

DR. DARTS' NEWSLETTER

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RECORD DEAL ANNOUNCED AS THE PROFESSIONAL DARTS CORPORATION AND WINMAU TEAM UP WITH OFFICIAL PARTNERSHIP

An exciting new era for the Professional Darts Corporation (PDC) has begun following the announcement that PDC events will be played exclusively using WINMAU dartboards in a record five-year partnership.



In the biggest deal of its kind in the sport's history, the revolutionary WINMAU BLADE 6 Triple Core dartboard will be used in all PDC events through to 2027.

In addition to the deal as official equipment provider to the PDC, WINMAU will be supporting the stars of the future through title sponsorship of the Challenge Tour, Development Tour and World Youth Championship.

WINMAU are already a partner of the PDC-affiliated Junior Darts Corporation and also sponsor many top professional stars - including Michael van

Gerwen, Joe Cullen, Daryl Gurney, Simon Whitlock and Steve Beaton - as well as emerging talents from around the world.

"This record-breaking deal is a massive moment for the PDC, WINMAU and the sport of darts," said PDC Chairman Eddie Hearn.

"WINMAU is a brand known across the world and it's exciting that their products, led by the BLADE 6 Triple Core dartboard, will be used by the PDC in the coming years and showcased globally in our biggest events.

"Their support will also extend to backing our developmental tours in addition to their existing partnership with the JDC, matching our ambition to produce future generations of stars to take this sport forwards. We're delighted to be working alongside WINMAU."

The new partnership will see WINMAU dartboards used across televised events, the European Tour, Players Championships, Challenge Tour, Development Tour and Women's Series for the next five years.

The company's BLADE 6 Triple Core dartboard was launched in 2021, featuring a three-part sisal base and sixth-generation Blade technology to provide the ultimate playing experience.

The BLADE 6 Triple Core's anti-glare number ring and new graphics will now be accompanied by the PDC logo on the surface of the dartboard, which is fitted with the easy-to-adjust Rota-Lock mounting system that allows the board to be hung on any wall within minutes by players worldwide.

WINMAU Managing Director, Vincent Bluck, said: *"The Professional Darts Corporation are the undisputed leaders in the global distribution of world-class darts, by delivering performances and moments not thought possible even a decade ago.*

"They have captured millions of new fans and players for the game that we all love and we're absolutely delighted to be embarking on this new partnership with the superb team at the PDC.

"WINMAU's passion for grassroots and top televised darts stretches back over 70 years and we look forward to joining forces with the PDC and their global platform in helping continue darts' growth as one of the most vibrant and dynamic sports on the planet.

"Broadcasting to countless millions worldwide and driving engagement like we've never seen before, the PDC's televised majors have created top stars such as the latest World Champion Peter Wright.

"So to supply the official dartboards for the PDC is an absolute honour and privilege and testament to the passion that our engineers, designers and production staff all have for darts, working tirelessly to ensure Blade dartboards exceed the exacting requirements demanded by the world's top professionals and every player alike.



"Darts is one of those unique sports with no barriers to playing the game. Irrespective of age, race, gender, fitness or budget, anyone can have a go and the PDC now have a pathway for players to progress to the very top if they have the ability.

"With the PDC's prize fund of £15 million in 2022, there has never been a more exciting time in the history of the entire sport to be involved in darts as we embark on this exciting new partnership."

H. A. Kick & Sons was founded in 1946 by ex-Sergeant Major Harry Kicks, who, in 1976 renamed the company WINMAU after his wife **Winifred Maud** - with the name pronounced as "win-more". (See company advertisement (above) from *Darts World*, April 1976, that indicates the name change.)

WINMAU first launched the original Blade Dartboard in 1997. The advertisement (on the next page) shows one of the first advertisements for the original BLADE which also indicates that Accudart were exclusive distributors of the BLADE at that time in the USA. The four key promotional points for the BLADE were that it was 'The Ultimate No-Bounce

Dartboard' featuring 'Unique, totally staple-free blade technology', 'Angled doubles and trebles' and 'Smooth, angled blade dividers'

In the very beginning with the BLADE, WINMAU emphasised 'Sporting Excellence Through Innovation' and now, over the past 25 years, the BLADE has been continuously developed to incorporate the very latest technical and innovative features, resulting in the phenomenal BLADE 6 Triple Core Carbon.

I wish WINMAU continuing success with everything they do.

For further details about WINMAU and to see their range of products, please visit winmau.com or follow [@Winmau](https://twitter.com/Winmau) on Twitter.



SID DOWSON – THE COMPERE WHO OWED SO MUCH TO DARTS

Over the past few months I have occasionally delved into the work and lives of the unsung heroes in our sport: the referees and Masters of Ceremonies. In this month I pay tribute to **Sid Dowson**.

Darts World ran a series of articles titled 'Ladies and Gentlemen...' during the late 1970s turning the tables on the 'men behind the mike.' The February 1978 issue featured Sid who was



The compere who owes so much to darts

[British Darts Organisation] B.D.O. director and Durham M.C., Sid Dowson says he's normally a very shy person. A surprising claim for a man behind the mike to make, you might think, but nevertheless it's true, at least according to Sid himself.

"My wife is constantly amazed that I get up there and shout out the odds," he says. He runs the King's Head pub in Stanley, Durham, and got into 'miking' about five years ago, through the B.D.O. at their Unicorn Championships, where he was an official marking the board.

[Researching the Unicorn Championships programmes for 1975 and 1976 shows that Sid was listed as one of the two 'Practice Board Players Area Stewards' (with Ken Glidle) in the former and one of the ten named 'Stage Scorers' the following year and was shown to be the referee for the first match in the initial

Friday afternoon sessions and, with Ken, a stage scorer in the evening in the International Invitation Final.]

Since then, he's come on strong and for the last three years has appeared on Tyne Tees television as the regular compere in their 15-week Double Top competition. In fact, he was so

good at the international match between England and Scotland at Newcastle's City Hall last February that B.D.O. general secretary Olly Croft told him: "You were fantastic, I didn't realise how good you were."

High praise indeed as Olly won't tolerate unprofessionalism in any department.

Rivalry

Last October [1977] Sid took over during the Home International series when compere Jack Price wanted a break. "Of all the comperes, I have tried to model myself on Jack. He's word perfect and I try to do what he does. His style has really lifted the game, I think."

[DDN celebrated the life of Jack Price in issue #135, June 2021.]

Sid knows all the other top comperes. Tony Green, Fred Castle, Mike Palmer and the like. He rates Price the tops but stresses:

"I don't think there's any rivalry between us. We're not trying to outdo each other. I just try to make sure the scores are called out correctly so that if part of the crowd can't see the board, they'll know what the situation is."

He has no particular ambitions as a compere. "I did the World Masters Pairs last time and you can't get a bigger event than that."

Now 54, Sid has not played darts himself for 30 years after badly damaging his throwing arm in a car smash just after the last war.

"When I was playing there was no such thing as County matches or Super Leagues, and we threw off an eight or nine feet throw. It surprises me when I see players, good players, talking in my pub, about challenging other players for a few pounds. I played for £100, 35 years ago, and that was a small fortune in those days... Mind you, it was not my money. I had a backer and I imagine the money came in one or two pounds from people who had enough confidence in me to bet.

"It was largely a game of bluff. Sometimes my backer would say to me, 'You don't have to try tonight'. On other occasions it would be 'You must win this one.' If I lost, I didn't get paid.

"You were a good player in those days if you could hit 180. And up until about five years ago any player who got a 180 in my pub, got a brandy off the landlord.

Admirer

"Now they have shortened the throw, players buy me one when they score one. One night we had seven and I didn't half have a headache when I woke up next morning," he said. But Sid is also a self-confessed admirer of the high-speed, spectacular action is today's game.

"It's nice to sit and watch players coming down fast and finishing quickly. Take the last Masters when Bristow hit 180 and then got out on 153. That's fantastic shooting in six darts. I watched it again on television in my pub and the regulars wanted an action replay."

Sid's wife and three daughters don't share his interest in darts, although one of the girls has a good throwing action, he says. But he freely admits,

"Darts has built my business up. It was very quiet in my area when I took this place over nine years ago. I started a competition with a £50 prize, shouted out the scores myself and it's all progressed from there."

Now he's an automatic for talking the fans through the big ones round Durham. And he's got high hopes of a spot on the compere's team at the Embassy World Professional championships in Nottingham next month.

As regards Sid making the cut at the initial Embassy World Championship, I cannot find any reference to him in the programme for that year but former England international Doug McCarthy told me in November 2021:

I might be wrong on this but I think he refereed every game on T.V. in the World Professional darts competition from Nottingham won by Leighton Rees.

Doug knew Sid very well, not only as a referee. Sid managed both Doug and his Durham colleague Bonner Thompson. Doug told me

Sid, landlord of the Kings Head, West Stanley, formed the Durham County Super League before joining the B.D.O. Inter league as Durham County Team manager, eventually serving as B.D.O. Director.

He also ran the Durham County Press competition that could boast as many as 1,200 entries. In 1977 he took charge of the game between Alan Evans and Mohammad Ali at the Gypsy Green stadium, South Shields (open air).
[Image © Unknown]



He led Durham County to become British Gold Cup champions 1977 and 1980. Unfortunately, he did not see them in the 1980 as he passed before the finals.

Perhaps, from a nationwide perspective, Sid's most famous performance as an M.C. was indeed the 'open air' match mentioned by Doug where the 'Welsh Dragon', Alan Evans, took on Mohammad Ali at darts. Throwing javelin-style and in a cross wind, Ali claimed an 8-3 victory and proclaimed himself the World Darts Champion.

When Ali passed away in 2016, Mike Amos of *The Northern Echo* on 30th June ran an article titled 'Float like a butterfly, sting like a bee – and his darts weren't bad either,' recalling the occasion when the boxing champ visited the North-East when it was darts, not fists, which flew. Mike wrote:

"He even seemed to be quite good at that", remembers Olwyn Gunn [one of Sid's daughters], afforded the oche-equivalent of a ringside seat.

Lamenting Ali's passing, the last column - three weeks ago now – recalled the champ's visit to Newcastle and South Shields in 1977, but clearly didn't know the full score. Olwyn chalks. Ali's pictured with Sid Dowson, her father, MC and scorer on Double Top, Tyne Tees Television's hugely popular darts show – fronted by George Taylor – in the 1970s. [Image © The Northern Post] The champ had agreed to a charity challenge to support boys' clubs in the region.

Olwyn, 28 at the time, was introduced to him. "He said 'How do you do, little lady'. I used to get quite angry when people called me little, but I didn't get angry with Ali. He was every bit of charismatic as people said, one of those people who seem only to have time for the person to whom they're speaking."

Olwyn recalled her father keeping the Kings Head pub in Stanley. She told Mike Amos



"The pub was a real hive of darts. We had all the big names staying there. My dad bought me a lovely set of tungsten darts. I still have them, and I wasn't bad. Rather ironically, my problem was hitting double top because I was so small. I could hit 19s, but if I needed double 20, I'd probably lose."

It was her dad, Olwyn insisted, who formulated the triumphant phrase 'ONE HUNDRED AND EIGHTY!', telling Mike Amos,

"Everyone thinks it was Sid Waddell. It wasn't, it was Sid Dowson. My dad was a performer, put a microphone in his hand and he'd sing, but he was really quite shy. That's why he always liked us to go along, even to see Muhammad Ali."

"It was one of those days that is just so full, everyone was so excited. My dad was over the moon at helping to put on a show with The Greatest, but who'd have thought that it would be darts."

According to Doug McCarthy, the last match Sid Dowson refereed was Cliff Lazarenko v Jocky Wilson at Marden Country Club in 1980 where he left early feeling poorly and died two days later aged only 56.

Sid's passing was recorded in *Darts World* in July 1980. The obituary read

A SAD loss for darts players throughout the country and particularly in the North East of England is the sudden death of Sid Dowson of Stanley, Durham.

A former champion darts player and licensee of the Kings Head public house in his home town, Sid was well-known as an M.C. and television commentator for top darts events in the area.

As secretary and later chairman of the Durham Darts Organisation he helped set up the super league structure and built the county team which is at present in the Premier League of the Inter-counties tournament. Until his death Sid was team manager. Sid was a director of the British Darts Organisation and a selector for the England team until forced to resign because of business commitments.

County and national darts officials attended the funeral and Durham BDO members acted as pall-bearers. County secretary Ken Spencer said: "Sid's death is a great loss for all who knew him." (Acknowledgements: Doug McCarthy, Darts World and The Northern Echo.)

CHARLIE ARGUE AND MONEY RACERS – FEEDBACK.

Chris Murray adds to his comments made in #142:

Hope all is going swimmingly. Charlie Argue – and The Railway Tavern at Woodford...those reminiscences bring him to life. He was definitely one of Life's chancers. His thick bottle top glasses made you think he would never hit the board let alone a double. All part of the act! I would love to see a picture too.

I replied, "So would I Chris but one has not been forthcoming thus far."

In the meantime, from the USA, Jerry Feather commented

Great Article Patrick! On the Charlie Argue segment. We had people come from everywhere to play, all sizes & shapes, but the hustlers were the best or worst. You could see they were missing on purpose then want to raise the stakes higher & higher.

As our best player through the years 79 to 99, Grover Clanton took them all on; the longer he played the better he got. His favorite saying after all their antics to first raise the stakes, the smoke, then touching him while shooting, walking directly into Grover who was getting ready to shoot was "If you want to hustle me, put on a skirt". He himself was so bad at hustling that he couldn't stand to lose any games & ran the competition!

Grover's highest national fame was 2nd in 1980 US Open to Rick Ney. But he was a terror at Dart Tournaments on a side board for money, like so many great Dart Players like David "The Kid" Miller [pictured, right] & Danny Pucillo. Keep up the great work... [Image courtesy DW/PC Archive.]



Brian H. wrote:

Hope you & yours are in good health. Thanks for yet another great DDN. Particularly liked the reminiscing of Chris Murray which added to Bobby George's story of Charlie Argue & prompted more memories from other dartists. It's stories like these that make the game what

it is: not the averages & stats of the current elite. So, thanks again for pulling it all together for us.

I replied

Cheers Brian. Thanks for your feedback. Much appreciated as always.

I agree what you said about 'stories' rather than 'stats.' Back in the NDAGB [National Darts Association of Great Britain] days I remember being told that all they ever recorded was the winner and, if you were lucky, the runner-up: never stats. Of course, the BDO [British Darts Organisation] recorded every dart but then, in the end, most of it was discarded when the 'Head Office' in London was sold.

AND FEEDBACK INSPIRED BY 'THE PIT' (#142)

From London, Ontario, Canada, John Thornton wrote:

Hi Patrick. Your tales of things past always amuse me. You might want to check this out if possible.

In Amersham, Buckinghamshire. There is, or was an Inn, cannot remember the name, that was built in ancient times that had a dartboard which was partially obstructed by a large wooden beam and in order to throw the player had to stoop unless he was very short. I know it sounds like something from Ripley's Believe it or Not but I believe it may be fact.

I replied

Thanks John. That's a great story and one that I will use in a future DDN. Perhaps one of my readers will remember it. Obviously, the landlord couldn't be bothered to dig a pit! I hadn't heard of 'Ripley's' until today but I've looked it up. Interesting.

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