

DR. DARTS' NEWSLETTER

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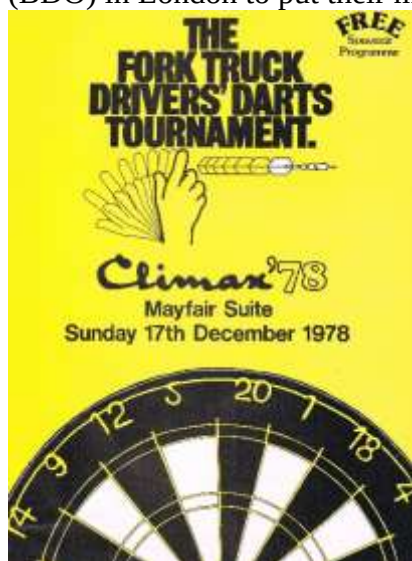
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CLIMAX 78

In the late 1970s, sponsors were queueing up at the office of the British Darts Organisation (BDO) in London to put their money down to support the numerous televised darts



tournaments that formed the BDO darts yearly programme. These were primarily companies that sold cigarette and drink but also included those that sold paint, promoted football pools (such as Vernons) and, of course, darts and dartboard manufacturers.

Naturally, these major tournaments attracted the very best the game had to offer or they had simply been invited to participate because of their standing in the darts world: the players the darts fans and TV viewers wanted to see.

But occasionally, such in the case of *Climax 78*, a company approached the BDO and asked them to organise a tournament for them. John Buckeridge, the Sales Promotion Manager for Coventry Climax, explained

The whole question of sports sponsorship arose about a year ago when we were examining ways of bringing Coventry Climax closer to the fork truck driver – ways of pointing out that a big company could be more friendly and less impersonal. Various sports were discussed, but darts was clearly the leading light. That's why we embarked on this tournament, but we little realised just how popular it would prove to be.

Subsequently, applications were mailed to 26,000 companies who used Climax fork lifts and one major advertisement was placed in the popular Sunday press. John Buckeridge was stunned by the response: 4,500 entries were received over fifteen days! Then the hard work began of allocating those entries to the relevant county play-offs. The company engaged the services of the BDO to administer all the qualifying heats and local finals and these produced forty-eight county winners who would play the finals proper in London at the Mayfair Suite on the afternoon of Sunday 17th December 1978.

DDN subscriber, Patrick Dee (aka 'The Curator of Darts') clearly recalled taking part in the initial phase of the competition, playing at Haverill, Suffolk. He enjoyed the experience but, sadly, was not one of the county winners.

Each of those county winners had already received a prize of a quartz analogue clock plus a cheque for £15. In the finals the champion would win a yellow Mini (the colour of Climax fork lift trucks), together with the Winner's Cup; the runner-up to win a music system and a shield; the third, a portable colour television and the fourth a SLR camera. Shields would also

be awarded to the losing semi-finalists and any finalists achieving 180 with three darts in a single throw would receive 'a special prize'. In addition, a commemorative wall shield was to be awarded to the company where the champion worked.

All of the finalists were named in the programme with short biographies. A number of them were shown to be excellent dart players and worth keeping an eye on, such as Michael Merrick (West Midlands), a winner in the C.I.U (Clubs, Institutes Union) All England Championship, David Porter (Glamorgan) 'a winner of the Welsh Unicorn', David Pryke (Cambridgeshire), William Stevenson (Tyne & Wear), winner of the South Tyneside Premier League, Paul Wright (Essex) a winner of the 1977/78 Dagenham & Rainham League Singles, Raymond Venn (Berkshire), an LLKA Triples Champion, and, of note, was Robert Tinkler (Wiltshire) who 'achieved the magic 180' in one of his games earlier in the Climax tournament.



The format for *Climax 78* was best of three legs, 501 up, straight start, finish on a double. The length of the oche was not shown in the programme and, given that this event was not reported in *Darts World*, one has to assume it was 7feet 9inches. (The photograph above shows the tournament under way.)

Unfortunately, one of the 48 finalists was unable to take part. The North Yorkshire finalist Geoffrey Schofield, was incredibly unlucky when the coach he and his supporters were travelling in broke down, so he failed to make the event on time. Thus, his planned opponent, Vincent Barden (Bedford), was awarded a bye to the next round.

The tournament was witnessed by 700 spectators and supporters. The standard of play was high with maximums being hit no less than nine times during the afternoon. The eventually winner was Bob Tilbury, the Middlesex County finalist, pictured (right) celebrating here with David Fenner,



Managing Director of Climax International Sales. Notes from the programme informed us that Bob was 29 years old, married, lived in Hayes and that he had recently changed his job and was then working for Ripolin, a paint factory, in Southall.

The runner-up was Bill Stevenson (Tyne & Wear), previously mentioned above. Third place went to Roger Derham from Taunton, Somerset. Ray Venn (Berkshire), who had played consistently throughout the afternoon and had hit two 180s, came fourth.

There had been nine maximums during the tournament, two to Venn (as mentioned) and one by Bill Stevenson (the runner-up), one by Derham (the third placed player) and one each by John Tolhurst (Sussex), Tony Dillane (London), Philip Cookson (South Lancashire) and Alfred Macklin (Humberside). Each of these players won the aforementioned ‘special prize’; an engraved tankard. Macklin also achieved the best outshot of the day with a 13-dart finish.



Having won the Climax trophy, Bob Tilbury had one more challenge. His win had earned him a friendly match against the current WINMAU World Master champion, Newcastle-upon-Tyne's Ronnie Davis who had recently beaten England's Tony Brown at the Royal Horticultural Hall, London. In this photograph (left) the new World Master looks on as a finger-biting Bob Tilbury is interviewed by the ATV sports presenter, Gary Newbon, who was the M.C. for the afternoon.

The Climax 78 champion rounded off his day by beating Ronnie four legs to three in a seven-leg match. The Climax reporter wrote “Our thanks to Ronnie Davis for such a sporting gesture.”

Gary Newbon declared

“I am staggered at the standard of play; it wouldn't disgrace television. I didn't think fork truck drivers were as accurate with their darts as with their trucks but I have been proved wrong!”

Interviewed after his tournament win, Bob Tilbury said

“Fantastic – nothing else to say – a great climax! I try to finish on a bull as often as possible and spend a lot of time practising at home as I think it's important – it's the difference between winning and losing.”

Caller/referee Tony Green (pictured here calling Ronnie Davis' win in the 1978 WINMAU World Masters) enthused



“Fantastic darts – I was not expecting the quality we have seen here today. The sportsmanship in this tournament has been great – this is what the sport is all about.”

Both the organisers and the Climax company were pleased with the way the tournament had gone.

Olly Croft, the Honorary General Secretary of the BDO

"I wish more companies would offer sponsorships such as Coventry Climax Ltd has done. On behalf of the B.D.O. may I say how pleased we were to be appointed to run the competition for Climax."

Ken Osborne, the BDO Vice-Chairman for Lancashire, commented

"One of the best competitions for the amateurs who normally wouldn't enter a competition where the big names were involved."

David Fenner, Managing Director of Climax International Sales said

"I was delighted to see so many people at the tournament – I hope we have converted all fork lift truck drivers to Climax!"

Shropshire Branch Darts Secretary, Roy Evans, enjoyed the day so much that he adjudged it 'the best event ever for the working man to participate in' (I am sure fans of the *News of the World* championship might well disagree with him.) and hoped to see it as an annual event.

Despite the fact that Climax 78 was a success, and Roy Evans hoping for it to become an annual tournament, I cannot find any record of this particular tournament being held again. (Please let me know if I am mistaken.)

(Special thanks to *DDN* subscriber Cyril Evans for providing me with a copy of 'A Climax News Special Report' which enabled me to compile this article.)

THE ALEXANDER CLUB, ROME – LEAVE CLUB

As many of you know, I collect *anything* to do with darts but in recent years have focussed on ephemera, items such as advertising, newspaper cuttings and postcards.



It was earlier this year (during a gap in the series of 'lockdowns') I ventured out to an antique centre and purchased, amongst other items, the postcard featured here. It is titled 'Games Floor – N.A.A.F.I./E.F.I. Alexander Club, Rome'. (The abbreviations stand for Navy, Army and Air Force Institutes and the Expeditionary Forces Institute, both relating to the UK Forces.)

As you can see, the photograph (above) shows British and allied servicemen (and probably servicewomen although they are not in view) playing darts. Three dartboards can be seen; all in use. Note the piece of matting placed strategically on the floor beneath each dartboard. (A billiard table can also be seen in the distance as, on the left, is (I think) a table-tennis table and a strange game involving cut-out jockeys and horses.)

The oche (or ‘hockey’ as it was back then) looks very much like a nine-feet throw. The serviceman throwing at the first board is very clearly ‘getting his feet wet’: an old darting expression used to indicate that the player’s foot was over the toe-line and thus the throw would not count. But that doesn’t seem to mean much to either of the players as the Alexander Club is a ‘leave club’ where servicemen and women relax before being either on leave, sent home or on to their next posting.

In the 4th March 1945 issue of the *Sunday Post* a letter was published from a Lance-Bombardier on leave in Rome. He described the six storeys of the building, that stood in the Via Venti Settembre, and wrote

When in Rome – The Alexander Club in Rome must be the most palatial leave club on any front. It is a former department store...You could spend an entire leave in this club.

Playing darts, I guess.

KYLE ANDERSON

Earlier this year, Australian darts star, Kyle ‘The Original’ Anderson, having not returned to the PDC Pro Tour following the lockdown, released this statement:

“I have had a great seven years in the PDC but I have a new child on the way next month, so it’s only fair that I give my Tour Card up so that another rising star can try to achieve their dream.”

The 33-year-old, who turned professional in 2014, won his first ranking title, a Players’ Championship, in August 2017 and won the Auckland Darts Masters shortly afterwards. Kyle reached the last 32 at the world championships at Alexandra Palace on four occasions and was one of only eight players, thus far, to ever hit a nine-dart finish to the PDC World Championships.



Kyle Anderson died in August aged only 33.

PDC president, Barry Hearn, said:

“We send our condolences and best wishes to Kyle’s family and friends at this terribly sad time, particularly his wife and children. He was a popular player on the tour and his talent and dedication made him an inspiration to other players around the world.”

Fellow Australian darts player, Simon Whitlock, tweeted:

“Totally gutted to wake to the terrible news about Kyle. Not only a brilliant player but a very nice man. Many times I played against him and loved playing with him. You will be missed Kyle but never forgotten – tragic.”

Dave Allen, Head of Media at the Professional Darts Corporation told me

Kyle was a wonderful person, always smiling and making people laugh and it was a privilege to work with him from first meeting him in 2012.

Multi-world champion, Michael Van Gerwen tweeted



“A lovely man and always fun to be with. Very sorry to hear about Kyle. We had many great games and a fantastic player. A credit to Australian and world darts. RIP mate.”

Former BDO world champion, Stephen Bunting, tweeted

“Absolutely gutted hearing the news this morning. RIP Kyle Anderson. The darts world hasn’t been the same with you not around brother. You always made me laugh every time we met. Never a dull moment with you around. We are all gonna miss you mate.”

Referee Russ Bray tweeted

“I am absolutely devastated to hear Kyle Anderson has passed away. A nicer person you could not wish to meet. A lovely man and good friend. My thoughts are with his young family...RIP bud....so, so sad.”

It is always sad to record the passing of anyone who has made their name in our game and earned the respect of fans and fellow darts people alike. To lose a player, like Kyle, at only 33 years old is totally wrong. RIP Kyle.

(My thanks to Lawrence Lustig and the PDC for providing these photos of Kyle at the Grand Prix and the Grand Slam. © Used with permission.)

GUINNESS GOLDEN DARTS

I mentioned the Guinness Golden Darts Tournament in the tribute to Terry O’Dea in #136 and, as a result, I received the following email from Martin Hopkins (and Maria):

Hello Patrick. I very much enjoyed your last newsletter, though sad that we are losing so many of the darting greats.

Attached is a photo of a set of Guinness Golden Darts which I recently acquired. Had to purchase them as I did actually win a set during the Guinness promotion but long lost!

I believe the promotion ran in the late 70s...From what I can remember, if you bought Guinness in a promo pub, then you were allowed a single throw of three darts - the highest score that week won the Guinness Golden Darts. The promotion ran for three weeks.

As I hated Guinness, my friend Tony did the drinking and I did the throwing. Rather embarrassingly I won the first week with an awful throw but great score, trebles in 12, 20 and 18...

Tony, who wasn't a dart thrower, [but] actually won a set for himself on the final week with a score in the seventies. Tony died several years ago, a huge loss to a lot of people, but these darts do help to keep him with us.



I hope you are keeping well and healing.

Do any other readers remember winning a set? (I bought a set, years ago, at a boot fair, so no skill involved there!)

Checking my archive, I discovered that the Guinness Golden Darts event was held over Tuesday 21st and Wednesday 22nd March 1978 at the Surrey Tavern, Kennington Oval, London, an international tournament featuring the top players from America, Australia, Canada, England, Ireland, Scotland, Sweden and Wales run in conjunction with the British Darts Organisation (BDO). It was covered by Thames Television.

BOB CROSLAND – DOUBLE YORKSHIRE NEWS OF THE WORLD CHAMPION

I learned recently that double *News of the World* grand finalist passed away earlier this year.

Bob, a miner, had made three appearances at the Yorkshire divisional finals before winning the title and going through to the Grand Finals of the most famous darts tournament at the time. Bob said

“It was my lucky night and made up for the two years when I felt I was unlucky to lose the Divisional Final.”

On his way to the Yorkshire title in 1977 he had been pitted against the very best of the best, even defeating Alan Glazier in the semi-finals. The photo (below, left) shows Bob (on the right) receiving his trophy from Dave Campbell, the Sports Editor at Radio Leeds. (Photo © *News of the World*. Used with permission.)

In 1977 the *News of the World* Grand Finals featured **twelve** darts champions: the eight original Divisional Champions (Eastern Counties, Lancashire & Cheshire, London & Home Counties, Midland Counties, North of England, Wales, Western Counties and Yorkshire), plus the Australia, Eire, U.S.A. and Scotland champions. This meant that *four* of the champions were awarded a 'bye' from the first round, straight to the quarterfinals.



Bob Crosland was one of the 'byes' and met the Wales champion Mick McDermott (another 'bye') in the quarterfinal who Bob beat 2-0. In the semi-final Bob took on Jack Jones, the North of England champion, another 'bye' who had beaten another 'bye', Eddie Bush, the Eastern Counties champion, in their quarterfinal 2-1. Bob beat Jack 2-1 so moved into the final where he lost 2-0 to the London & Home Counties champion, Mick Norris, 2-0.

Not deterred, Bob eventually reached the Grand Finals once again in 1981 (but this time held at the Wembley Arena). Bob, a

43-year-old grandfather with five children, told the *News of the World* that, although he worked down the Prince of Wales colliery in Pontefract, a win (the first prize of £5,000) would help him and his wife, Elsie, with the café business they planned to open.

The *News of the World* Grand Finals programme noted that, coincidentally, the man who beat Bob in the final in 1977, Mick Norris, there again representing the London & Home Counties, a situation Bob 'would like to see reversed on this occasion.' (This 'special' photo shows Mick Norris, the 1977 *NoW* winner, sitting on the Alexandra Palace with his prize, a Skoda! © DW/PC Archive.)



What chance was there that Bob and Mick would meet in the actual final for a second time? Well, that was never going to happen as the first-round matches were announced. How coincidentally would it be if the 1977 finalists (Crosland v Norris) were drawn against each other in the very first match of the 1981 event?

Well. They were...

Mick Norris beat Bob Crosland 2-0, so for another year, Bob's dream was ended. Some solace for Bob might have been that although Mick Norris fought his way to the final again, this time he lost 2-0 to the Midland Counties champion; John Lowe.

It is, again, probably, coincidental that of the four 'byes' drawn for the first round that year, three went to the most well-known, and professional, darts players in the tournament, namely John Lowe, Rab Smith and Stefan Lord.

SOMETHING FOR YOU HOBBYIST OUT THERE

I found the following article in the 28th October 1942 issue of *Hobbies Weekly* and hope it is of interest. I know that there are several *DDN* readers who like a challenge. I remember them building a 'darts cricket' board some time ago, so why not try this?

Everyone plays darts, so everyone needs A DARTS SCORE-BOARD

NOT having such a good memory as Datas, there is often a lot of doubt and friction when players try to keep remembering their scoring whilst playing the game of darts. It is hard to concentrate on accurate throwing and do this at the same time.

For accurate totals and good play, the scores should always be written down on paper or on a score board like the one illustrated at Fig. 1. This is made from a solid piece of wood, then specially lined and coloured black for marking down the scores with chalk.

If one has an old, scrap piece of cheap plywood about $\frac{1}{4}$ in. or $\frac{1}{2}$ in. thick of suitable size, a back stiffening frame could be made for it and attached with glue and nails. Two pieces of box wood 20ins. by 6ins. could be fixed to such a frame, incidentally.

A Solid Board

A solid board is the best, for both sides can be lined off and blackened. To make such a board, you could join

Having cleaned both side surfaces smooth and level with a smoothing plane, the top is shaped as shown with a key-hole saw or bow-saw, then spokeshaved and glasspapered. A $\frac{1}{4}$ in. hole is drilled in the top for hanging purposes.

A Frame Board

To make the board as a frame, covered with thin wood on one side, the frame is built up as shown at Fig. 2, using $\frac{1}{4}$ in. thick wood. The top cross piece is shaped first, then the corner ends of the laths half-lapped as at C. The central lath is affixed first to the top and bottom laths, either by tongue and mortise (A) or by dowelling (B), Fig. 3.

Having attached the facing of wood and shaped it at the top, level off the ends and sides, then glasspaper smooth. To prepare a suitable surface for the chalk, you need some special Blackboard Black, this being obtainable from Hobbes Ltd.

Prior to applying the black, rule the face of the board into sections as shown. With a veining tool, cut along the lines to make a "V" groove, or alternatively, deep lines could be made with a small tenon saw.

Apply the blackening fluid to the board, using a flat paint brush. Do the edges of the board as well as the face side. When dry, rub down with

fine glasspaper and apply a second coat. Be sure to remove all glasspaper dust from the board before applying the second coat.

When dry, rub white chalk into the grooved lines or, if you wish, apply white paint to the lines with a small pencil brush. The top sections are worded "1st. Side" and "2nd. Side" as shown, in white paint. You could do this neatly in chalk, if desired.

Chalk and Rubber

Now, at this stage, screw two hook-eyes into the sides of the board. To one attach a length of chalk, a piece of old sponge being fixed to the other to serve as a rubber. Be sure the string for each is long enough to enable easy use at any part of the board.

A double-sided score board is not absolutely essential, by the way. When scores become too long in length, the lefthand section can be rubbed off and a fresh beginning made. If necessary, the second section can be cleaned so the score total may continue until the game is won.

Fig. 1—Showing the completed board, with chalk and sponge

Fig. 2—The framework

Fig. 3—Joints to use

up two pieces of $\frac{1}{4}$ in. or $\frac{1}{2}$ in. wood 17ins. long by 6ins. wide. To the top end a 12in. long by 3in. wide batten piece is attached by dowelling, the same thing applying to the lower batten, this being 1 $\frac{1}{2}$ ins. wide.

Also, perhaps, it's something for you all to do in the next lock-down!

TERRY O'DEA – MORE FEEDBACK

Arthur Hook, an original *DDN* subscriber from the first issue, has sent me this ticket to a Terry O'Dea Darts Challenge. Arthur organised the event when he was a bartender at Dublin Airport. It was staged in the Arrivals Bar on Saturday 26th November 1983.

Arthur told me



“What a gent Terry was. I think he was a hotel manager in Melbourne but a great buddy of Russell Stewart. Terry moved to London, met ‘Big Cliff’ Lazarenko and the rest is history.”

PARALYMPICS – ROME – 1960



Another contribution to my archive by Arthur Hook is this photograph of Ireland's first Paralympic team about to board the plane to Rome in 1960 to participate.

Team member Jack Kerrigan, paralysed in a diving accident at the age of 21 a decade earlier, represented Ireland in ‘dartchery’ (similar to darts but played with a bow and arrow); arrows shot at a large dart-style target.

Apparently, Jack enjoyed the ‘vino’ over there. His colleague Oliver Murphy (now 86 years old and the only surviving member of the team) remembers Jack insisting that the wine was “only harmless stuff” and him drinking it before each match. Those were the days!

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