

DR. DARTS' NEWSLETTER

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DAVID PORTER, CLIMAX 78 AND 'THE WELSH UNICORN'

After I had researched my article about the Climax 78, Fork Truck Drivers' Darts Tournament, held in London in December 1978 (for details see #138) I recently returned to look in more detail at one of the entrants, David Porter of Glamorgan, who had been described as 'a winner of the Welsh Unicorn'. That intrigued me.

Re-examining the Climax 78 programme, I read the short biography provided for each finalist in the eight groups and found that David was included in Group Five.

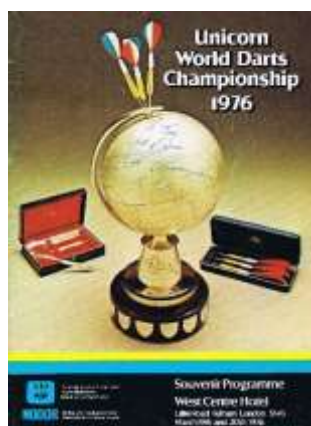
The image (right) shows that group with (left to right) Robert Rumney (Durham), William Amos (Staffordshire), Paul Wright (Essex), Roger Derham (Somerset), David Porter (Glamorgan/Powys) and Robert Webb (Shropshire).



Of David, the programme told us

David Porter (Glamorgan) from Treforest is 32, married and a winner of the Welsh Unicorn. He works for Wella in Pontyclun as a storeman and drives a variety of fork trucks.

Thanks to *DDN* subscriber, Cyril Evans, who provided me with a copy of 'A Climax News Special Report' which detailed the results of each Group and was published after the event, I discovered that David beat Shropshire's Robert Webb in the Group Five semi-finals after which he faced Roger Derham (Somerset) in the Group Five final in which the latter was victorious. (Derham eventually came third in the tournament overall.)



But what was 'the Welsh Unicorn'?

It did not take me too long to discover that this referred to early rounds that culminated with area representatives attending the Unicorn World Darts Championship 1976 which was held at the West Centre Hotel, Lillie Road, Fulham, London SW6 over 19th March and 20th that year.

To secure their place at the Championship, David and his darts partner Bob Williams won the Mid-Wales title. David's brother Ralph was also in the mix as an undated newspaper cutting revealed:

Two South Wales brothers have reached the final of the Unicorn World pairs championship. David Porter (Pontypridd) joined his brother, Ralph, in the final when, playing with Bob Williams (Abercynon) he won the Mid Glamorgan regional final at the Regent Ballroom, Pontypridd.

Ralph Porter and his partner, Alf Jefferies (Pontypool) earlier won the South Glamorgan final at Llanwit Fardre.

The world pairs programme provided a little more information about both brothers and their partners:

MID WALES

David Porter is a Welsh international and a familiar figure in Welsh darts circles. Gained much experience and enthusiasm for the game from his older brother. Has played for about ten years. A former Welsh NDA champion.

Bob Williams is the other half of this successful partnership which has collected a strong of local titles. He is a car salesman and has been playing for eight years.



SOUTH WALES

Alfred Jefferies has claimed the 1975 Denmark Open and the Welsh News of the World (1968-9) titles in his 30 years in the game. Many other local titles have come his way and he represented Wales in 1973-74.

Ralph Porter is one of the best-known darts personalities in Wales, and has been on a representative tour with the Welsh Darts Organisation. He is a painter and decorator by trade and plays regularly for the West of England.

In the Wales semi-final of the World Pairs David Porter and Bob Williams defeated the West Wales team of Phillip Davies and John Davies, and then in the Wales final David and Bob beat North Wales team of Chris Jones and Anthony Andrew (who had beaten David's brother Ralph and his partner Alf Jeffries in the semi).



This win then led David and Bob to the finals proper where in the preliminary round they were to meet the pair from Denmark, Ole Axholt (on left of photo) and left-handed Palle Rasmussen. Another undated (but clearly 20th March) or credited newspaper cutting (but, from the tone, a Welsh periodical) titled 'Great world bid by Porter, Williams' read

GLAMORGAN'S DAVID PORTER and Bob Williams took a big step towards winning the Unicorn world darts championship when they beat the Danish pair in three straight legs in London today.

And of the pair's Welsh group final earlier the newspaper wrote

They staged a magnificent fight-back last night to snatch the Welsh title and a place in today's finals against North Walsians Chris Jones and Anthony Andrews. They were trailing by two games when in the words of car salesman Bob Williams; "We started putting it right."

They climbed back to 2-1 after taking the doubles in the five-game match, in which the North Wales took the first two games with a confident display of controlled throwing. Porter struck to level the scores, leaving Williams to play the decisive match. After conquering their nerves, both players settled and were neck and neck before Williams went out on double 16.

The pair now carry the Welsh banner in the bid to retain the world title won last year for Wales by Rocky Jones and Ray Phillips.

Having dispatched the Danish invasion David and Bob met the American pairing of Californians, Russ Zanardi (left and the left) and Jack Curry who they beat 3-1, then moving to the semi-final.



There they met the Australian representatives, Kevin White and George Foster. *Darts World* reported

The Australians reached the semi-final by "whitewashing" the much-fancied Welsh pair of Dave Porter and Bob Williams, in an unhurried exhibition of steady scoring and no-hesitation doubles.

A rare reporting error there by *Darts World*. The Australians actually beat David and Bob in the semi-final (not to reach the semis) but the score was clear. David and Bob's journey had come to an end 3-0. From there the Aussies reached the final where they then 'whitewashed' the Belgium team of Willy Delafre and Omer Bauwens 3-0 to lift the title.

When this event was mentioned recently in the Darts from the Past Facebook group, David commented

"Love this. Remember it well. Got to the semi-finals. Great achievement."

Indeed. And there must be more to know about this Welsh darts ace. So, my research continues.

(With thanks to Billy O'Brien and Cyril Evans.)

DORWIN DARTS

I have often been asked about DORWIN darts but, looking back on issues of *DDN*, I have never produced an article about the company. Indeed Brian H. wrote recently

[A]fter your interesting article about Bernard Young & Deebee Darts, I hope you don't mind me reminding you about the Dorwin Pencil Co. A while ago you said you had an article from your Web pages about this dart manufacturer & promised to revisit it for DDN.

So, here it is...

The Dorwin Pencil Co was established in the late 1930s in Colnbrook, Buckinghamshire and went into actual dart production during the Second World War. The name is a contraction of DORothy WINifred after the wife of the owner of the company.

Initially they manufactured darts which comprised of a metal barrel with a rubber grip and a complex construction for the stem and flight holder which some have described as 'hair grips.' They do in fact work on a similar principle.



The flights are vulcanised card which was much stronger than ordinary cardboard and this additional strength meant that incoming darts could be deflected into the board rather than piercing (and probably ruining) the flight.

In the early 1960s the company began to manufacture brass darts which a transparent push-on barrel, into which was often inserted advertising material, and a push-on plastic flight. These DORWIN darts were popular in pubs where the 'advertising darts' were used as house darts with the name of a charity inside the clear part of the barrel and players made a donation in the charity box to use the darts.

Some early examples of DORWIN Darts featured a paper insert with information about a darts champion named George Caley who was sponsored by DORWIN during the late 1940s/early 1950s. The advertisement shown here appears on the back of George's book 'How to Improve Your Darts'

which was published in 1950 and shows the type of darts the company were producing at that time. The very early sets did not have the rubber grip.

The company manufactured darts throughout the 1940s, 50s, 60s and 70s and into the 1980s at which point the company failed.

GREETINGS FROM TRINIDAD

While I'm sitting here in the UK looking out at a cool, damp, grey and gloomy day, the following email cheers me up.

Hello Patrick and Greetings from Trinidad on a very hot and sunny day. Just to say thank you very much for Dr Darts News which we enjoy very much over here. So kind of you to send the mag, a great read. Kindest Regards, Stephen Goddard.



M.Y. DARTS MIND JOGGER

Frank Saunders, from Ontario, Canada writes:

“Just read your Nov Newsletter and it jogged my mind about my darts.

These were given to me by one of the older machinists when I started my apprenticeship in 1955. I don't know how old they were when he gave them to me, but I have had them for over 67 years.

I used these darts to play Joe Hitchcock when he visited the local "Working Men's Club", the "Westerhope Excelsior Social Club", which was a mining village about 4 miles West of Newcastle upon Tyne. He was travelling for Watney's Brewery in the late 50s.



I haven't played much darts in the last few years so the old feather flights look a bit the worse for wear 🤔. Just thought I'd take a picture and send it to you. Always enjoy reading your Newsletter every month!

OLD STONEFACE PUBLISHES HIS SEVENTH BOOK

Having been the first darts player to win the World Championship in three different decades, it may surprise some readers that John was, and remains, the first darts player to publish three darts books in the same decade, two in the same year: *The Lowe Profile* early 1980 (with a Foreword by Sid Waddell) and *John Lowe on Darts*, published less than twelve months later.



His third book *The John Lowe Story – Inside Pro Darts with the World Champion* appeared in 1987. *The John Lowe Story* had the original title of *Chairman of the Board*. (See cover of the uncorrected proof copy, left.)

Then there was a break of nearly two decades before John's fourth book was published (the first in hardback) in 2005; *Old Stoneface: The Autobiography of Britain's Greatest Darts Player*. I was privileged to have been associated with this publication and with the updated and expanded version published in paperback in 2009, then retitled *Old Stoneface – My Autobiography*. At the same time as *Old Stoneface* was being published in paperback, John's then latest book venture *The Art of Darts – A Masterclass with 3-time World Champion* hit the bookshelves.

One might have thought that after writing six darts books (counting the updated *Old Stoneface* as one) John might have put his ballpoint pen and writing paper away in a desk and said "That's enough." But no.

When *The Lowe Profile* was published in 1980, John was approaching his 35th birthday. Now this year, at the age of 76, John presents for us, *John Lowe MBE – “The Nine Dart Legend”*, in which he takes an opportunity to look back at his life in darts and reflect on his selected ‘best memories’. These, of course, include the ‘nine-darter’, meeting his idol, Muhammed Ali, and bumping into David Bowie and Eric Clapton at Gary Numan’s studio while recording his first darts video, his love of golf and his thanks to his key sponsors and his award of an MBE and, of course, his love of family and loyal, long-time friends.

But, reflecting on the times we all now live in, John takes a serious look at his and our world over the past two years where life changed for everyone with the arrival of Covid-19. (John spends over fifty pages reminding us what we have all been through and, of course, it’s not over yet.) John’s reflections on Covid are poignant and reflect how everyone, but especially us older folk, feel and continue to feel about the situation, still with us.



I found this to be the most personal of John’s books. He says it is “looking back and going forward” as he writes that his story “comes to an end.” But, as far as I can see, John’s story isn’t finished just yet. In fact, on the final page of *The Nine Dart Legend*, ‘Old Stoneface’ himself tells us that his story is ‘far from an end,’ as he looks forward to February 2022 when he, at the age of 76, will toe the oche at the Circus Tavern, Purfleet competing in the first Seniors World Championship.

John Lowe MBE – “The Nine Dart Legend” is publishing by Chipmunkapublishing. Signed copies and details of the inclusive cost can be purchased direct from John at jloweprodart@aol.com.

NARROWEST THROW EVER SEEN?



DDN subscriber Roger Nickson has seen many thousands of darts throws, both in the UK and well beyond, but in early October this year he posted this photograph of what he described as “*the narrowest throw I have ever seen. No more than three feet across*” which he discovered at the *Stand Up Inn*, Lindfield, West Sussex.

Numerous Darts from the Past Facebook group members pitched in with their comments including ex-England player Doug McCarthy who wrote: “*Be no good for the likes of Steve Bunting or Ted Hankey then Lol!*” Whilst Member A.W. commented

The Old School House in Ockley, also in West Sussex, was like that. They had a window on the right-hand side so people could see something of the action. The scorer was behind you on a pillar.

E.F. asked

Did you ever play darts at the Junction Pub on Queens Road [London]? That was a bad place to play, started about 6' at the throwing end going down to about 3' at the board. It was like throwing down a tunnel.

The photo reminded M.R. of old country pubs that had low ceilings and aluminium plates screwed to the ceiling and if you needed 'tops' you had to bounce in off the plate!

W.F. stated

My first team I played for Noah's Ark in Tipton had a board that was just like this (maybe narrower) the opposing team hated it and it was a real advantage when you got used to it.

Roger Nickson then replied to those contributors that

"Seems this throw is not as unusual as I thought. Thanks everyone for their input on this subject. I will add that at least this pub had a board with the lights on and chalk and a cloth, so darts is still being played there."

So, what about *DDN* readers? What strange and/or unusual oches have you played on? Let me know at patrick.chaplin@btinternet.com.

By the way, the item on the floor in the photo on the previous page (and opposite), below the dartboard, is not a toilet but the pub game called 'Pitch Penny' or 'Toad in the Hole'. It is still played in a number of pubs in the south of England. The example shown here, right, can still be seen and played on in the *Lewes Arms*, Lewes, Sussex. (Photo © English Heritage. Used with permission.)



FEEDBACK FROM MICK

Mick Simpson often provides feedback to *DDN* and #139 was no different. Here Mick comments about the 'Phantom' and 'darts and maths'. He writes

Hi Patrick. Once again you have amazed me with your vast knowledge of Darts.

Such a great variety of articles about our great game and its players. The Phantom story is great. Wouldn't it be great to see Phil Taylor dress up like that and take on allcomers? Think if you don't know who you're playing you may have a better chance.

The article about darts and maths is absolutely true. I was useless at maths at school but when I started work and played a lot more darts, the lady who helped me play darts insisted on me taking chalks. It improved my game counting massively. Even now all these years later I am still very quick at counting. Thanks again Patrick.

Thanks Mick. I'm sure there must of thousands of darts players who improved their maths and their game by 'taking the chalks'.

I first 'took the chalks' in the late 1960s, in the public bar at the *Sportsmans Arms* in Nounsley, a small Essex pub two or three miles from where I lived. Great days!

HELP PLEASE – ACCUDART ‘PROLINE’ SERIES

I have received the following enquiry via my website.

Hello my name is Scott. I was hoping you could help me. I’m collecting Accudart Proline Masters Series from the 1980s. My question is “Where could I find out how many different types of darts were in the series and where I could find a catalog or photos of said darts. I’ve tried Google images, pinterest, tumblr. Any help you could provide would be greatly appreciated. Thanks.

I have very little information (in fact next to nothing) about Accudart so I’m hoping that DDN readers (especially in the USA) can help. My mailing is patrick.chaplin@btinternet.com and I’ll pass any information on to Scott. Thanks.

FESTIVE GREETINGS



Every year, at this time, I wish you all a very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year, even though I appreciate that not everyone celebrates the festive season in the same way or indeed as I do or even at all.

However, the December issue of DDN does give me the opportunity to send my best wishes to *everyone*; to all subscribers and to their families and friends.

I hope the cartoon (left), by Griff, which was featured in *Darts World* magazine in its December 1981 issue, will bring a smile to your faces during these continuing, troubled times.

The past couple of years have been poor for all of us so I am hoping that things will improve in the months to come.

Fingers crossed. All the best to you all for 2022.

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