

DARTS HISTORY

(aka Dr. Darts' Newsletter)

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BOB ANDERSON RETIRES (FROM TV DARTS)

“Yes,” says Bob, “It’s true. I’m retiring from TV darts tournaments.”



In early May, World Champion Bob Anderson announced on the Darts from the Past Facebook page that he was retiring from TV tournaments **but not** exhibitions; his last appearance being the World Senior Masters at the end of June. (For poster and details check out this link

[https://www.westlandseyevil.co.uk/whats-on/sports-events/.](https://www.westlandseyevil.co.uk/whats-on/sports-events/))

I contacted Bob to ask him about his TV appearances and began asking him what was the first TV tournament he appeared in.

He told me

“The 1981 Flowers Dartsathon, played at the Redwood Lodge, Bristol. I made the last eight losing to Tony Brown. It was the first time I had seen myself on TV.”

After more than four decades, Bob’s last TV appearance was the World Seniors at the Circus Tavern, Purfleet earlier this year. “An early exit against Andy Jenkins.” Bob’s last success in front of the TV cameras was in 2008, the Betfred League of Legends in which he beat Keith Deller 10 legs to 3 in the final. (See right. Image © Betfred)

Looking back, Bob told me that his first exhibition was played at RAF Fairford in 1980, “When I had just been picked for England.”

Bob turned full time pro on 1st January 1985. There was no point in asking Bob “What was your most memorable TV appearance and why?” as, of course, I already knew the answer. His World Championship win in 1988. Other memories Bob? “Of course.”



“Playing for my country. In all I played 33 times for my country winning twenty-four. Captaincy of England came in 1992, when we won the Home Internationals and Europe Cup. But then the painful “split” came and ‘bang’ went my proudest moment in darts!”

Bob told me

“I am still in love with darts, but I can’t expect to play like I did thirty years ago. It’s a bitter pill but I have to accept that I’ll be seventy-six in November!”

By retiring from TV, Bob is following in the footsteps of other greats, John Lowe, and Dennis Priestley and, like them, Bob will continue to entertain darts fans in his fun exhibitions.

Bob said, “To book me at your pub or club, please email sally.anderson180@gmail.com. We’ll have a fun afternoon or evening with your darting pals!”

I’m sure you will.

THE NODOR FOURS STORY – PART TWO

After 1959, the NODOR Fours competition went from strength to strength. In 1960 the number of county’s entering the tournament doubled to sixteen and in 1961 it became what it remained for many years, a national competition.



Organiser John Ross (pictured left promoting the 1959 NODOR Challenge Cup Image © NODOR, used with permission) confirmed that the Fours was not originally organised by the National Darts Association of Great Britain (NDAGB) but “by their officials helping me out.”

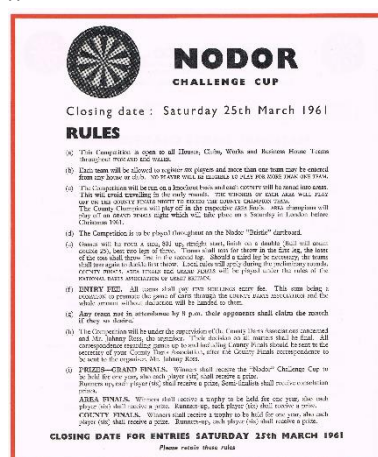
Speaking to me in 1983 John said

“In 1961 we wanted it nationally. Therefore, we did it through the NDAGB. I took on personal responsibility on behalf of the

NDAGB and the NODOR Company of handling that competition.”

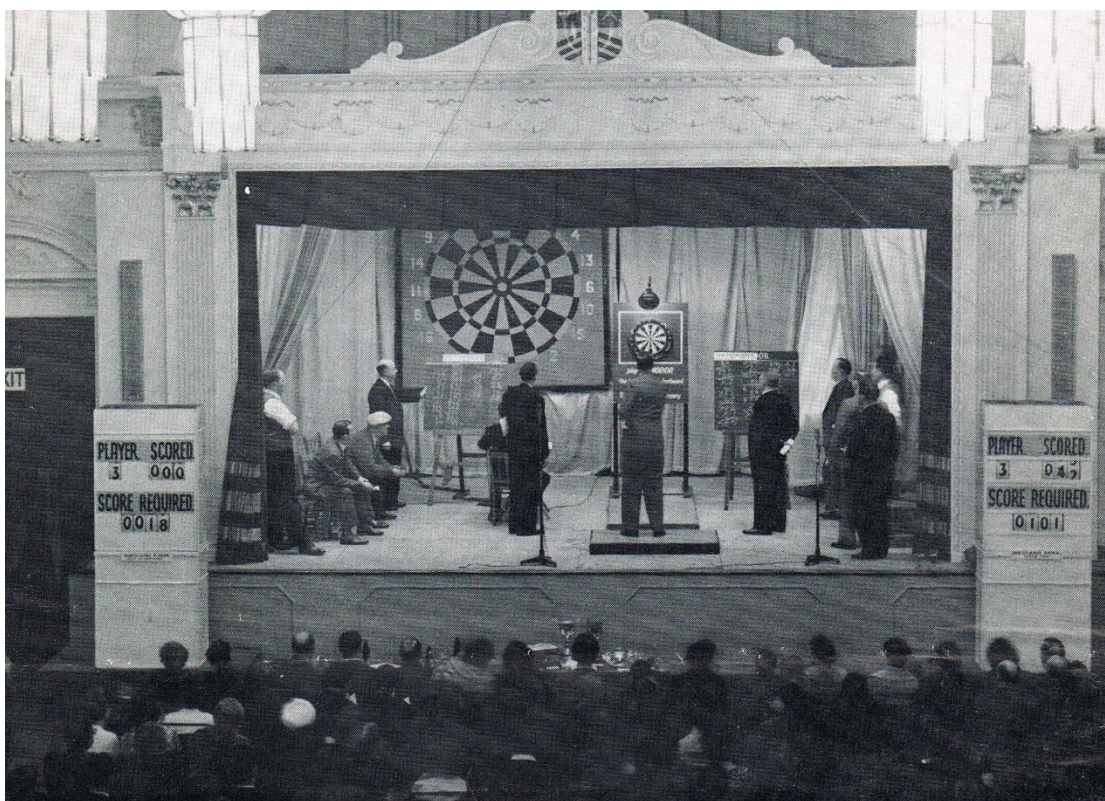
Here are the rules as set out by the NODOR company for that first national (‘national’ at that time meaning England and Wales) NODOR Fours (the NODOR Challenge Cup) tournament in 1961:

- (a) This Competition is open to all Houses, Clubs, Works and Business House Teams throughout ENGLAND & WALES.
- (b) Each team will be allowed to register six players and more than one team may be entered from any house or



club. NO PLAYER WILL BE ELIGIBLE TO PLAY FOR MORE THAN ONE TEAM.

- (c) The Competition will be run on a knockout basis and each COUNTY will be zoned into areas. This will avoid travelling in the early rounds. THE WINNERS OF EACH AREA WILL PLAY OFF ON THE COUNTY FINALS NIGHT TO DECIDE THE COUNTY CHAMPION TEAM. The County Champions will play off in the respective AREA finals. AREA champions will play off on GRAND FINALS night which will take place on a Saturday in London before Christmas 1961.
- (d) The Competition is to be played throughout on the Nodor "Bristle" dartboard.



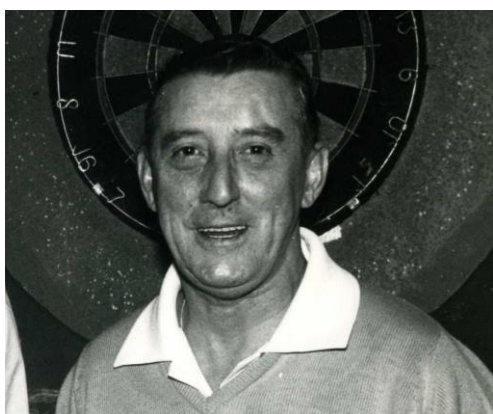
- (e) Games will be FOUR A SIDE 801 up, straight start, finish on a double (Bull will count double 25), best two legs of three. Teams shall toss for throw in the first leg, the loser of the toss shall throw first in the second leg. Should a third leg be necessary, the teams shall toss again to decide first throw. Local rules will apply during the preliminary rounds. COUNTY FINALS, AREA FINALS AND GRAND FINALS will be played under the rules of the NATIONAL DARTS ASSOCIATION OF GREAT BRITAIN. *[The photo above shows the 1961 final at Stratford Town Hall. Image © NODOR International. Used with permission.]*
- (f) **ENTRY FEE.** All teams shall pay FIVE SHILLINGS entry fee. This sum being a DONATION to promote the game of darts through the COUNTY DARTS ASSOCIATION and the whole amount without deduction will be handed to them.
- (g) **Any team not in attendance by 9 p.m. their opponents shall claim the match if they so desire.**

- (h) The Competition will be under the supervision of the County Darts Associations concerned and Mr. Johnny Ross, the organiser. Their decision on all matters shall be final. All correspondence regarding games up to and including County Finals should be sent to the secretary of your County Darts Association, after the County Finals correspondence to be sent to the organiser, Mr. Johnny Ross,
- (i) **PRIZES – GRAND FINALS.** Winners shall receive the “Nodor” Challenge Cup to be held for one year, also each player (six) shall receive a prize. Runners up, each player (six) shall receive a prize, semi-finalists shall receive consolation prizes.
AREA FINALS. Winners shall receive a trophy to be held for one year, also each player (six) shall receive a prize. Runners-up, each player (six) shall receive a prize.
COUNTY FINALS. Winners shall receive a trophy to be held for one year, also each player (six) shall receive a prize. Runners-up, each player (six) shall receive a prize.

CLOSING DATE FOR ENTRIES SATURDAY 25th MARCH 1961

That first national tournament involved 2,122 teams, the organisation of the event being headed, as it had been from the start, by darts organiser and player, John Ross.

The winners of that inaugural national event were the *Cotton Tree Inn*, Manchester who beat the *Hope Inn*, Gloucester in the final.



The *Cotton Tree Inn* team comprised George Barrow, Ray Hatton, Jimmy Berry, Alec Dixon and Bill Lennard (pictured below), the latter destined to become the *News of the World* Individual Darts Champion in 1976 beating the pre-tournament favourite Wales' Leighton Rees 2-0 in the Final.

The *Cotton Tree Inn* was clearly a formidable team, becoming runners up in the 1965 contest, losing to the *Queen's Head*, Bishop Auckland in the final and then returning to take the title for a second time in 1966, beating the Pioneer Club, Newcastle. The team was

almost the same as those who were victorious in 1961 except George Barrow was replaced by Johnny Moores. In all the *Cotton Tree Inn* qualified for the final no less than five times. In 1963 even the pub's 'B' team managed to qualify.

My good friend, *Darts History* subscriber and former England team member, Doug McCarthy, and his team, the *Travellers Rest*, Spennymoor, Co. Durham, lifted the Fours title in 1975 beating the Eyres Monsell Club,* Leicester in the final.



[The photo (above right) shows, left to right, John Ross (NODOR organiser, John ‘Bonner’ Thompson, Bobby Ludkin, Doug McCarthy, Mickey Cummins, Ernie Peckett and Peter Hawkins. Image: Courtesy Doug McCarthy.]

(*Incidentally, top professional Jamie Caven, replied to Part One which brought back a memory for him. He wrote

Great read Patrick! Nice to see George Russell with the trophy! Eyres Monsell WMC the first team I ever played for age 13 in 1990!)

In 1979 the established format was abandoned as ‘outmoded’ and replaced by a best of seven format featuring four singles (best of three, 501-up), two pairs (best of three, 601-up) and ‘a decider’; one leg of four-a-side, 801-up.

The last team to win the title under the old rules was the *Printers Arms*, Rochdale (comprising Mel Faith, Norman Coombes, Gerald Harling and Jim Lord) who beat *The Calendar* team from Wellingborough, Northamptonshire.

The first to win under the new format was the *Foaming Quart*, Norton Green, Stoke-on-Trent who beat the *Puddlers Arms*, Rhymney, Gwent. The winning *Quart* team comprised Roger Machin, Ken Stringer, Ron Gregory, Alan Dawson and Geoff Langdon. The *Puddlers Arms* were to make the Grand Finals again the following year but, again, came runners-up; this time to the team from the *Swan Inn*, Bicester.

The *Foaming Quart* was later to become famous due to its association with Eric Bristow and his then partner, top lady darter, Maureen Flowers.

For the record, the winners in that final NODOR Fours championship were the team from the *Swan Inn*, Bicester, Oxfordshire (comprised of Joe Dodd (pictured), W. Hearne, R. Sampson, G. Howells and D. Scurfield) who beat the team from the *Puddlers Arms*, Rhymney, Gwent 4-3 on 22nd November 1980 at the Diamond Theatre, Caerphilly, Glamorgan.

The *Puddlers* team was packed with Welsh international talent (Wayne Aston, Glyn Greenaway, David R. Jones, M. Hughes and D. D. Jones) living up to their reputation by soon building a 3-1 lead. However, the *Swan* pulled things back to 3-3 with everything depending on the final team game. *Darts World* included a brief description of what followed:

Able led by 20-stone Oxfordshire county player Joe Dodd (with scores of 100 and 140) The Swan found themselves after eight visits to the oche with only 116 needed. Dodd calmly hit 20, 60 and double 18 – to the delight of his team-mates.

Played in Wales and with a Welsh team beaten in the Final it is probable that the guest of honour, Welsh champion and first-ever Embassy World



Champion (1978), Leighton Rees, *may* have had to force a smile when handing the trophy over to the English winners.

(In 1981, team member Joe Dodd was called up to play for England and the following year Joe (pictured above right) qualified for the *News of the World* Individual Championships finals when on Monday 22nd March 1982, won the London and Home Counties Divisional title. In the final Joe met Welshman Alan Evans (the Lancashire and Cheshire Divisional Champion) in the first round and lost to the Welshman 2-0.) (Image © *News of the World*. Used with permission.)

Unbeknown to darts fans at that time, this was to become the last Fours championship, sponsored by NODOR, the decision being made by the company later in the year. The trophy was returned to NODOR and put into storage.

Coincidentally, when contacting Vince Bluck, the Managing Director at NODOR, on another matter, he told me that he had a trophy I might be interested in knowing about. Vince wrote

The cup certainly goes back some time. When we [the Bluck family] took over NODOR in 1983, it was the NODOR Fours trophy. I believe that by that time, the tournament had either ceased to exist, or NODOR were no longer the title sponsor. Either way, the trophy was redundant and gathering dust...

In the mid-late 1980's, sales to the USA and Canada were really taking off, and we were working really closely with the the National Darts Federation of Canada (NDFC) and, as part of this close relationship, we gave the trophy to the NDFC to be presented to the annual winner of the Canadian Open [the cup being engraved 'Canadian Inter Provincial Mens's Team Championship'].



It was used until the mid-late 1990's when the cost to insure the trophy became prohibitive for the NDFC. They therefore returned the trophy and acquired a lower cost replacement.

We still have the trophy, but unfortunately, the base has been lost at some time in the past.

Thanks to everyone who was contributed in any way to the NODOR Fours story. If anyone has any other memories of this tournament please email me at patrick.chaplin@btinternet.com.

THE ALL-NATIONAL DARTS COUNCIL (ANDC) – AN APOLOGY

In the May issue I featured a special report titled 'Newly Discovered Darts Association fills the gap.'

Not surprisingly, several of you realised very quickly that there was something wrong. For example, subscriber Markio wrote



“Love it! But Eddie and Ethel Bristrow at the Upsadaisy darts club... very late April fool surely? 😊” and regular feedback provider Bill Bell wrote “I thought the Upsadaisy club was your April fool...”

and, of course it was.

But I cannot let the article go unexplained so here I go...

In response to the April issue of *Darts History*, Dr. Eddie Norman wrote:

“Patrick. I had a message yesterday from my friend Antonio who I forward Darts History to in Ecuador who has loved reading your April Fools section in the past and enjoys the magazine each month. I told him you had both been under the weather and he sends his kindest regards to you both.

I was in Quito, Ecuador in November on my recent South America tour of Ecuador, Peru, Chile, and Colombia, and he remarked then how he got fooled each time. He asked yesterday, “No April Fool’s joke this year?” He is the fourth person recently to say how much he appreciated your little annual joke. Alandro Bonney, from Tuvalu, another of my contacts I met again on my recent South Pacific tour said how he was always fooled as well.”

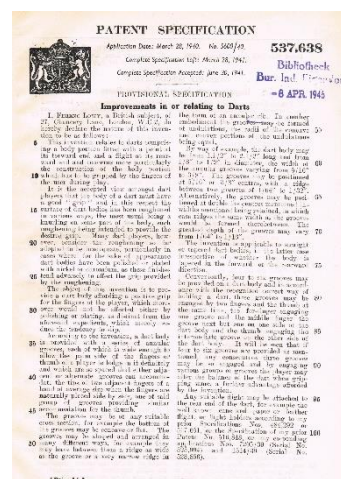
Eddie’s email made me look back to when I used to publish April Fool stories in *DH/DDN* and made me think that maybe other readers might be missing them too. So, for old times’ sake, for Antonio and Alandro and others I produced the ‘missing link’ article I published in last month’s issue. I hope you all enjoyed it.

PATENTS

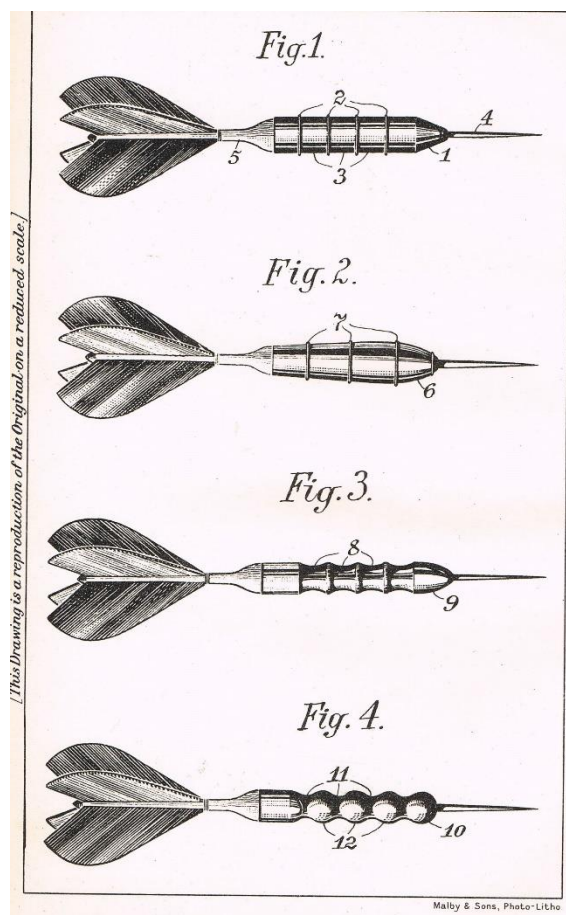
My sincere thanks to John Howie who for many years ran a well-known darts shop in Glasgow who recently sent me a number Patent Specifications relating to darts and dartboards for my archive, two of which were registered by Ferenc Lowy, the man who was to create Unicorn Darts.

The example shown here bears an application date of 28th March 1940. The complete specification was accepted on 30th June 1941. The Specification states

This invention relates to darts comprising a body portion fitted with a point at its forward end and a flight at its rearward end



and concerns more particularly the construction of the body portion which has to be gripped by the fingers of the user during play.



It is the accepted view amongst dart players that the body of the dart must have a good “grip” and in this respect the surface of dart bodies has been roughened in various ways, the most usual being a knurling on some part of the body, such roughening being intended to provide the desired grip. Many dart players, however, consider the roughening so far adopted to be inadequate, particularly in cases where for the sake of appearance dart bodies have been polished or plated with nickel or chromium, as these finishes tend adversely to affect the grip provided by the roughening.

The Specification continued

The object of this invention is to provide a dart body affording a positive grip for the fingers of the player, which moreover would not be affected either by the polishing or plating, as distinct

Many readers will recognise the designs and shapes of these darts and, indeed, the design of ‘Fig. 2.’ Reminds me of the ‘torpedo’ shape of

one of the first sets of darts I purchased in the mid-1960s, although then the stem was not made of wood (as appears to be shown here) but of plastic.

Even back then, Unicorn produced plastic cases that contained the darts, and indicated that in 1966, **20,000** of their products were used ‘by millions...in five continents.’

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