

DARTS HISTORY

(aka *Dr. Darts' Newsletter*)

Issue 152

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POST-COVID DARTS

You may remember that, in #150, before he passed away, pub games expert, Arthur R. Taylor had detailed to me his concerns about the effect that Covid has had on our pubs (and darts) and I asked you, my readers, what has happened in your village, town or city not just in the UK but across the globe?

From the UK, Michael Cowell, who worked in the City for a large insurance broker based in the City but since COVID has worked from home full time, told me:



I don't actually go out drinking locally (Pitsea/Basildon), and it's actually been a while since I ventured into London for a drink and game of darts but there were quite a few pubs either close or take down their boards the last time I went to the City, just before COVID hit. In the space of 100 or so yards down one road alone (the Minories, Aldgate) we lost several venues:

The Peacock - closed down.

The Three Lords - took the boards down to become a gastropub.

City Sports Bar & Grill - closed - believe now a restaurant.

Still & Star - actually just off the Minories but sadly now closed.

[Image of the *Still and Star*, above, © www.beerinthevening.com.]

I'm not sure but I think the Still & Star may actually have been pulled down now - at least I understand that was the intention of the building's owner last I heard. This is especially sad as it was a great little pub (my teams used to play their home darts matches there) and it had been there for at least 200 years.

As far as the leagues I played in are concerned, I used to be signed up for two leagues in the City - the CBFIDL [City Banks & Financial Institutions Darts League] and LIODA [London Insurance Offices Darts Association]. Looking on Google, the CBFIDL has restarted following the lifting of COVID restrictions, but as far as I can tell LIODA is still dormant.

LIODA is the City insurance league and whether it will restart or not I don't know, but it had been losing teams for a while now so I think it may well have folded for good. A shame if it has, but a lot of the players play in the banks league (CBFIDL) anyway.

Looking at the old LIODA records it started for a year in 1938 then stopped until 1954. When I first started playing in the league in the late 1970's it had grown to 10 divisions of around a dozen teams in each. I gave the game up for a while, but when I drifted back into LIODA in 2011/12 when there were only three divisions of 10 teams in each. Since then, teams were slowly leaving up until the last season pre-COVID when there were still three divisions, but two only had seven teams and the other only had six.

From the USA, Jerry Feather thanks me for “Another great one!” and reports:

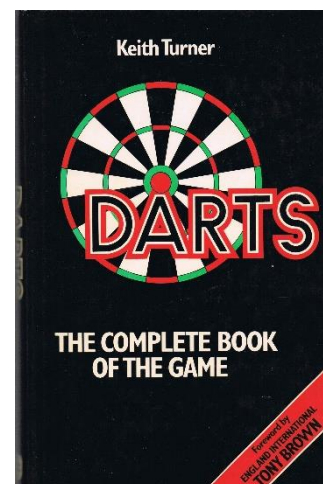
Same here about “things” not getting back to normal. But no masks or restrictions here in Colorado. Dart leagues more local as pubs running “in-house” leagues, so no travel.

Thanks to Mike and Jerry for their feedback. If anyone else would like to report on their post-Covid darts please email me at patrick.chaplin@btinternet.com.

TONY BROWN AND THE ‘MAGNETISM OF DARTS’

After I had published my tribute to Tony in #151, I realised that, although he had never published a biography, he had written the Foreword for Keith Turner’s excellent book *Darts – The Complete Book of the Game* published by David & Charles in 1980.

Even though it had been written over four decades ago, it was produced when Tony was one of the top darts players in Britain and stood at Number Two in the rankings. His insight of darts and the information he provided of his life at that time is well worth reproducing for all darts fans to read.



Thus, having gained permission from the publisher, I have produced Tony’s words in full. I have added some photos from my archive to illustrate the piece. His four-page Foreword to Keith Turner’s work can be found on my website at <https://patrickchaplin.com/2022/10/22/tony-brown-and-the-magnetism-of-darts/>.

CERI MORGAN – WELSH DARTS STAR



I received this very straightforward request via my website from Adrian Wright who asked

‘Hi. Any idea what darts Ceri Morgan used. A picture would be great. Kindest regards, Adrian.’

I checked the tribute I wrote to Ceri and posted on my website, <https://patrickchaplin.com/2020/03/08/ceri-morgan-1947-2020/ou>, which did not provide the answer.

Then Stuart Mackenzie, from the Darts From The Past, Facebook page wrote:

'I seem to remember he used a long straightish barrel, medium stems and pear flights. This clip shows him using Harrows Eric's Alamo stems.'

And gave us this Youtube link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hTsaFZpdOg0>

Ceri's fellow Welsh darter at the time, David Porter, told me:

Hi Patrick. I can't remember the weight of his darts rough guess 28 to 30 grams. He didn't have a sponsor in my time might have later on. If I find out any more, I'll let you know. Take care.

So our search continues.

MARK WEBSTER – LIFE. HOW IT IS NOW.

In #142 (January 2022) I reported that Mark Webster, the 2008 Lakeside World Darts Champion, had been named as the new global brand ambassador for leading water treatment manufacturer, Monarch Water. (Image © PDC/Lawrence Lustig. Used with permission.)



In this article, which appears courtesy of Monarch Water and its Head of Sales, Ian Flack, Mark explains how he manages to play a significant role on the darts scene while working in the heating and plumbing industry.

Mark Webster is a familiar name to *DDN/DH* readers, a former World Champion who maintains a substantial presence on the circuit and TV. However, what many may not know is that he is also a qualified heating and plumbing engineer and continues to work alongside his successful darts career and Sky Sports commentary position.

It was at the age of 18, when studying business administration at the University of Liverpool, that Mark started playing darts in a local pub. The left-handed Welshman had a knack for the sport and soon conquered the local pub darts league.

Whilst continuing to study, Mark racked up some impressive games in the Super League whilst playing for the county and Wales. However, his commitment to the sport meant that Mark was away a lot, so he took the decision to leave university in 2004.

Mark recalled

“I remember going to South Wales with my dad to darts competitions and was getting £700 pounds prize money,” recalls Mark. “When I started playing in tournaments abroad for ranking points the prize money was considerably more. I broke into the top-level darts scene in 2006 when I won the European Cup.”

Although playing darts was proving to be lucrative, Mark wanted to learn a trade. A few of his friends were in the heating and plumbing industry, so that’s where he started his search for an employer, sending letters to local businesses. Mark said

“Tony Kelly, a one-man-band operation, took me on and organised my apprenticeship with Llandrillo College, where I studied one day a week for four years and gained my level two and three gas certificates.

As his darts career gained pace, Tony realised that Mark needed to work for a larger company that had enough staff to enable him more freedom to travel to and from games both in the UK and abroad. Mark enthused

“Tony was a fantastic boss. He got me a job with a bigger company called GGS Heating and even managed to get me sponsorship to play darts. GGS gave me the freedom to have time off whenever I needed to play darts or even practice, which was a great help.”

By 2007, Mark had won the World Cup and was runner-up in the International Darts League. The following year he won the British Darts Organisation (BDO) World Championship, beating Simon Whitlock in the final at Lakeside. That same year, Mark won the Europe Cup, which left him holding three titles, all while completing his plumbing course.

Mark became a full time professional in 2009, joining the Professional Darts Corporation (PDC), finishing third in his debut PDC World Championships in 2010, taking home £60,000 prize money and breaking into the top 32 players in the world.

In 2010, Mark represented Wales, alongside Barrie Bates, in the inaugural World Cup of Darts. Although Mark won both of his singles matches, the pair were runners up. The next year, Mark’s good form continued when he reached a second successive semi-final at the 2011 World Championships beating then 15-time and defending champion Phil Taylor.

Within two years of starting his darts career, Mark had broken into the top 16 and was selected to play in the 2011 Premier League. He has one of the highest averages in the history of the tournament averaging 110.9 in his game against England’s Adrian Lewis.

Although his employer was supportive of his darts career, Mark knew that being part of the Premier League meant that he would be touring around the country, which would make it difficult for him to be a reliable employee.

He explained

“I was making decent money from playing darts, so I decided to leave GGS and focus on the game. Since then, I have been working part-time as a plumber, which fits in around playing darts.”

Mark admits that being a famous face can sometimes mean that he gets a little extra attention on jobs, which can sometimes add to the length of his jobs. However, he takes it all in his stride.

“After I had won the World Darts Championship, my first plumbing job when I got back was at a school,” recalls Mark. “They wanted me to come in and meet the children and take photos, so I ended up plumbing and making a personal appearance.”



After making the decision to take some time off following an injury, Mark currently works as an analyst and commentator for Sky Sports and ITV. He said:

“I really enjoy commentating as it keeps me involved in the sport and I see some great talent coming through. At first, I was a little bitter that I couldn’t play, but now I love it being able to be with friends and watch the sport. However, I hope to be playing very soon.”

In 2021 Mark became Monarch Water’s Brand Ambassador to help raise awareness of the problems hard water causes and the advantages of installing water softeners.

(Mark is pictured here with Monarch Water’s Head of Sales, Ian Flack.) Mark says:

“My background in plumbing meant I had previously installed Monarch Water’s products and was aware of the financial and lifestyle benefits they bring at a time when the cost of living has gone through the roof and environmental issues are a genuine concern, I am pleased to champion products that can help homeowners lower energy bills and improve the water quality in their homes.”

JAN IS VERY HAPPY WITH DARTS HISTORY

Subject of the top story in last month’s issue, India’s Janani Janakiraman wasted no time posting the news to all of her friends writing

Really happy to share that I was featured in one of the monthly newsletters by the great Patrick Chaplin, Dr. Darts, Darts Historian. This is a very happy day for me!

A huge thanks Patrick for considering me worthy enough to feature in your newsletter. And Ashfaque Sayed can't thank you enough. Thanks for pushing me to take part in the PDC series and for an introduction with Dr. Darts.

We all wish Jan continued success.

HAPPY 50th ANNIVERSARY DARTS WORLD (1972-2022)

Although I had been playing darts (in my fashion) since the age of twelve I did not begin reading *Darts World* until the late 1970s and then only seriously in 1985 when I decided to research the game.

I had been talking in the pub to a great friend of mine about darts history. "When did it all start Pat?" he asked. I replied, "Give me a couple of weeks and I'll tell you."

Over 35 years later, a website, eight darts books and numerous articles and TV and radio appearances under my belt, I'm still delving into the heritage of the second most popular indoor sport in the land and much of the knowledge I learned and contacts I made there gained via *Darts World*.

First launched in November/December 1972, *Darts World* continues to bring news and views to the world of darts.

In the December edition I will be celebrating fifty years of *Darts World* so if you have any memories of the longest surviving darts magazine on the planet, please drop me a note at patrick.chaplin@btinternet.com.

FROM THE USA - JERRY FEATHER WRITES...



DART PLAYERS REUNION

If you really ARE an old dart player
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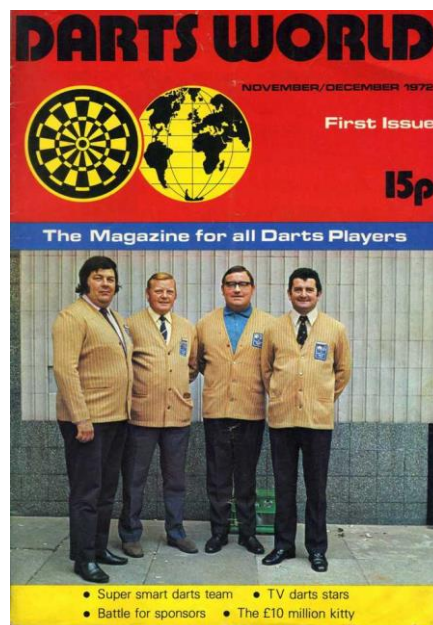
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Ask for
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Reservation link
www.ADOdarts.com

Patrick. Another great newsletter. Tony Brown & the Queen. Great job. I think I sent you an invite about the Golden Reunion of Darts in Las Vegas on January 19-21 & hoped you could mention in your newsletter as any additional old timers would be appreciated. Thanks again for a great read.

Having lost the original message, which I had received but had clearly filed in a 'safe' place, Jerry was good enough to send me another one (reproduced here).

I am very happy to promote this event, the 44th Annual WINMAU-Fleetwood Memorial Las Vegas Open.

For all of the 'old timers' across the Pond (or indeed anywhere else) who can make it to Vegas, good dartsing!



RONDART EXHIBITION OPENS IN DARLINGTON

In issue #148 (July) the lead article of *Darts History* announced that ‘RONDART IS GOING TO HAVE HIS OWN SHOW’. Elaine Vizer, whose father and friends grew up with Ron, had hoped that collected memorabilia, posters and other items from RONDART’s career would be displayed *somewhere* to preserve them and show them to the wider public.

Back in July Elaine had emailed me to say that Caitlin Barratt, the Heritage Learning and Engagement Officer at the Darlington Hippodrome, had agreed that the exhibition would be going ahead and opened on 2nd November at the Darlington Hippodrome right the way through the Panto season, until April.



Recently, Elaine sent me the above photo of the RONDART display up and running and told me, that includes my obituary on RONDART to the right and Elaine’s explanation to the left. “It’s wonderful to see Rondart celebrated so beautifully.”

I agree.

What a superb display! RONDART would have been proud.

I hope that *DH* readers living in the Darlington area have an opportunity to view the exhibition. Thanks to Cait and Elaine for making this piece of darts history happen.

(Image © Elaine Vizer 2022. Used with permission.)

MICK 'DOWNTOWN' BROWNE VERSUS PETER MANLEY

Earlier this year *DH/DDN* subscriber Mick Browne invited me to attend a special evening he had booked at his local, the *King and Queen*, Caterham, Surrey, a closed event arranged for a few close darting friends featuring darts champion Peter 'One Dart' Manley.

Mick has been playing darts since the age of nine when his dad bought him a cardboard dartboard and then his big sister bought him a bristle board with one of her first pay packets. Later still, his dad took him to Gerry's of Wimbledon for his first set of tungstens.

He then played for his dad's works team for a few years. They had exhibition evenings which is where he met Alan Glazier, his darts hero and one evening he actually beat Bobby George at the age of 16/17 years. But did all this prepare Mick for battle with 'One Dart'?



Unfortunately, I was unable to be there but Mick promised to let me know how the evening went and I promised to mention it in *DH/DDN*. Better late than never Mick. (Sorry for the delay.) Mick told me

"Well, picked Peter up from the hotel, went for a meal with a few friends, then onto the pub. Peter was an absolute gent. Plenty of banter, one liners and great inside stories. When it came to my match with Peter, I managed to win the first leg but bombed out 2-1. All in all, a great night."

REMINDER: If you change your email address, and still want to receive *Darts History*, please ensure that you let me know on patrick.chaplin@btinternet.com. Thanks.

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