health and safety in our sport: the owners or licensees of all UK public houses, clubs and sporting venues where darts is played having to take NO SPECIFIC ACTION to protect other players, officials and spectators from the potentially dangerous effect of rebounding darts, save to ensure that people are warned before any match, played anywhere, of the possible danger of bouncing projectiles.

Disturbingly, whatever the outcome of Brexit, this Rule will be IMMEDIATELY REVOKED on 29th March and, three days later, Britain falls back to the *Health and Safety* regulations that were going to be introduced by HM Government before the current EU regulation was introduced.

Put simply, as soon as we leave the EU, all licensees of pubs and clubs and owners of any venue, large or small, used for darts must erect a large, clear, Perspex 'wall' between players and spectators so as to comply with H&S Order 9102/01/AF.

My personal view is that this is bureaucracy gone mad.

In my 35 years of researching the history of darts I have only ever discovered two instances during the past 100 years where someone has been hurt by a rebounding dart. One was in a works canteen in Wolverhampton in the 1930s; the other at the *Red Lion and Sherbet* pub in Newport, Essex in the mid-1960s. In both instances neither 'victim' suffered any life-threatening injuries although the Wolverhampton case did end up in court and the company was fined.

OK. I must admit that I was hurt once by a rebounding darts but it was my own fault. I threw my third dart in anger at busting a score with my second. The dart hit a wire, bounced off the board and headed back towards me at speed...and I tried to catch it! (We've all been there haven't we?)

What HM Government has done is absolute madness. Who wants to watch a darts match through a Perspex screen or even play behind one? How will that affect TV screenings of live darts? Surely such legislation will kill the sport we all love. Pressure must be put on the Government IMMEDIATELY to repeal this prime example of Health and Safety insanity.

AMBIDEXTROUS DARTS PLAYERS

Chris K. has asked me whether I'd heard of an ambidextrous darts player, that is, one who can play as well with his or her left hand as his or her right. Chris told me "I reckon it would be handy if you got blocked on your double!"

Now *that* would be a useful skill but, to be honest, I don't think I've ever heard of a darts player who employs/employed both hands in a serious darts tournament. However, I am certain that a professional right-handed player would throw darts left-handed on, say, an exhibition night.

Perhaps *DDN* readers can help. Do *you* know of any darts player who is ambidextrous? If so, please write to me at patrick.chaplin@btinternet.com.

TOUGHEST OUTSHOTS – MORE FEEDBACK

US subscriber Jerry Feather writes:

Hi Patrick: Thanks again for another great March DDN. So much variety, especially the two bits by Jay [Tomlinson] about toughest or hardest out in darts!

I loved his theory because it is really the same when you throw a Ton Eighty. Millions have thrown that first triple 20 and never hit another. Then there is a huge drop off for players to have hit their second triple 20 and then the tough one to make a Ton Eighty.

Years ago I was teaching a Darts class at the University of Colorado, Denver extension, and I would have the "wanna be" Dart Players actually stop and look at a Dart that hit the triple twenty or whatever I had them shooting at, and then I would say "You have just shot ONE DART as well as any player that ever lived!" They would be very proud of themselves.

I just received the book Heart of Dart-Ness, enjoying very much and Ned Boulting sure gives you a lot of credit, keep up the good work!

ALAN EVANS AND 'ODD DARTS' – FEEDBACK

In a number of issues last year the matter of players using odd darts (that is three darts of different weights comprising one throw) was raised and discussed at length. One reader had mentioned that Welsh darts legend Alan Evans used odd darts but his former Manager, Dr. Eddie Norman disputes this. Eddie wrote:

Regarding Alan Evans, I was unaware Alan had odd weight darts. He would at his exhibitions play with two of his opponent's darts and one of his own. Perhaps this is what your enquirer refers to as these would have been odd weights.

Also Alan did swap his darts around, having 20 and 22 gram sets, so again these could have been 'odd weights' as they all looked the same, but not to my knowledge did Alan set out with odd weights as a permanent set.



(The photo, above right, shows Alan on the front cover of *Darts World* Magazine, July 1978.)

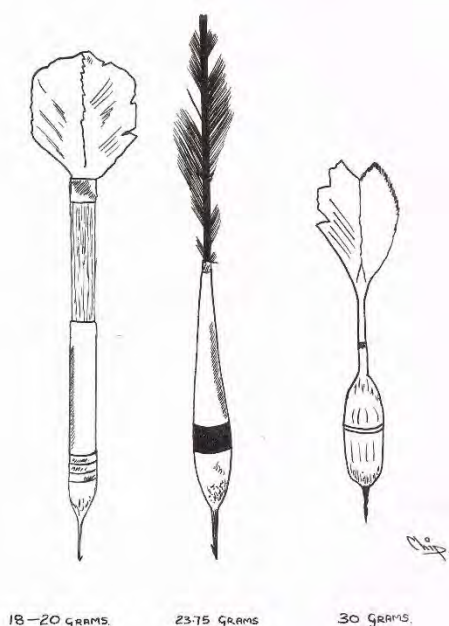
Regular reader Mick Simpson told me of his experience. He wrote:

What a strange thing to throw different weights of darts? The only time I have done that is when in a pub and you borrow a set of pub darts usually out of a beer tankard?

PUB OR HOUSE DARTS

Some of my younger readers may not know what Mick means by 'pub darts' or, as I know them, 'house darts' so here's a quick explanation. (This is based upon the 'House Darts' section of Bobby George and my book *Scoring for Show: Doubles for Dough – Bobby George's Darts Lingo*.)

When modern darts was in its infancy only the very best players, of which there were few, bothered to purchase their own darts. Most players couldn't afford to buy a set so the cunning brewers and landlords provided them for the customers. That way the punters had no reason not to play the game – and remember in the 1920s and 1930s darts in pubs was booming. Usually kept in an old cigar box or a jam jar on the bar these arrows became known as the house darts.



became a subject of ridicule: a joke. The box or jar eventually contained a combination of odd darts from several different sets with odd flights and shafts thrown in for ... well, just thrown in. The artist's impression (by cartoonist 'Chip') of a set of house darts circa 1980s, above, was originally drawn for inclusion in my first venture into writing darts books, *Arrows by any other Name*, which I completed in 1984 but, despite me approaching numerous publishers, never saw the light of day.

Today house darts are becoming increasingly rare but when you do see them they'll be kept, quite securely, jammed into an old cigar tin behind the till on the bar or under the counter loose in an old chalk box, together with the odd playing card, a few dominoes, empty matchboxes and enough chalk dust to suffocate the pub dog. Alternatively, the landlord or landlady may have a set of 'house' tungstens that he/she lets customers borrow but charges a fairly high deposit, ensuring their safe return.

The use of the house darts has no advantages whatsoever for the person who has chosen to borrow or rent them (often via a contribution to a charity box).

(The advertisement, right, dating from the 1940s is encouraging licensees and club secretaries to take a St. Dunstan box to raise money for the war-blinded charity by customers paying to use their darts. The darts offered were two sets of DORWIN True Balance Darts.)

When it comes to throwing the house darts, the differing shapes, weights, lengths and condition of whatever ragged flights are available add to the speculation as to where each darts is actually going to land. Landing is one thing. To score is another! Such is

As the game became more and more popular, and the general level of play improved, more dart players bought their own sets. In the 1930s three wooden French darts with turkey feather-flights cost the landlord 10½d (approximately 4½ p) wholesale and the life-expectancy of a set was no more than three or four days. Because they were free to use and in any case were 'only the house darts', it is not surprising that the arrows were treated with little or no respect by punters.

As time went by landlords decided that it was all too expensive and therefore did not renew the sets for many weeks or even months at a time, only then replacing those darts which had been seriously damaged or had been permanently 'borrowed' by customers. As a direct result of this, and players buying their own, the house darts eventually

To Licensees and Club Secretaries

Address your request to:
Mr. S. BUCKENHAM,
St. Dunstan's (Darts Appeal),
COLNBROOK, Bucks.

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ST. DUNSTAN'S
and Yourself

BY TAKING A
ST. DUNSTAN'S DART BOX

Dart Players appreciate the Dorwin True-Balance Darts which accompany the Box. St. Dunstan's will supply spare flights and replace the Darts when necessary.

Large numbers of gallant men and women have lost their sight for YOU. Here's your chance to do something for THEM.

GET YOUR BOX NOW!

the unpredictability of house darts play that if the first dart lands somewhere near the treble 20, that is no guarantee that the second or third will even hit the dartboard let alone the same segment.

But hands up all you dart players out there who have been beaten by a player using the house darts. (Be honest.)

DARTS ‘BANNED’ IN THAILAND?

I am grateful to Dr. Eddie Norman for bringing to my attention a report, dated 12 March last year which seemed to indicate that, with immediate effect, darts was banned in Thailand. The article from the ‘Around Thailand’ on www.thaivisa.com stated

Thailand’s ban on bars and entertainment venues allowing punters to play darts is now in affect nationwide. In January, officials in Pattaya raided bars along Soi 6 to confiscate the ‘illegal’ dart boards. Bar owners and staff were told that venues must now have a dart board license if they wanted to be able to allow customers to play the popular pastime on their premises...

One Soi 6 bar owner told...of his bewilderment when a uniformed official demanded to see paperwork for his dart board. When no paperwork could not be produced, the dart board was confiscated.

The new requirements for a ‘dartboard license’ resulted in the suspension of Pattaya’s popular darts league, which many expats in the town take part in.

Initially there was some confusion not only into the crackdown on the seemingly innocent game of darts but now bars could obtain the so called ‘dart board license’.

Now more details have emerged as to the reasons behind the darts ban.

According to a notice from the Thailand Darts Association [TDA], the requirement for bar owners to register dart boards is linked to Thailand’s strict laws on gambling. Bar owners must now register their darts board if it is in a public space and must ensure that no gambling is taking place when darts are being played. The Thailand Darts Association has shared information on its website on how bar owners can register their dartboards.

Once registered bar owners will receive an official certificate stamped and signed by the president of the TDA, which also includes a registered license number from Office of the National Culture Commission (ONCC). Bar owners can then show the certificate to the authorities in the event they are required to show their dart board is registered.

Failure to register dart boards may result in a fine or the board being confiscated, the TDA warns on its website. The TDA is providing the certificate free of charge and has warned bar owners about opportunists trying to charge for fake certificates.

Source: <https://www.thaivisa.com/forum/topic/1028763-thailand-dart-board-ban-goes-nationwide-bars-urged-to-get-registered/>

Having never seen this report before, I wondered if my key contact in Thailand, and long-time *DDN* subscriber, David Brook, could help clarify the issue one year on. David, pictured left with his great friend John Lowe back in 1987 (Image © David Brook/*Phuket Times*), wrote from ‘The Land of the Mighty Mekong River’:



Hi Patrick, The cat was certainly set amongst the pigeons in Thailand darts although in reality it was not a ban but more an enforcement of existing laws. But confusion did reign for a while!!

It all kicked off in early 2018 with a series of raids in Pattaya on various venues asking to see the establishment's dart

permit. Owners and staff were informed that the existing entertainment license required by bars did not cover playing darts and that venues must have a dart board license in order for their customers to play darts. Illegal dart boards would be confiscated. As confusion spread Pattaya's popular Darts League was suspended and rumours of a nationwide darts ban ensued.

Seemingly the action was instituted reflecting the kingdom's strict laws centred around gambling and specifically one in place enacted in 1935 which listed many types of sports and games as gambling including such as darts, bingo, lottery, mah-jong and even billiards or pool. Thus the use of dart boards in venues without a specific 'dart board' licence was prohibited. In essence therefore bar owners would be required to register their darts board if it is in a public space and must ensure that no gambling is taking place when darts are being played.

The Thailand Darts Association (TDA) posted information on its website on how bar owners could register their dartboards. Once registered, bar owners receive an official certificate stamped and signed by the President of the TDA (Vichai Govindani), which also includes a registered license number from Office of the National Culture Commission (ONCC).

And that's the extent of my understanding and did not hear any comments from other parts of Thailand. Not heard anything new for several months nor spoken with Vichai for a while but darts action seemingly operating with no publicised issues.

Thanks David. That's clarified things very nicely.

111 – GAME! – FEEDBACK

Many apologies to my good friend David King for not publishing his feedback from the discussion we had in *DDN* some months ago about how in some casual games if a player had 111 remaining he or she, if agreed by their opponent(s) could go one dart for treble one to win the game. David told me

When I was eighteen I first encountered pub darts and pub league darts in London. Within a friendly match with others, I have encountered the 111 so-called rule! A single dart at Treble 1 for the match. I usually played for a small wager or a pint I would not allow or accept the so-called rule that had to be agreed on.

You can add to this the splitting of the 'eleven' number ring. Should you find yourself on 2, double one and hit a single 1 then rather than just collect your dart if you had any darts left in your hand you could throw a dart between the 11, number figure and should it land between the ones you win the game. I guess this may have the origins of the game loop or loopy that includes the numbering system as well as scoring segments of the dartboard.

Indeed – Thanks David – I well recall those rules and the game of 'Loopy' or 'Loops' where the loops of the numbers 20, 10, 9, 6, etc. all counted for points. More popular in my local pub back in the 1980s was to include loops in a game of 'Silly Shanghai' which was played the same as a normal game of Shanghai but instead of using the numbers 1-9, 'silly' targets were used.

These might include a treble or double of a couple of numbers, then the bullseye or outer bull, or scoring, say, 'under 11' or 'over 65' plus, for example, a 'loopy 9'. At least two ordinary numbers had to be included otherwise players would stand no chance whatsoever of hitting a 'shanghai' (single, double and treble of the same number in three darts).

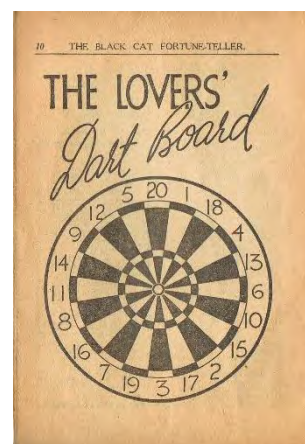
The version of 'Silly Shanghai' my friends and I used to play at the *Blue Boar* way back when also included an element of the game 'Halve It' where, if you didn't hit the required number, your existing score was halved.

If no shanghai was achieved then the player with the highest score at the end of the game wins.

SOMETHING FOR DARTS LOVERS

Back in the UK in the 1940s and 1950s there was a newspaper called *Red Letter*. Aimed primarily at women and young girls it featured mainly romantic stories. On one occasion the newspaper included a free booklet entitled *The Black Cat Fortune Teller*, a 68-page supplement packed full of advice and games. These included 'The Kind of Person You Really Are', 'The Stars tell of Coming Events', 'Who is the Man of Your Dreams?' etc., etc. In the undated issue I have I found 'The Lovers' Dart Board'! All you needed was a dartboard and a pin. The rules read thus:

HERE'S a simple way to find what the future holds for you. Holding a pin in your right hand, close your eyes and circle it three times over the dart-board, then dab. Note the number you land on and consult the readings below.



Below were listed the numbers 1-20 plus the bullseye, each with a commentary. If, for example, you hit the number 4, the player read that 'You have many admirers...' whilst striking 16 the reader is told, 'He'll probably fall in love with your voice first – over the telephone' and, for hitting the bullseye, well, 'Your luck's right in.' All good fun...

BADGE COLLECTING

It's been a while since I mentioned anything about darts badge collecting but I was reminded of this aspect of darts ephemera whilst looking through a back issue of *Darts World* magazine; one dated April 1978, an article titled 'Badges – Solving the problems of space.'



The report mentioned Ken Osbourne, pictured below, at the time Chairman of the South West Lancashire Darts Association, who had over one hundred badges stitched on to a single jersey!

The other reason for mentioning darts-related badges was to feature one from my collection: an incredibly rare badge previously belonging to the Welsh darts legend Leighton Rees. The badge, shown here, would have been worn by one of his players during Leighton's tour of Australia undertaken in 1977.

Leighton's former manager, Dr. Eddie Norman, told me

The South Pacific Darts Federation was run by Pat Fletcher in a suburb of Sydney, New South Wales. Pat was one of the key brains of early darts in Australia. He is one of the unsung darts founders of darts down under. All the top players played for Pat. He organised Leighton's first tour of the country. Pat also ran a small darts business. Unfortunately I have no current details of Pat's whereabouts. Perhaps DDN readers in Australia can help.



If you can then please contact me patrick.chaplin@btinternet.com.

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