

DR. DARTS' NEWSLETTER

Issue 126

www.patrickchaplin.com

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Sincere apologies for the delay in sending you this September issue of *DDN*. My faithful laptop 'died' a few weeks ago which had to be replaced and subsequently prevented me from preparing *DDN* on time. However, I do hope that this issue lives up to the standards you expect from me. All being well, the October issue will be out on time.

Patrick

JOE HITCHCOCK'S NAILS

I've found over the years that *DDN* readers are always interested when I either publish articles about the legendary Joe Hitchcock or respond to enquiries from subscribers.

Here's the latest enquiry from Alec Hird, of 'Sunny Wakefield' here in the UK who writes:



Recently I have acquired two sets of Joe Hitchcock darts, which got me wondering about the gent. Read things here and there then had a look at his short film on internet. In this it showed what he maybe more well-known for nail-throwing.

I have always thought of throwing nails as 4" to 6" nails with a point added. So when I saw Joe throwing I tried to get a look at his nails so that I should recognise them at any later date. Alas I did not get a good

enough view of them. Are there any pictures of his nails anywhere?

I replied

As far as I am aware, Joe never threw nails with points in. They were always genuine, sharpened four-inch nails. I don't have a set of Joe's darts but I do have a 'gold' six-inch nail that his daughter gave me some years ago together with one of his standard throwing nails. Joe used to present the 'gold' nails to the best player of the evening during his exhibitions.

Joe was, of course, renowned for his captaincy of the St. Dunstan Four darts team between the period 1945-1949 during which time the team raised thousands of pounds for the war-blinded by throwing darts. Such evenings were usually ended with Joe giving a demonstration of his nail-throwing using a stooge: often a friend. Joe resigned as Captain of the St. Dunstan Four due to his being sponsored by the Watney's brewery. As his fame grew, so did public demand for his exhibitions and his contractual obligations to Watney's.

The rare photograph shown above (© PCJH Archive. Used with permission.) shows a gentleman named Tommy Leigh acting as ‘stooge’ at one of Joe’s exhibitions. It appears that Joe has just knocked a cigarette off of Tommy’s ear with his third nail. Tommy ran a fish stall at a market near to King’s Cross station in London. Resting on the photograph are examples of both Joe’s ordinary throwing-nail and the ‘gold’ one from my personal collection.

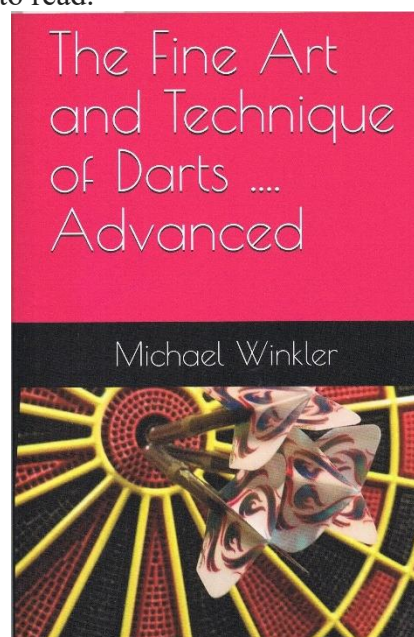
AMERICAN DARTS PLAYERS ARE DECADES BEHIND THE BRITS

This is a theory featured in US darts author Michael Winkler’s book *The Fine Art and Technique of Darts ... Advanced* which was published in 2017: a book I discovered whilst browsing the ‘net during lockdown for darts books I had yet to read.

I had always thought that the reason why overseas nations developed an interest in, and a passion for, darts was purely because they started later.

Countries like the USA and Canada began playing darts as a result of allied forces being ‘over here’ experiencing and enjoying the English pub and the traditional game of darts. In other theatres of war, allied troops took the game into Europe and from there darts developed mainly in British Legion clubs set up in countries such as The Netherlands by ex-patriots who settled there. As interest in the game grew, national organisations were established (especially during the 1970s) and darts began to conquer the entire planet.

Of course, I know that this is an over-simplification but, essentially, that’s what happened.



Winkler’s book, which is primarily designed for soft-tip players, but steel-tip players may find it of some use, does state some very clear advice on how to play darts based around what the author calls his ‘Iron Laws’ and they can be useful. Such rules, or those similar to them, can be found in numerous other books. It is sad that the book contains no images or diagrams whatsoever that would illustrate, emphasise and clarify his Laws.

Winkler insists that ‘these iron laws are intended for the United States, so we will eventually be on equal playing grounds with the United Kingdom’ adding

I don’t have to remind anyone that this year at the 2017 PDC World Championship not one American player stood on the big stage. NOT ONE. One might ask: why is this happening?’

Dave Allen, Head of Media at the Professional Darts Corporation (PDC) was good enough to clarify this point. He told me:

The 2016/2017 World Championship did not feature an American; at that stage it was still 72 players and there was one North American Qualifier place, which went to Ross Snook (Canada) who beat Darin Young in the final.

In 2018, we brought in the North American Championship as part of the US Masters event on the World Series, which was won by Willard Bruguier from USA and with the CDC we've had a US & Canadian representative + the North American Championship winner since the World Championship expanded for 2018/2019.

We all know that US darters have been featured in both PDC and BDO events for many years and Dave's explanation of the 2016/17 exception is very clear. However, Winkler cites the reason for the Brits being so far ahead of the American darters as 'Heritage.' He explains:

'Darts in the UK is in their blood. It is rooted in deep tradition in their values, norms and customs.'

So far so good as the Brits passion for any sport could be said to be 'in their blood.' Winkler continues

As soon as a kid is old enough to hold a spoon, he has a dart in his hand. As soon as he is old enough to walk, he is taught how to throw a dart. He is given instruction that is verbally passed down from generation to generation. They are taught the Iron Laws of Darts as soon as they can learn to use words: the secrets of darts are taught to them as soon as they talk and walk.'

Was that how it was for you UK darters? Is that what happened?

And have you presented your children with a set of darts yet and passed on the knowledge from your darting predecessors? If not, why not?

Surprisingly, Winkler then reveals

'It is no secret that in the UK they are about 40 decades ahead of Americans in this sport...'

"40 decades"???

That's 400 years!

I am sorely tempted to send him a copy of my book *Darts in England 1900-39 – A social history...*

While Winkler's self-published book contains some fine advice and guidance, parts of the text lacks the rigours of an editor's eye. For example, on page 38 Winkler refers to the very serious and very sensitive issue of darditis. His research revealed that

'Professionals do not get Darditis, only amateurs suffer from this destructive phenomenon.'

Yet in the very next sentence he adds

'And the professionals who do get Darditis, watch how their throws lack fluidity. Out of all the professional darts matches I have watched, only about five has a serious case of darditis.'

...and practice is, of course, 'an essential part of your diet.'

I think I'll leave it there...

BRASS OR TUNGSTEN?

DDN subscriber Michael Bailey writes

Hi Patrick, reading back issues of Dr Darts has really helped me during lockdown.

I enjoy the history of darts sections, and wondered what you, and your readers, think of brass darts? I play with brass darts, and love them, but I do experience some ridicule for still using them in this hi-tech tungsten age. I know tungsten is denser, and so lasts longer, and that brass darts are thicker, making grouping more difficult.



However, bearing all that in mind, is there much difference? Can you still hit high averages with brass darts? I'd be interested to hear your thoughts. All the best and keep up the great work.



I replied

Hi Michael. I am so pleased that DDN is helping you through the lockdown.

It's refreshing to hear of someone who still plays with brass darts. I certainly wouldn't criticise that at all. You are clearly aware of the advantages of tungsten: denser material, thinner darts, better grouping, etc. Therefore, continuing to use brass darts must, I would

have thought, put you at a disadvantage when playing in competition. But in truth it really comes down to what each individual darts player is comfortable with and what darts bring out their best performance and most confident play.

As for your question relating to hitting higher averages with brass darts, I would say, for all the same reasons, you would hit more high scores, more regularly with tungstens.

Michael's email made me think that there *must* be more darts players out there who still use brass darts. Could that be you? If so, contact me at patrick.chaplin@btinternet.com and tell me why you have never made the transition from brass to tungsten.

CATCHING UP

Over the past few months, I have received numerous enquiries most of which are dealt with direct whilst others are sorted but then included in *DDN* when I think they would be appreciated by a wider audience, that is you, my readers. Others take a while to include.

For instance, some time ago, John Armstrong emailed me to say

Hi Patrick. I hope you are well. I have just come across your website and think it is excellent. I have a keen interest in darts like yourself and have enjoyed reading the articles on your web page. I was wondering if you had written anything on Bobby George or Keith Deller. If so, would you mind sending the articles through or a link so I can have a read?



Also, as a child, I remember watching the darts with my Dad and remember a player falling off the stage after, having too much to drink. From what I remember it was Jocky Wilson but again I can't find any footage or information on this and am doubting myself as to if this actually happened? Can you remember this? I look forward to hearing from you.

I replied

Many thanks for your email. Thanks too for your kind words about my updated website.

I've not written anything about Bobby George as he covered all the necessary ground in his book Bobby Dazzler - My Story which was published in London by Orion in 2007. However, I did write a book with Bobby back in 2011 titled Scoring for Show - Doubles for Dough about the language of darts. I know Bobby very well. We've appeared on the TV together a couple of times and I played him on stage at the Lakeside one year. Not an official game of course but part of a sequence called 'A Leg with Bobby' he was playing as part of that year's world championship. Of course, I lost.

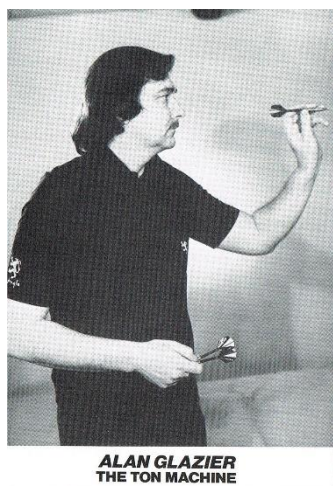
With so much available on Bobby on the 'net and particularly his own website, I doubt I will be writing much for my website until he passes on to that great oche in the clouds. Bobby is the most genuine person I have ever met. What you see is what you get.

As for Keith Deller, he's certainly a survivor and has done extremely well since his stunning defeat of Eric Bristow in that legendary World Championship in 1983 which is, of course, his major claim to fame although he did win many other top titles. All power to him. I admire his spirit and determination. He is also a very shrewd businessman. [Keith is pictured here on the front page of Darts World magazine after winning the Unipart in 1987.]

As regards the 'falling off the stage', that was Jocky Wilson who was credited with doing that during a match against Dave Whitcombe. To see if it actually happened watch 'JOCKY WILSON SAID' a documentary about Jocky produced by BBC Scotland early last year. It's on YouTube. I was actually part of that programme.



ALAN GLAZIER



Sad to read on Facebook that the legendary English darter Alan Glazier had a heart attack a short while ago. Fortunately, he was treated in hospital and, at the time of writing, is recovering back at his home in Rochdale. Alan is a subscriber to *DDN* so on behalf of all readers I send very best wishes to Alan and his partner Christine.

As many of you will know, Alan was a star of some stature in the darts firmament from the 1970s for over two decades, winning many major titles, although a 'world' title always eluded him.

A left-hander, dubbed 'The Ton Machine' and 'The Man in Black', Alan was a great exhibition player and, I guess, would still give a great account of himself whenever he is called up to the oche.

DARTS FROM THE PAST

They say the 'From little acorns mighty oaks do grow' and this could well apply to the Facebook group begun a few months ago by Roger Nickson former London Team Manager and chronicler of the history of the Greater London Darts Organisation.

I guess that, when he launched the group, he had no real idea how many would be interested but over the months the private group has risen from a handful of players and darts fans to nearly 5,000 members. Originally, unsurprisingly, London-centric, the content has now expanded across the UK and beyond.

VINTAGE DUTCH BOARD FOR SALE

I was recently contacted by Rik Gijzen from The Netherlands. Rik is an antique dealer and offered me what he described as 'a 19th Century dartboard, approximately 1820-1850 and used in a pub.'

The dartboard, pictured here, is extraordinary and must be one of the oldest known examples of the Dutch target game of 'vogelpik'. I have certainly seen this kind of target before but never with numbering around the outside. It appears that the board is a combination of vogelpik and a random-number dartboard.

Rik's primary aim is to sell the board. He asked me if I was interested but, as I ceased collecting darts memorabilia last year, I had to refuse but said that I would mention the item in this issue to see if there was any interest within the *DDN* readership. His asking price is 375 Euro plus 30 Euro for shipping (22 Euro if within the EU).

If anyone is interested in purchasing this fascinating item from Rik, please contact him direct at kgijjsen@zonnet.nl.

Over and above Rik's desire to sell the item, I would be interested to learn more about this board. Perhaps there is a member of my Dutch or perhaps Belgian readership who can help. If so, please contact me at patrick.chaplin@btinternet.com.



T. X. DARTS



As my research has progressed over many years it has become clear to me that I will never be able to compile a complete list of 'darts companies.' I have been amazed at the number of darts companies that had darts made for them to sell under their own brand names.

Darts fan Michael Glennon wrote to me back in April asking what I knew about 'T.X. Darts'. Michael was good enough to provide a photograph of the set in his possession (see left). My answer to Michael was simply "Sorry. Nothing" but by publishing the image in this issue I'm hoping that readers may be able to help.

My guess, and only a guess, is that T.X. had their darts made for them by a local light engineering company which made brass darts with standard feather flights for any number of companies but other than that I'm stumped.

Please write to me at the usual email address if you can help.

REMINDER

If you ever change your email address and still wish to receive *DDN* please let me know.

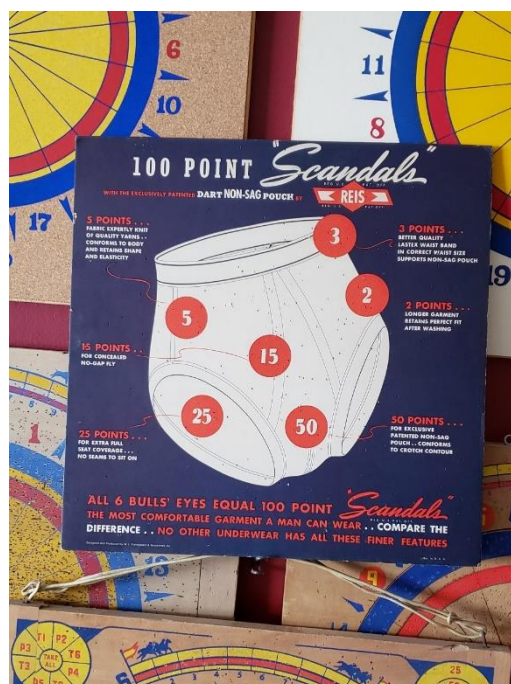
DARTBOARD IS PANTS?

Following discussions about the Hamlet Cigar dartboard in *DDN* some time ago I was contacted by Philadelphia-based, dartboard collector extraordinaire Mark Brindza who sent me images of three fantastic dartboards all of which, if published, would have had the Politically Correct Police kicking down our doors.

When I told Mark, he was not surprised and so sent me images of some boards which were a lot less controversial: two promoting cigarettes ('Lucky Strike' a US brand and 'Woodbines' from the UK) and one advertising men's underwear.

"Men's underwear!" I hear you scream. "What??"

Mark told me *"Reis Scandals was a brand of men's underwear back in the 1940's in the USA. The dartboard [shown right] is genius. Each target area has a feature about the briefs."*



Lack of space prevents me from including the other two boards this month but I will be featuring them in the October issue.

AND FINALLY...

I do hope that you are all coping as well as can be expected with COVID-19 and that you and your loved ones keep safe and well during these torrid times.

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