

DR. DARTS' NEWSLETTER

Issue 136

www.patrickchaplin.com

July 2021



TERRY O'DEA – AUSSIE DARTS LEGEND

On 18th May 2021 Australian darts star Russell Stewart posted:

It is with heavy heart that I have to inform you of the sad news of the passing of my great mate and rival in darts Mr Terry O'Dea. Terry [right, image © Steve Daszko] was an absolute LEGEND of World darts and Australian Darts and the man who opened all the doors for all Australian dart players to follow. A great bloke. He will be sorely missed. My love and condolences to his family and Betty. R.I.P. Terry.



The administrator of the Facebook 'Darts from the Past' (DFTP), Roger Nickson, posted

Earlier today Russell Stewart let the members know the sad news of Terry O'Dea's passing. He was a very good friend of mine and I signed him to play for London in the mid '80's.

[Terry was to become the Captain of the London side in 1986/87 when Cliff Lazarenko left. Terry's record for London was played 27 matches; won 21 (78%).]



He also played for me at the Morning Star, Peckham. I had so much fun with him on the golf course and in many drinking establishments. I took this picture on the practice board at the British Open and the determination on his face epitomises him perfectly a true Aussie and very proud of it. The dart world has lost another great character. R.I.P. (Image © Roger Nickson)

I had always wanted to write an article about Terry and had already begun to collect information about his life and darts times and chatted with Wayne Baker (former *Darts World* contributor) when the sad news arrived that Terry had passed away. I remember seeing Terry on TV numerous times during the 1980s and admired his style and determination.

I hope that the following article will do Terry and his career justice.

Derek Brown's *The Guinness Book of Darts* (1981) is always the best place to start when researching 'the best' dart players around at the turn of the end of the 1970s and looking forward to those emerging at the beginning of the 1980s. Of Terry, Derek Brown wrote

O'Dea, Terry (b 3 May 1945) was injured while playing Australian Rules football which led him to take up darts. The chap who knocked him over on the football field must have been pretty formidable because O'Dea is a husky 6ft 2in (1.88m) Aussie weighing 16 stone (101.6kg), with a lot of it looking like muscle. Manages the Clarendon Hotel, Perth, and has twice won the Western Australian title and twice come runner-up in the Australasian singles. Represented Australia in the 1979 World Cup since when he has become a well-known face to television audiences in Britain.

When *Darts World* reporter Wayne Baker interviewed Terry in depth in 1983 for his 'Star Profile' series, Wayne wrote

STUDYING the rugged and muscular makeup of 6ft 2ins, 16-stone Australian darter Terry O'Dea it is easy to understand why he has attracted the nickname "The Towering Inferno".

Pausing for a moment during his practice session the blonde-haired brawny hotelier from Sydney gave a wry smile and then looked thoughtfully at the dartboard, his small 19-gram darts looking distinctly out of place in his shovel-like brawny hands...There is no show about this tough but friendly natured Aussie muscleman. He has an extremely comfortable and relaxed style, his piercing eyes fixed on the target of the dartboard. There is a minimum of movement as the darts find their target with amazing accuracy.



O'Dea burst into the world rankings [in 1981] taking 14th place, moving up to sixth after a purple patch saw him clinching the singles, pairs and mixed pairs titles while leading the Australians to victory in the Pacific Cup.

When Wayne Baker asked Terry about who influenced him most back then in the Australian darts scene, Terry replied,

"Unfortunately, the man responsible for doing more than anyone to put Australian darts on the map is likely to miss out on the glory. He is Matt Banovich, a tremendous ambassador, a gentleman, and a fine player."



(Banovich (pictured left) made a handful of appearances in Britain – his brass darts and plastic flights and stems providing a vivid contrast with the modern tungsten darts with their multi-coloured flights and assorted inter-changeable stems. Banovich (b. 14th April 1933) came from Herne Hill, Western Australia and won the Australasian title four times and represented Australia in the 1977 World Cup.)

Terry added

“Matt was perhaps the greatest influence on my playing career but unfortunately he was ten years ahead of his time. He was in the wrong side of 40 to be considered a likely contender for the 1985 World Cup.”

Although Terry made his name as a darts player, his career would have been so different but for a sports injury. Terry told Wayne Baker in 1983,

“I reckon I could have played professional as an Australian rules footballer, but for my leg,” he sighed, tapping his left leg. You can still detect the disappointment in his voice as having to give up the tough physical sport, although it all happened 17 years ago.

The injured ligaments in his left knee came as a crushing blow to the powerful and talented 19-year-old who had captained cricket, tennis, swimming and football (Australian Rules) teams as a teenager at school and looked set for a bright future on the football field. To be groomed on hard physical demanding sports and then have to ditch them virtually overnight is not an easy task, especially for a talented teenager.

And you still sense the impatience and restlessness as O’Dea smashes his tiny 19 gram tungsten missiles into the board.

However, it was clear that Terry enjoyed playing darts and played well. Fellow Aussie darts ace, Russell Stewart provided this photograph (right) of Terry in 1967 when he was runner-up to Barry Delbridge in the Australian Singles Championship.



In that 1983 article, Wayne

Baker commented that in recent years Terry had matured steadily into a formidable opponent on the international scene, although, as Terry admitted, improvements could be made with a spell in Britain on the tough exhibition circuit to sharpen up his game. One example of such an exhibition took place in May 1985 when Terry visited the *Victoria* pub in Charterhouse Street, London EC1 ‘to throw a few darts with the locals and share some draught Castlemaine XXXX lager newly arrived at the pub.’

The press release, titled ‘‘VICTORIA’ MEETS AUSTRALIAN NATIONAL DARTS CHAMPION’, published on 28th May, recorded that

Mr. O’Dea took on 22 locals in separate games of the best of three 501 as well as showing them some special trick shots. A playing fee of £1 and a bar raffle during the evening helped



to raise £170 for Mencap (charity for mentally handicapped children). Pictured here is Mr. Terry O'Dea (left) and landlord of the 'Victoria', Mr. Richard Bellamy.

Terry O'Dea's career on the oche seriously began when his football career was brought to a premature end following that knee injury. He turned to darts as a tonic to ease the suffering. Wayne Baker recorded

With three brothers already involved in the game and a fiery determination to drive himself on, O'Dea not surprisingly, adapted pretty quickly and it was not long before he was offered the chance to play regular darts with a local pub team.

He progressed through the gradings but was penalised by his rapid rate of improvement. Because of his age and the fact that A grade darts involved money changing hands he was not allowed to play. Eventually he was allowed into the grade and quickly emerged as a formidable opponent.

His upbringing in sport had taught him the importance of regular training and practice sessions and it was not hard for the ex-footballer to spend several hours developing his style and perfecting shots.

State teams places and eventually a national team spot was snapped up by O'Dea who also found time to take runners-up spot in the Australian singles event in 1969. The Western Australia singles and doubles titles followed.

Terry told Wayne

"The real turning point in my career was in [1978] when I made my first trip to Britain for the Guinness Golden Darts tournament. It was then I realised how big darts was and how the sport could be organised.

[Terry played in the Pairs event in the Guinness Golden Darts tournament, partnering Matt Banvovich,]

For the first time since taking up darts I felt nerves and tension creeping in. It was a whole new experience, and very frightening. It was easy for Britain's best to beat an outsider like myself by simply looking at me. Psychology is an important part of playing darts."

Terry also realised that the only way he could compete on equal terms with the British stars was to travel to Britain on a regular basis.



Improvement was shown and Terry made his first appearance at the Embassy World Professional Darts Championship in 1979 which was held at the Jollees Cabaret Club, Stoke-on-Trent (3rd to 10th February). The big Australian defeated an equally big Cliff Lazarenko 2-0 in the opening round but despite a spirited performance the Aussie was sent tumbling out of the contest in the next round 2-0 by England's extrovert cockney star Eric Bristow.

But Terry was back at Jollees in 1980 and improved on the previous year by beating Scotland's Eric MacLean 2-1 in the first round but then lost to England's Tony Brown 2-0 in the second round.

In 1981 Terry lost in the first round to Eric Bristow 2-0 but in 1982 Terry made it to the quarter-finals. In the first round he met fellow Aussie, Kevin White who he beat 2-0. In the second round Terry met Angus Ross (Scotland) who he also defeated 2-0. In the quarterfinal Terry met England's John Lowe. John averaged 30.30 per dart and Terry lost 4-1.

There were high hopes for 1983 and the Embassy World Professional Championships after Terry (then world ranked 6th) had beaten Peter Locke (Wales) 2-0 in the opening round. Wayne Baker reported that

the big Aussie was in a mean mood as he prepared to take on darts' multi-talented John Lowe. Just 12 months earlier O'Dea felt that lack of confidence had robbed him of victory. But after a nail-biting confrontation during which the Australian had costly double misses Lowe emerged the victory. [Lowe won 3-2.]

Reflecting on the disappointment, a strangely subdued and angry O'Dea cursed those missed doubles again, pinpointing Lowe's overall confidence and experience as the decisive factors.

But 1983 was to bring Terry his biggest payday when at the Seashore Holiday Village, North Denes, Great Yarmouth, Norfolk in the Ladbroke's Festival of Darts on Monday 17th October, Terry, appropriately, won the Foster's Draught Men's Singles event for which he won £1,000. On his way to victory, Terry had beaten Essex's Peter Kemp in the quarter final, then defeated his fellow Australian, Russell Stewart, in the semi-final. In the final Terry faced Wales' Brian Cairns who had seen off Billy Dunbar (London) in the quarterfinal and Northern Ireland's Steve Brennan in the semi. Terry's average of 28.6 in the final gave him a victory over the Glamorgan darts ace by 2-0, in 18 and 17 darts.



That same month, on 23rd, Terry reached the final of the Scottish Open (Alloa's Diamond Heavy Darts Championship) at Edinburgh. (The competition had over 1400 entries.) There he faced his compatriot Russell Stewart, Russell winning after a close final. (See photo. DW/PC Archive.)

Also, during October, the Silk Cut World Cup IV took place (21st and 22nd), the primary reason why Terry and Russell Stewart were in the country. Their colleagues in the Men's team were David Crack (who won the Puma Masters in 1982) and Frank Palko who had been in the 1979 World Cup team and who, like Terry, turned to darts following a football injury. The Australia team of Terry and David Crack won the bronze medal in the Men's Pairs and their Men's team ended joint 5th (with Sweden) in the tournament.

Returning to Terry's Embassy career, there were two subsequent years (1984 and 1985) where he again fell at the first fence: 1984 beaten 2-0 by Scotland's Jocky Wilson, and in 1985 losing (once more) to John Lowe (2-1). (It was during the 1984 WINMAU World Masters that Terry made his best performance in that prestigious tournament - joint 5th place.) In the 1986 Embassy, Terry once again made it to the quarterfinal, beating England's Richie Gardner 3-1 in the first round and then another Englishman, Dave Lee 3-0 in the second round. But in the quarterfinal Terry's progress was stopped by yet *another* Englishman, left-hander, Alan Glazier (4-3).

Terry O'Dea's last two appearances at the Embassy ended with first round defeats to Rick Ney (USA), 3-1 in 1987 and a second meeting with Scotland's Jocky Wilson (previously met in 1984) which Terry lost 3-1.

At this time Terry was looking to cease his globe-trotting but before considering that event, it is important to look at Terry's personal achievements and those for his country. Thanks to Russell Stewart for providing the following:

Terry became the Australian Champion twice (runner-up in 1967) while representing Western Australia. He was a formidable player in both Men's Doubles and Mixed Doubles Disciplines.

Australian Champion (Singles) - 1981 and 1987
 Australian Champion (Doubles) - 1980 with Tim Brown; 1983 with Emil Derjaha and 1986 with John Burnett
 Australian Champion (Mixed Doubles) - 1982 with Delys Gibson; 1983 with Delys Gibson; 2000 with Ann Lacey representing Queensland
 Pacific Cup representing Australia - 1980 Mixed Doubles Champions with Barbara Fletcher; 1982 Singles Champion; 1982 Men's Doubles Champions with Barry Atkinson (pictured, right); 1986 Men's Doubles Champions (Japan) with Russell Stewart
 Puma Pacific Masters - 1981 Runner-Up to Eric Bristow



For all intents and purposes Terry retired from international darts around 1988/89. Russell Stewart told *DDN* that Terry returned to Australia, lived in Western Australia for a short while before moving to Queensland. Russell added

He still played representative darts and became a steady player for the Queensland State side. I'm sure he would have been a great role model for the up-and-coming players, and of course the current state reps. He still played well into the 2000's. He eventually had to give it away as his knees were giving him trouble and it was difficult for him to stand.

Terry O'Dea was a great Australian dart player always a gritty fighter and fierce competitor on the dart board, although he generally had a cheeky smile and laugh away from the board.

As a team member he would make you feel at ease and comfortable before the match and would always be a formidable opponent to all who played him.

At the time of his death, Terry had been sharing his life for the past 22 years with Betty Walsh. They had met at the Gold Coast Hotel at Burleigh Heads. Betty said, “I was working in the bar and the TAB [betting office] and he was living upstairs.” Betty added that Terry had been poorly for the past ten years.



(Terry and Betty are pictured here in recent times, with Jamie ‘Bravedart’ Harvey.)
(Image © Russell Stewart)

Sadly, Terry passed away on 18th May 2021.

When learning of Terry’s passing, Paul “The Asset” Nicholson tweeted

“This is awful news. A giant of the Aussie game and a real trailblazer for

world darts in the 1980s. His legacy is still being felt to this day. Rest easy Terry.

In talking to *Dr. Darts’ Newsletter (DDN)* later, Paul added:

“I never had the privilege of meeting Terry, but his appeal and legacy are still being felt. He was a trailblazer for Australasian darts players and without his influence, the likes of Wayne Weening, Tony David and Simon Whitlock may never have been shown the path. His contribution should never be forgotten.”

(Image © Lawrence Lustig/PDC. Used with permission.)



Top Aussie professional darter Simon Whitlock has very fond memories of Terry. He said:

“Terry was always the guy I looked up to when I was growing up playing darts as a youngster. One great memory of him was when he beat Eric Bristow. It was an amazing moment for Australian darts. Terry was a total trail blazer for Australia with Russell Stewart who both came over to the UK thirty-odd years ago to play Pro-Darts which was just unheard of back then and whoever met Terry just said what a truly decent bloke he was”.

(Image © PDC/Lawrence Lustig.)



Terry O’Dea R.I.P.

Acknowledgments: Betty Walsh, Warren Ackary, Dave Allen, Wayne Baker, Derek Brown, Roger Nickson, Paul Nicholson, Russell Stewart and Simon Whitlock.

© 2012 Patrick Chaplin. (Photo credits as shown.)

FEEDBACK FROM #135

David King writes:

"A good DDN this month. Unfortunately, lots of obituaries. ... I must admit, if you didn't give these good players and referees their well-earned tribute, I guess many would pass without mention."

Good to see you covering the Harrows' 240 Quad Dartboard [Image, right, © Harrows]. Here is a link to a short video showing Phil Taylor hitting a 240!

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6rj5upo1I2s>



Thanks David. It is sad that such a number of darters and officials have passed away recently but of course, that's life, so to speak. And, of course, a good number of my articles are looking back at lives of people who left the oche some years ago. In the case of Terry O'Dea in this month's issue, that article had been planned for ages but now turns into a tribute.

Tom Firth wrote

Great, Patrick, to hear your comments about the Callers at the darts. Met Jack [Price] a couple of times but I remember the first time in Scotland in 1983. Met a few others since, namely Phil Jones and Russ Bray.

Met Phil and Russ many times over the years but one memory is about Russ's first time to call out in The Circus Tavern. Just before he was about to start calling out, an announcement was made that a car was about to be towed for illegally parking and then his registration was given out. Like a true professional Russ did not flinch and, it was only after he finished calling out, was he told that it was a "Wind Up".

BRUCE SPENDLEY



In the June issue of *DDN* I announced the passing of Bruce Spendley, one of the best MCs and referees ever. I promised to provide some of the comments made by darters across the UK. (Bruce, left, photo taken in 1987. Courtesy PC/DW Archive.)

Roger Nickson – Darts from the Past - Facebook group

Jayne Kempster earlier today let members know of the passing of Bruce Spendley, one of the finest referees ever to take the stage. I knew Bruce way back in the old B.D.O. days and a

nicer man you could not meet. Lovely smile and a calm presence on stage which players always warmed to. Darts has lost another "Great".

Dave Alderman – former BDO official

Saddened to learn of Bruce passing – a much-respected referee who officiated in many of the earlier major darts events promoted by the BDO and PDC. My condolences to his family.

Bob Anderson – World Champion 1988

What a lovely man he was....so calm on the Oche. He made our lives on the stage easy...it was a pleasure to be in his company.

Wayne Baker – Sport Journalist

I was privileged and honoured to work with both Jack Price and Bruce Spendley, the latter officiating at the Modern Hotels Jersey Festival of Darts as part of the Barry Dennis/Julie Christensen organised event. We shared many a pint - I enjoyed his dry humour. We linked up at the Embassy World Championship and the early PDC events.

Jack, I knew through the Embassy World Championship but really got to know him when he joined the Lescol Promotions Team, who were running the popular Isle of Man Darts Festival. Wickedly funny, he kept us enthralled post darts matches with his memories of the sport - both on and off the oche...

Russ Bray – Referee

So sad to hear of the passing of the best Darts Referee ever. Bruce had the perfect voice and stage presence of any other. He was respected by all the players and officials throughout a fabulous career. He certainly helped me and guided me as a Ref. Thanks Mate RIP.

Barry Clarke – Darts player

One of the referees in my memory that kept order and gave both players an equal chance.

Babs Evans - Cleveland County

Bruce will be sadly missed. He was a reporter in our local paper. He had a darts column and was a keen darts enthusiastic who started to referee on stage for Cleveland County darts between him and the late Gary Travers. We had the very best of referees but not only that he was a devoted committee member who did a whole load of promotional work...always a gentleman. Cleveland County were very lucky and will always be thankful for Bruce. My thoughts and prayers to his family. R.I.P.

NEW SUBSCRIBERS

A warm welcome to all new subscribers to DDN. It is always a special time when someone subscribes from a country that DDN has never known to have reached before. This is the case with Alan P. who joined us last month from Bonaire. (Yes. I admit that I had never heard of

it! I had to look it up!) Alan had found out about us via a visit from the globe-trotting darts ambassador Dr. Eddie Norman. (National flag right.)

At the last count *DDN* has readers over 130 countries and each single subscriber, wherever they live around the world, are free to copy *DDN* to their friends in darts wherever they may be.



Although a few back issues of *DDN* can be found on my website www.patrickchaplin.com my newsletter is only sent to those who actually *ask*. Those who truly care about darts. For over a decade *DDN* has remained advert-free and that is how it will stay.

ANDY FORDHAM – THE VIKING



As this *DDN* was completed, the news arrived that one of darts' giants (in more than one way), Andy Fordham, had died.

I will be featuring an article about Andy (who I met on a number of times) in the August *DDN* so if any *DDN* readers have any special memories of 'The Viking' please write to me at patrick.chaplin@btinternet.com and I will include as many as I can next time.

(Image © Chippix.)

MY RESEARCH IS SPONSORED BY



NOTE: Text © 2021 Patrick Chaplin or as shown. Images © Patrick Chaplin or as stated or sourced. Neither text nor images can be reproduced without prior permission of the copyright holder(s).