

DR. DARTS' NEWSLETTER

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Thanks to all those who emailed me to ask where the September *DDN* was; one even asking if I had retired and not told anyone! Not so. Hopefully all my technical worries have been sorted and so I can return to some normality as far as preparation and distribution of *DDN* is concerned. Thanks too to all those who provided feedback from the September issue, some of which is included in this number. I trust that you are all continuing to cope with the effects of COVID-19 as best you can.

Patrick

NEWS OF THE WORLD TEAM OF DARTS CHAMPIONS – ‘MIRACLE DARTS’

Because I know that so many of my subscribers, especially but not exclusively those based in the UK are interested in anything to do with the *News of the World* Individual Darts Championship and the *News of the World* Team of Darts Champions I am always looking to publish more.

The Team of Darts Champions were formed at the commencement of the Second World War to enable darts to continue to promote the newspaper throughout period of conflict; the



competition proper being suspended in 1939 for the duration. The Team usually comprised Jim Pike (Captain) (*News of the World* London Area runner-up 1934/35), Stan Outten, the *News of the World* London and Home Counties Area champion 1937/38, Dixie Newberry (from Hitchin, Hertfordshire (later to become *News of the World* national champion in 1949/50) and Leo Newstead (former All-England police champion and later a member of the equally legendary St. Dunstan Four.)

Although the *News of the World* carried reports every Sunday throughout the war relating to the Team's activities and into the early 1940s, it was rare that their matches were covered in any detail by provincial newspapers: major sports such as football, cricket and rugby always making the headlines and squeezing out darts.

The reason I mention this is because subscriber Mike Cowell recently posted photographs of a ticket for a post-war visit of the Team of Champions (shown here) to Penzance, Cornwall on 3rd August 1946. I commented on this fascinating piece of darts memorabilia and suggested to Mike that a local paper might have carried a report...fingers crossed...so he might learn more.

Almost immediately Mike came back to me to say that he had taken ‘a quick look’ and found an article published in *The Cornishman* newspaper on 8th August 1946; the Thursday after the event. Here is the report in full.

MIRACLE DARTS AT PENZANCE

ONLY ONE local team took a game off the “News of the World” darts champions at Penzance on Saturday.

The team was G. Tonkin (Tolcarne Inn, Newlyn), F. Hodgson (“Star”, Penzance), E. Blewitt (“Fountain Tavern”, Penzance) and A. R. Ball (Holgates Hotel, St. Mary’s). The champions wanted double two, when the local team needed 376 [in a game of 1,001-up]. The champions kept missing and Penzance got down to double thirteen. Again the champions failed, A. R. Ball scoring the double to win.

The other games against the seven teams raised in the district were one-sided. The champions scored “tons” with the greatest of ease and enthralled the spectators with the facility with which they “finished.”

Arranged by the “Duke of Cumberland” darts club, the games were played in two sessions in St. John’s Hall, in aid of the Licensed Victuallers’ National War Memorial Fund. The visitors were Jim Pike (London), Stan Outten (London and the Home Counties, and Dixie Newberry (Hitchen), “News of the World” champions and Leo Newstead (former all-England police champion).

They beat the Duke of Cumberland “A” and “B” teams, a Penzance landlords’ team, a Penzance mixed team, a district team (west of Penzance and east of Penzance) and the Penzance local team. Newstead beat V. Williams and W. Mennear, both of the “Duke of Cumberland” darts club.

Jim Pike entertained with wonderful tricks shots that included scoring a bull by firing through Newberry’s hair, taking matchsticks out of the fingers of Newstead, knocking pins out of a man’s mouth, scoring doubles with the board covered, taking cigarettes out of mouths, and taking a sixpenny bit out of Newberry’s fingers.

The Mayor, introduced by Mr. H. Watkins, landlord of the Duke, welcomed the team to the borough. He threw the first three darts with Jim Pike. Mr. Pike thanked the town for their reception and presented Mr. Jack Mead, secretary of the “Duke’s” dart club, who had carried out most of the arrangements, with a silver darts shield medal.

I have to say that it is rare to find such a detailed report in a provincial newspaper. Mike’s ticket also features three autographs on the reverse; namely Stan Outten, Dixie Newberry and Leo Newstead; the only absentee being that of the captain Jim Pike. Note too that this ticket was for the ‘Afternoon’, a rarity indeed to find the Team of Champions taking on a team for two sessions: Afternoon and Evening. What a collectors’ piece!

It is highly likely that I will feature this match in my new book in the chapter relating to post-war darts/darts in the 1940s.

As for the pub, the *Duke of Cumberland*, I can find little about it except that it was built circa 1822 and that, according to the 'Picture Penzance' website is "long gone".

My sincere thanks to Mike for giving me permission to use his research in *DDN*.

BRASS v TUNGSTEN – FEEDBACK

Michael Bailey's comments re. whether brass darts were better than tungsten in the last issue of *DDN* certainly generated a lot of interest from readers. Here's what former England international and multi-title winner Dave Whitcombe (pictured below with me some years ago) had to say.

Hi Pat. Read your section about brass darts and would like to reply.

After stepping back from almost everything a few years ago I went back to brass. I used them extensively in local and super league. I won the league singles, the Kent open mixed pairs with Delph, and qualified through the PDC playoffs for the world championships.



Then I lost one of them. If I could find someone who makes darts I would have a set made.

If I could go back in time I probably would have used them instead of tungsten which I don't particularly like. But pressure from others saying you can't win anything with brass led me down the path of constantly changing from one tungsten set to another.

So, providing the brass darts are not too fat, I can see no reason why tungsten is superior in any other way on the modern boards.

Can any *DDN* reader help Dave? Do you know of anyone who still makes custom brass darts? If so, please contact me immediately at patrick.chaplin@btinternet.com and I'll pass the details on to Dave. (The photo of Dave and me (above) was taken a while back...)

The article struck a chord with Brian H. who wrote:

Hi Patrick. Thanks once again for a great read: well worth the extra wait!

Interesting subject, brass darts over tungsten: I was one of the sheep who invested in tungstens way back in 1977. I hit more 180s but if I was a better player it was probably because I was practising more trying to get used to them! I was still beaten plenty of times by players chucking 30g+ brass bombs.

When I got back to darts after a 25 year sabbatical I've found I play just as well with my first set of brass darts (from when I was initiated with the Iron Laws of Darts by my dad!) as I do with my tungstens & it's surprising how often I can still squeeze three in the same bed, despite the extra size. I don't play regular competitive darts now though so it's a moot point whether I'd be at a disadvantage using brass but I certainly feel The Tungsten Effect is vastly overrated especially for a high proportion of the darting population. I will be interested to

see the views of your other readers on the subject & hope there are still players out there enjoying great success with brass.

Hope your article sparks a lively debate!

Robert Z wrote in favour of brass:

One of my favorite dart stories to tell took place when I was living in Pittsburgh and playing league there. One day I was at a blind luck shoot with a good number of people participating. The place hosting it was a bowling alley that had a large dart room with at least a dozen steel tip dart boards hung (permanently, not just for the shoot). All of them were in use, as I recall, and you couldn't see one end of the room from the other for the smoke.

A guy came in to play in the shoot and ended up in the barrel. He didn't have any darts with him so he grabbed three bar darts from behind the bar and used those. They were all brass, and none of them matched. It was basically three random brass darts, and that is what he used. He did not drop a single leg and won the shoot.

I told him that I thought what he did was amazing, especially given the darts he was using. He just smiled and said, "It's the artist, not the brush." I think this is when I awoke to the joy of brass darts. I also love, and use, brass darts and many brass darts in my collection date back to the 50's and 60's but I still use them even in league and tournaments (pre-pandemic, anyway). I love the warm feel of brass in your hand. Thanks again for the great article.

Before anyone jumps to conclusions, I thought, especially for us Brits, that the term 'in the barrel' needed explaining. Robert z told me

That term may be specific to America, I don't know. It is used to describe the situation in which there are an odd number of people at a tournament or shoot and you end up with yourself as a partner. That is what we mean by "in the barrel".

Thank goodness for that!

THAT WINKLER BOOK

You will all doubtless recall my comments about a self-published book on darts in the last issue; a book that I was a little bit critical of.

Segments of the book I quoted certainly triggered memories for reader Michael Bennett. He wrote:

Dear Patrick. Many thanks for another enjoyable issue of DDN. I have to say I didn't notice it was late, for the simple reason that time has just flown by at such a pace during Covid and all that jazz.

I particularly enjoyed your coverage of the American darts book, and his comments amused me as much as they clearly amused you. As your review led you to ask us readers some

questions about his conclusions, I thought I'd try to answer. Forgive me for the long missive; hope it won't bore the Scandals pants off you!

I quote an extensive section from your newsletter first:

"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?"

I have lived in Slovakia for the last 17 years, and in that time darts has really grown from the relative obscurity of soft tip machines in some pubs to regional and national steel tip tournaments, plenty of local leagues, and even a BDO/WDF Slovak Open (since 2018). Many local players, once they know I am a Brit, say things along the lines of, "Oh, then you've got darts in the blood," or, "Well you've had a dart in your hand since you could crawl." This rather echoes what Mr Winkler said.

But is it true? Well, at least to some extent, yes!

For starters, as a small child, I can remember my father's ancient (small) paper-roll dart board being put up in the garage. Not that he was a darts player in any way, shape or form, even if he likes to say that he once beat the Cornish champion (in doubles, playing with another good player!)

At school, there was a dartboard in every common room (we're talking posho public school here), and some of us played for Bully's special prize every day (usually ancient library books!)

More significantly, however, I can remember, in the 80s, my maternal grandfather taking us young kids to a sport shop to buy a board, and then getting out his old Jim Pike darts with cane shafts and home-made paper flights, as well as an array of other darts barrels, some of whose shapes seemed bespoke or one-off, to say the least. I've still got some of them.

And it's true that he did indeed pass on his instruction. He taught me the biggest outshots, and the terminology. I still often quote the words he said to me as a child, "Always look after your darts game, because you never know when it might come in handy."

Now, his basis for that advice came from the days when he was a travelling salesman of some kind, and a game of darts with potential customers proved a good way of cementing good relations! It's not quite like that now, as the world and darts have changed somewhat, but

since I put up a dartboard at home some ten years ago, I have been able to look after my darts game, such that when darts finally made its way to my village three years ago, and grew into a decent league for the surrounding area, I was able to win it.

I now carry a darting photo of my grandad in my case at all times, and his trophies from the



40s and 50s are on the piano! So yes, darts certainly was handed down to me in some way.

I've attached a pic. I'd guess it's from the 1960s, and they were clearly playing 301 Double In. Amazing how everyone is in suit and tie, presumably even to play? Well, maybe jackets off? I've no idea where it's from, but a couple of his trophies mention "The Windmill". Based on where he lived after the war (Stanmore), I did find a place in nearby Bushey still called

The Windmill (now a Harvester), so who knows. Anyway, it can be fun to try and investigate things.

What about the next generation? Well, I did indeed give my son a set of darts, but it's been hard to interest him in playing (boo!) as he'd rather play more dynamic sports like football. Fair play. He's still young. I expect when he's a little older he won't mind having a game of darts with his dad!

Anyway, enough. Thanks for DDN; keep going - it's always enjoyable to read about darts past and present.

WINKLER...DARTOID'S VIEW BACK IN 2018

You will recall that in last month's DDN I mentioned a book, not very favourably, by a man named Winkler. My sincere thanks to Paul 'Dartoid' Seigel who was good enough to send me the link to his review of Winkler's work posted in April 2018. It's a great read. Here's the link:

<http://dartoidsworld.net/2018/04/column-556-the-best-book-about-darts-ever-written/#more-5145>

HITCHCOCK'S NAILS – FEEDBACK

Chris M. writes

Thanks, as usual. Re the Hitchcock piece – it reminded me of when I thought it would be a good idea to try and throw nails at my dartboard (a lonnnng time ago). It took a while to get them to stick in but after a while I got the knack – never with any great accuracy I hasten to add and it didn't do the board much good either. The nails were retired. They were standard nails sharpened up. Watching nails being thrown with a "stooge" involved has always been a hard watch for me...

ME? A 'GODSEND'?

Darts fan Scott Swanson contacted me via my website looking for information. He wrote:

Hope all is well, been racking my brains for ages and Google is not helping. What was the name of the tournament where the legs were won depending on the number of darts thrown/visits to the board? Are there any YouTube videos?

So, for example, if John Lowe finished in 18 darts on double 16 the leg wasn't over if Bristow could go on in 17 even though he was throwing second.

I replied

Hi Scott. I know that some matches used to be played with 'equal darts' and that may be what you're thinking of. I've not heard of a format where the player who has already won can be beaten in the way you mentioned.

That was all the information Scott needed. He came back to me to exclaim

Ah you're a Godsend! I'd be racking my brains for ages but i think i do mean equal darts format. A quick google brought up the first WDC event the 1992 Lada UK masters in that format. There was an article on the PDC website about its 25th year anniversary a few years back which may be where I misremembered it from. Here's a link to some footage

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oIDpZcu1XN0&feature=youtu.be>).

I'm glad to have been of help Scott who has now joined the DDN global community. Welcome to you Scott and all the other darts fans who have subscribed in recent weeks.

MORE ADVERTISING DARTBOARDS

I promised in last month's issue to feature more advertising dartboards from Mark Brindza's collection but, alas, have only room for one. Mark based in Philadelphia says of the Wills' Woodbines' board shown here

Will's Woodbines –British Cigarette Company. I bought this dartboard from someone in England. Because it is thinner, the freight didn't kill me. It is cork mounted on plywood. Probably from the 1930's – 40's...



I do have the Will's Woodbine dartboard somewhere in my collection but it's not in such good condition as the one in Mark's collection. If I recall correctly, mine has the price of ten cigarettes on it which was, again if I remember correctly, two old English pence. I am certain that the period of manufacture is late 1930s or early 1940s. Do you have any interesting advertising dartboards in your collection? If so, why not send me a photo and tell me a little about each board and I'll feature the best in future DDN's.

BACK TO NAILS...

Of course, it wasn't just Joe Hitchcock who was well known for throwing nails in exhibitions. Shropshire's Mike Brown springs to mind, as does Usk's Cyril Pearce. There were many others. Indeed, at one time there existed an organisation named WANT (World Association of Nail Throwers) of which Joe was a member.



Following this theme, I am extremely grateful to Lisa-Marie Irwin, granddaughter of nail-throwing expert Lew Walker for bring my attention (via the Darts from the Past website) information relating to her granddad. Lisa-Marie posted an extract from Mike Barwell's book *The Second W.H. Allen Alternative Book of Records* (London: W.H. Allen, 1985). Headed 'Darts – Using 6 inch nails', the item read

We have all heard stories about the chap who could throw 6-inch nails better than some people could throw darts. Well here he is, Lew Walker from Gravesend, Kent.

On 9 September 1984, in a seven-hour non-stop marathon stint, Lew stuck 4,746 6-inch nails in the dartboard, achieving a total score of 58,609. The total weight of the nails thrown was 3cwt 3lbs.

The photograph (above left) (sadly undated) shows Lew with his Kent County 'Man of the Match' trophy. On the reverse is written 'Lew Walker. "Man of the Match" Twice.' So it seems that Lew was a dab hand at both darts *and* nails.

AND FINALLY...

What's the best exhibition match *you* have ever witnessed? I was thinking that this would form a great thread for *DDN* but then that is entirely up to you. Keep safe and well.

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