

DR. DARTS' NEWSLETTER

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NEWS OF THE WORLD THE RECORD BREAKERS

In last month's *DDN* I mentioned the enquiry made by Bobby and Marie George asking if Bobby's five appearances in the *News of the World* Grand Finals was a record. (Image of Bobby, below, © News of the World. Used with permission.)



I also promised to reveal the results of my research, which involved going through every *NoW* programme from 1947 to 1990, in this issue.

Regular contributor Mick Simpson wrote

Thanks for another great informative read. ... I am amazed how on earth do you find these things out about N.O.W. players? Don't get me wrong I think it's fantastic to read about the champions of the past. I can't imagine any other player

reaching the grand finals as many times as Bobby. The only player who in my opinion would have got near is Tom Barrett.

Another subscriber, and regular provider of feedback, Brian H. wrote:

Thanks for another great read! As to your News of the World teaser: I'm guessing, because you haven't revealed the answer straight away, someone may have beaten Bobby George or at least matched his 5 appearances in the Grand Final. I think Tom Barrett [pictured, right] might have run him close but I am going to guess Eddie Brown. Can't wait for the big reveal!

Well Brian, it's time...

It is a fact that Bobby George won through to the Grand Finals on five occasions: 1977/78 (at the Empire Pool, Wembley) and 1978/79, 1979/80, 1981/82 and 1985/86, all played at Wembley Arena, winning the title twice: 1979 and 1986.



One other player reached the final on five occasions. England's Mike Gregory made it in 1982/83, 1983/84, 1985/86, at Wembley Arena, and 1986/87 and 1987/88 at Hammersmith Odeon. Mike, like Bobby George, won the championship twice, the first in 1986/87 and then 1987/88. Mike became only the third player to retain his *News of the World* title; the first of course being Tom Barrett (1963/64 and 1964/65), both victories at the Alexandra Palace, the second 'The Crafty Cockney', Eric Bristow (1982/83 and 1983/84) at Wembley Arena.



Both Mick and Brian, mentioned above, thought that perhaps the one player to better Bobby and Mike's performance was the legendary Tom Barrett during the 1960s but no.

Tom actually made it to the Grand Final on four occasions (1961/62, 1963/64, 1964/65 and 1968/69) winning his first title in 1963/64 and retaining it (the first to do so) in 1964/65.

Two other players to record four appearances were American Rick Ney (1979/80, 1981/82, 1983/84 and 1985/86) and Canadian champion Bob Sinneave (seen here with Eric Bristow (occasion unknown)) (Image courtesy author's collection) who reached the final in 1984/85, 1985/86, 1986/87 and 1987/88). Sadly, neither Rick nor Bob won the title outright.

Another was Englishman Tom Reddington (1954/55, 1955/56, 1957/58 (held at the Empress Hall, Earl's Court) and 1959/60 (at the Empire Pool, Wembley). Reddington won the title in 1954/55 and 1959/60; at that time only the second man to win the title on two separate occasions: the first being Tommy Gibbons in 1951/52 and 1957/58 (pictured, right).



[**Obscure *News of the World* fact:** Ted Ray, 'that loveable laugh-raiser of Radio and T.V. presented the prizes at the 1958 final, stepping in at the last minute for 'One of Britain's greatest pop singers' David Whitfield, Esq.]

Now, as Brian (above) called it, 'THE BIG REVEAL'...

Multi-Eastern Counties Divisional champion Eddie Brown (pictured below, left) made it to the Grand Finals on no less than *six* occasions spanning two decades, in 1960/61, 1961/62 (both held at the Empire Pool, Wembley), and, at the Alexandra Palace, in 1963/64, 1964/65, 1969/70 and 1973/74. Despite this record of six appearances Eddie won the title on only one occasion, 1961/62.



Stepping up to the hockey (as it was called back then) at the Empire Pool, Wembley on the evening of Saturday 28th April, Eddie's first round (quarterfinals) match was against the soon-to-become-legendary London and Home Counties Divisional Champion, Tom Barrett. Eddie beat Tom 2-1 to move through to the semi-final where he met and beat Terry Coleman, the Lancashire and Cheshire Divisional Champion.

In the final Eddie met the Western Counties Divisional Champion, Dennis Follett who played out of the *Cadeleigh Arms*, Cadeleigh, Devon. Eddie registered a 2-0 victory.

But, thanks to a chance conversation with *DDN* subscriber Andy Scott, just before going to print, it was pointed out to me that Sweden's Stefan Lord also achieved **six**

appearances (Up until then I had only counted five) spanning more than a decade. Stefan's first appearance was at the Alexandra Palace in 1975/76, followed by the Empire Pool, Wembley in 1977/78, then three successive appearances at the Wembley Arena (1978/79, 1979/80 and 1980/81 and, finally, 1986/87 at the Hammersmith Odeon. Stefan was also the first player ever to play in the *News of the World* Grand Finals at *four* different venues.

Stefan (playing out of the Stockholm Super Darts Club and as Sweden's champion) lifted the trophy on two occasions: 1977/78, where he beat the North of England Divisional Champion, John Coward (playing out of the *White Hart* Sedbergh, Cumbria) 2-0 in the final and in 1979/80 where he beat England's Dave Whitcombe (the London and Home Counties Divisional Champion, playing out of the Naval Club, Chatham, Kent) by a similar score.

(Dave was to return to the Grand Finals (at the Hammersmith Odeon) in 1989 to beat Dennis 'The Menace' Priestley 2-1 to win the title.)

FOUR GREATEST MOMENTS FROM THE LAKESIDE

Simon Hall at WINMAU asked me recently "Just a quicky. Can you think of the four greatest moments that you remember from the Lakeside [*World Championships*]?"

Off the top of my head, I replied

Mike Gregory/Phil Taylor final in 1992. By far the best and most exciting Embassy final I've ever seen (and the only one the BBC issued on video). Taylor won 6-5 although Gregory had darts to win it.

Trina Gulliver's tenth Women's World Championship title in 2016 winning 3-2 against Deta Hedman. Now that the Lakeside is no more (at least for the foreseeable future) and no other regular women's world title contest, her record will never (surely) be beaten. (Image of Trina © 2016 Sue Gulliver.)



Andy Fordham's win in 2004: 7-6 against Mervyn King. One of the most popular wins, and Andy is one of the most popular players, of all time. Then Phill Nixon's comeback against Martin Adams in 2007. Adams won 7-6 of course. I was there and remember Martin's then wife dashing to the ladies' toilet and locking herself in as Phill won yet another leg. She did not emerge until after 'Wolfie' hit the winning leg.



And then, tongue-in-cheek, I added

Quite naturally I would add Dr. Patrick Chaplin's sensational appearance in 'A Leg with Bobby George' at Lakeside in 2007. (Image, left shows Bobby and me with BBC Sport frontman Ray Stubbs © 2007 Moppix). All of which begs the question. What was your favourite-ever Lakeside World Championship moment? Let me know at patrick.chaplin@btinternet.com.

MARKS & SPENCER DARTS PROMPTS MEMORIES OF FEATHER FLIGHTS

I recently posted the photograph shown here of a set of 'St. Michael' (that is the Marks & Spencer department store) feather-flighted darts on the Darts from the Past Facebook group and drew the following response from Dr. Eddie Norman which I would like to share with *DDN* readers. He wrote:

Patrick, I saw your photo of the little feather darts on Darts from the Past from M and S and it brought back a few memories.

The House of Darts used to sell feather darts flights. It is quite a little story really. Silvertrim used to sell feather flights and I thought that they were the [sole] manufacturer. Then I learned that there was a lady who I was told was making feather darts flights just outside Birmingham. (This was 1980-ish.)



I was told she had a factory turning them out. I rang the lady. She told me the business started with her grandfather in the 1950's. I arranged to meet her at her house.

When I got there, I could not believe it. The 'factory' was her extended kitchen in her house, and there were bags and bags and bags and bags of turkey feathers around the kitchen, and her two young daughters and their two friends sticking up the feathers on to the stems, and then being coloured and put in plain cardboard plastic packaging.

The colours were red, blue, white, black, green or yellow or two-tone. White and black were the most popular. The feathers were made in short stems as in your M and S photo, or the longer Arch feathers. There was feathers everywhere, feather darts flights everywhere and the first packet I saw was addressed to Silvertrim.



(Silvertrim was the trading name of L. A. and E. W. Tunnicliffe of Walsall. Advert shown left was featured in *Darts World* Issue No. 48, November 1976.)

Eddie continued:

I had discovered the source of feather darts flights in the UK. I had been buying from intermediaries and now I was at the source.

I had been sending all my feather flight supplies to the USA to a company in Kansas City and one in Milwaukee.

Feather flights were popular for soft tip darts and soft tip darts and soft tips machines were more popular than steel tip as you know in the USA at that time.

I bought all the stock Mrs Weston had finished and paid her on the spot. She was happy and the feather flights left for the USA the next day.

To be honest we made a lot of money on the sale of feather darts flights, they were like gold dust. Mrs Weston then told me she supplied a couple of other well-known darts manufacturers but payment was slow. But these firms complained when suddenly their feather supplies stopped!

I put in a very large order and told her I would collect and pay on collection which I did every collection. The orders got bigger and bigger and bigger and she had two extra girls making them, and all went to the USA. Unfortunately, after five or six years, Mrs Weston wanted her kitchen back, the girls no longer wanted to make them and have feathers sticking to their fingers when they went out, probably with their boyfriends. So the feathers closed down, and I never found another feather flight manufacturer.

LOCKDOWN PUZZLE

I am indebted to my friend Simon Inglis, who I worked with in relation to the darts chapter in Arthur R. Taylor's book *Played at the Pub – The pub games of Britain* (English Heritage, 2009), who contacted me recently saying merely "Hi Patrick. I came across this reference to a dartboard and thought of you!"

<http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/boredom-busters/archive-jigsaws/>

The link states

Unique Darts Board - Different regions have their own traditional styles of dart boards, but we can't find one that looks like this. It has no inner ring for triple scores, and only a single bullseye ring – something only a darts historian might be able to explain!

Have fun with it!

BOBBY GEORGE AND THE THREE-MATCH LEG

In addition to the feedback he has already provided above (see page 1), Brian H. had further comments to make as follows:

While on the subject of Bobby George I think he has been underrated over the years, remembered more for the candelabra and showmanship than his darts (he appeared on Bullseye in a Mickey Mouse shirt because John Lowe had said he was a Mickey Mouse dart player!). But when you see his display in the News of the World (8ft throw, 3 legs, no room for error) 180, and I think finishing twice on the bull, he deserves his place amongst the best. (Image of Bobby with bling © 2011 Bobby George/PC/Wendy Balic. Used with permission.)



And on the subject of 3-leg matches: I've been watching the World Championships and, in my opinion, they lack the excitement of the old News of the World or early Embassy Worlds. While the long format supposedly allows the best player to emerge, it also allows a slower starter time to get into his rhythm and a good player early on to go off the boil. I understand why it's more commercial to do it this way but would like to see a quick-fire competition over one or two days, three or five legs max.

Thanks Brian. What do other readers think? Let me know at the usual address.

CAN I BECOME A FULL-TIME DARTS WRITER?

In December I received a very interesting request from a young man named Bradley S. He wrote:

Good afternoon, Patrick. I hope you don't mind me emailing you...I'll get straight to the point: I love darts. I want to write on darts. The question is, where on earth do I start?!

I noticed you are an Anglia Ruskin alumni, so am I. I studied journalism from 2014-2017. For the last two years I have been working as a supply teacher - I don't like it. I want a total career change. This week, whilst watching the World Darts Championship, I thought how I could marry the two of journalism and my passion for darts. After doing some research, I found you.

Do you have any hints, tips, contacts? I am really struggling as to how or where to start. How do you monetise writing on darts?

Long-term, I would like to make a documentary (similar to the ones Jacques Peritti [investigative reporter and broadcaster] did) or write a biography on a darts player. However, now, I just want to get my foot on the ladder. I hope you can help!

I hoped my reply was of help not only to Bradley but also to anyone, including DDN readers who were thinking (or had thought at one time) of following such a potential career path. I told him.

It's true I am an ARU alumnus. I undertook a part-time, self-funded PhD, at the university



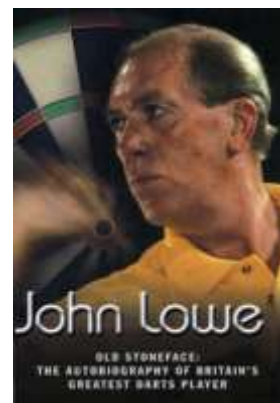
between 1995 and 2007. Most of my research was off-campus, my only attending ARU for meetings with my two supervisors. But the end result was good. As you probably know I was awarded a PhD in 2006 and my dissertation Darts in England 1900-39 - A social history was published by Manchester University Press in 2009.

Like you, I became involved in research into darts because of my love of the game. It was never about money, which I guess was just as well! (Image of me searching

for inspiration © 2019 Moppix. Used with permission.)

From the mid-1980s onwards and up until February last year, I wrote occasional historical articles for Darts World magazine. The pay was poor but at least it was a platform for my work which enabled my reputation to grow. Many of those articles were updated and included on my website. I know Darts World does take freelance material so you might like to contact the editor Phil Lanning to talk about his requirements That will give you some idea of what is required...and whether they pay. Their website is dartsworld.com. The editor is Phil Lanning and the phone number 0203 951 8262.

I make no real money from darts writing except for the eight darts-related books I have been either sole author or co-author. I have co-authored both John Lowe's Old Stoneface autobiography (2005) and his The Art of Darts (2009) and Trina Gulliver's Golden Girl (2008). Even so the rewards were low (I daren't try to work out my hourly rate as it would be well under the most miniscule wage for the most demeaning of occupations.) but the prestige is high. Put bluntly, darts books don't sell: not in great numbers anyway.



So, the fact of the matter is that, from my own experience, darts writing cannot be your sole interest. The potential markets are so small. The PDC doesn't, as far as I am aware, have freelance writers for their website or programmes and, of course, the BDO simply doesn't exist anymore. Many of the national newspapers avoid reporting on darts and those that do (mainly the 'red tops') have their own staff reporters. Local newspapers might take local reports but they wouldn't pay for them and, in any case, Covid-19 has meant the closure of pub leagues and super league; hopefully not forever.

Online darts-related websites probably take freelance contributions but my guess is that they would rarely, if ever, pay... However, that is one of the best ways to 'trial' your work.

You might well be the exception but most darts writers I've known over the years are/were part-time and have (or like me, had) full-time jobs or are full-time sports journalists for whom darts writing is only one of a number of sports they specialise in. Working full-time within education administration for nearly four decades didn't affect my enthusiasm for darts research or my eagerness to pursue my passion for darts. To have one of my books (the book of my PhD Darts in England 1900-39 – A social history) on the open shelves at the six major universities in Britain was a reward beyond price.

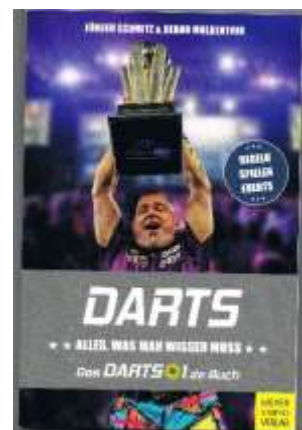
For me nowadays, I concentrate on writing my (free) monthly global Dr. Darts' Newsletter which currently has subscribers in over 120 countries. It has no adverts (thus no income) and is exclusive to my subscribers and I as regularly as I can add original material to my website. I also answer darts queries from all over the world often utilising the extensive network of contacts I have built up over 35 years of research.

But, I guess, that doesn't help you but I hope that some of what I have written above does and gives you some idea of the difficulties of concentrating only on darts.

Thanks again for your email. I know this isn't what you wanted to hear.

Clearly it wasn't because, at the time of writing, I have received no acknowledgement of my email. However, I hope this gives DDN readers an insight into the problems around writing about darts!

In addition, this item provides me with just enough room to publicise a new darts book produced (in the German language) by Jurgen Schmitz and Bernd Molkenhuth titled *Darts – Alles, Was Man Wissen Muss*. The book costs 14.95 Euro (paperback) and for information on how to order a copy go to <https://www.darts1.de/buch/index.php>. My signed copy arrived just before Christmas and now sits proudly on the 'international' section of my bookshelves.



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