

DARTS HISTORY

(formerly *Dr. Darts' Newsletter*)

Issue 182

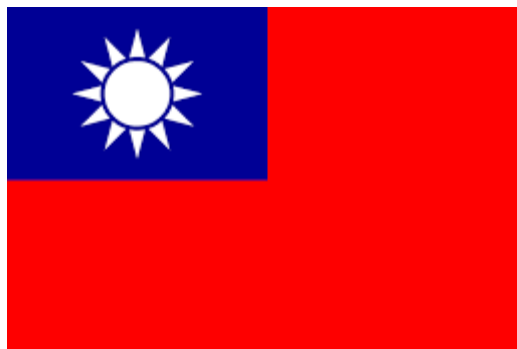
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May 2025



DARTS REACHES TAICHUNG CITY

I was only thinking a few days ago about how many countries *Darts History* reaches and how many of those had listened to Dr. Eddie Norman on one of his 'world tours' before then writing to me asking to subscribe. The last time I listed the countries where *DH* has subscribers (2020), I estimated 120 countries and still they come. Last month I received the following message from Alan H. who emailed me from Taiwan:



'Dear Dr. Darts. We recently enjoyed a second visit from Dr. Eddie Norman who was visiting our country on a Trade Conference mission here in Taichung City.

Eddie introduced us to the sport of darts on his last visit two years ago, and we have with his help started a small darts league which we play from our houses on Thursday nights. We are not huge but now have over 150 members, and play on NODOR Bristle Dartboards which we have to import.

Eddie took time off in his busy schedule to speak to us on the history of the NODOR company; a fascinating story which we really enjoyed.



[The image of Dr. Eddie Norman, left, shows him relaxing recently (April 2025) with a personalised dartboard presented to him by NODOR after the original had been stolen at an airport during an earlier journey.]

Eddie has taught us to love the sport and has shown us videos of top darts players and our favourite player is Luke Humphries. We will never achieve his standard but we can but dream and enjoy and love Mr. Humphries' sportsmanship – win or lose.

Eddie gave me a copy of your Darts History and I loved it and he said if I ask you would put me on your mailing list to receive copies. I would appreciate that and will circulate to our English-speaking members.

Eddie is a wonderful ambassador to your country and to the sport of darts and was immensely popular on his visit. We made him a dartboard to commemorate his recent, second, visit which he took on his travels.

Of course, I immediately signed Alan to *Darts History* (the first (I think) from Taiwan) and sent him a couple of back issues and asked him about his dart leagues. (As you all know, I always encourage subscribers to forward *Darts History* on to anyone they know who are genuinely interested in the history of the sport.)

Alan replied

'Dear Patrick. May I please thank you for your prompt reply to my e-mail, and of course you can use any extracts from my e-mail. I am shortly about to print off hard copies of the two Darts History that you kindly sent me, and look forward to a great read.'

You ask me about our darts league. We have one division of ten teams and play each team twice. Matches are played one game of 601. Each team consists of nine players. We play straight start to our matches and throw from 7 feet 9¼ inches. We play in halls, homes, and garages (converted for darts).'

Alan was unable to send me any photos of his teams but sent a photo of the special dartboard they presented to Eddie when he last visited (see right) but added

'The official language here in Taiwan is Mandarin Chinese, but younger people are taught English at school and university. Most people in the darts league speak Mandarin Chinese with little English. Eddie Norman left us a book of darts rules in Mandarin Chinese for our benefit, as well as one in English. Some players only speak Taiwanese Mandarin or Taiwanese Hakka but all know how to count the darts scores in any language and league nights get by in three languages.'



Thank you again for sending Darts History and congratulations on reaching #180. Best Wishes, Alan (Taiwan)'

A warm welcome to Alan and all his darts friends and league players.

[NOTE: In 2001 I was given the name of a man in Taiwan, named Joseph Wang, who was, at that time, living in Taipei and working for a company called Update Enterprise Corporation.

The letter I wrote to Joseph asked for him to provide me with any information he could about the development of darts, if any, in his country. On 6th February 2001 I received the following reply from him. In publishing his letter for the first time, I have made no attempt to correct his English. He wrote:

'Dear Patrick. I have searched a lot of your article of Knowledge of Darts, as I am just like a "freshman" on this field. Except a dart-lover myself. I also like to study series of Darts History.'

In Taiwan, for over 20 years ago, USA foreigner and sailor played Dart at Club, no one understood how fun of this Game. Some one joked it that Throwing a nail on wall is nonsense and foolish. But now, I worked inspired because training of concentration of Darts every week.

My requirement that is it workable to translate your article into Chinese. I would send it to put on Newspaper, if this is fortunate and welcomed.

Your best comments are deeply appreciated. Yours truly, Joseph Wang.'

It seems that over 50 years ago, a visiting USA seaman tried to encourage the people of Taiwan, or a small group of them, to play darts, only to be told that they thought 'throwing a nail' at a wall was silly.

That made me think of a similar story related by Edie Beed in her book *70 Years Behind Bars* (1984) in which she recalled the 'invasion' of USA servicemen to her pub in Bradninch, Devon, during World War Two. They were attracted to the pub, the beer (when available), the local girls, and to darts, a game they were not familiar with. During a conversation, one of the locals asked a US serviceman, whether they played darts back home to which the serviceman replied, "No, we don't throw anything at walls."

JOHN PLEWS REPORTS ON DARTS ACROSS THE POND

In *Darts History* #175, October 2024, I ran an article about the video *Toe the Oche* telling how the creator, John Plews, visited my home and deposited the master tapes in my archive.



In that article I reported that John (pictured left) would be returning to the USA, to visit, in 2025 and that he would be going in search of the darts venues he recalled back then, to see if he could find a game. I told John that I would look forward to his report 'next year' and, here it is:

'Hi Patrick. Hope you are well. [I've] Just returned from the States and thought this might be useful:

Anyone visiting Las Vegas and can't make it through the stay without a game then the Venetian/Palazzo hotel complex has a 'Flight Club' type bar with around a dozen boards. Well set out, good lighting and a big selection of beers and other drinks. There's a small charge; think it was \$25 for ninety minutes - up to six players on one board. It's located on the second floor of the Palazzo hotel.

And, if you are visiting Los Angeles and need a game then head down to Santa Monica and visit 'Ye Olde Kings Head.' It's much better than the name suggests (the 'Ye' and 'Olde' have been stuck on for the US tourists) but inside you'll find a very lively pub atmosphere with a great selection of drinks (including draught Guinness) and the food is as close to an English Pub abroad as you can get.

The pie and chips and fish and chips at about \$15 each were tasty and very reasonable and the Guinness was \$10 a pint.

There are two boards (regular-**not** electronic) with games going on most of the time. Same as back home: put your initials up, chalk and challenge the winner. The most popular game seemed to be a 20 – 15+ bull version of Killer.

I joined a couple of American lads who were reasonable pub players and had come from about 30 miles away to get a game. Bit like the UK, they complained about the number of boards disappearing from Californian bars and pubs.

Just to make this story worthy of 'history,' I played at the Kings Head [Image, right, © John Plews. Used with permission] back in the seventies when I was based in Los Angeles and, in those days, there was a strong league, mostly of ex-pats. But at least the pub is still there with mostly British staff, keeping the arrows alive in Southern California. There's also an "all British shop" next door so if you've forgotten your Kit-Kats or Marmite it's all there alongside the tourist type souvenirs...



Hope that's worthy of an entry in your next edition. Cheers John.'

Indeed, it is John. Thanks. Please keep us informed of your future darts-related travels.

FALCON AND PINNERTON AND SPONSORSHIP - FEEDBACK



My lead article last month about the above companies seemed to bring a good number of memories for you and a number provided feedback.

England's Dave Whitcombe emailed me concerning Ray Rawlings who was sponsored by Falcon. Dave wrote:

"In 1975 I played Ray in the quarter finals of the Nodor British Open and lost in the final to Charlie Ellix, which is a story in itself and don't think what happened has ever been mentioned.

Anyway, Ray won this title the following year so a quarter finals and winner in two consecutive years was some achievement. In short Ray was a very good player and on his day in that time period could have beat anyone. Alas though, he never achieved his true potential and somehow drifted away which was a shame."

James Hope wrote

"Hi Patrick. Just read this month's newsletter. Excellent as always. I read with interest the article on Ray Rawlings and I often wonder what ever happened to him after the successes he

had from 1976-1979. Did he have more successes in the 1980s and 90s or did he give up playing?"

Great news James. I have contacted Ray and he and I are going to have a conversation soon.

Ben Sheppard contacted me to say

'Hi Patrick. Thank you for Darts History. What a great read this month, loved entire contents. I remember buying Falcon Darts bubble canes, loved them. What a great story for Mr Smith's son. I love reading about these small independent darts firms; stories which would be lost for ever without yourself and your proof reader (What would you do without her?) I hope you find space for more news to give us on the pioneering small darts firms of yesterday.'

David Lennard, son of the famous *News of the World* champion Bill, told me that his dad



'...was sponsored by Falcon Darts for some years. They made his darts and from what I can remember it was a good relationship between my dad and them. His shirts were yellow but sadly he gave them all away; we only have 5 of his England shirts left.'

[Bill is featured on the previous page on the front page of the September 1980 issue of *Darts World* wearing his yellow and black Falcon shirt. Image of Bill's darts (left) courtesy of David Lennard.]

Tom Lucason wrote

'Dear Patrick. Thank you so much for latest Darts History. The article on Pinnerton was so fascinating. These little firms are the lifeblood of darts history and thank you for bringing them to life. Will you be writing about any other small firms?

Please keep up the good work I and others certainly enjoy it each month Thank You. Tom.'

I can tell Ben and Tom that I have a couple of other articles in preparation about gone but not forgotten darts companies, which I am planning to publish in *Darts History* at some point in the future once my research is completed.

APRIL FOOLISHNESS

I suspect that my belated April Fool item featured in #181 fooled no one. I know that a good number of you enjoy my occasional wandering into April foolishness.

COMPETITION WINNER

Thanks to everyone who entered the special competition I featured in #180. The prize was a WINMAU Blade 6 dartboard signed by all of the quarter-finalists up to the winner in the 2025 WINMAU World Masters.

The question I set was:

In what year was the first WINMAU World Masters held. Was it (a) 1974, (b) 1975 or (c) 1976?

The correct answer was **(c) 1976**.

A number of incorrect answers were received, all answering (a) 1974. That year was the first time the World Masters was held but for the first and second years the tournament was sponsored by Phonogram record company and it was called the Phonogram World Masters.

After two years Phonogram withdrew their sponsorship and WINMAU took over in 1976 and the tournament became known as the WINMAU World Masters until 2018 only to be 're-mastered' in 2025.

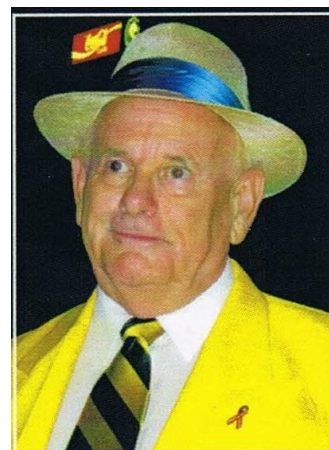
The lucky winner of the signed dartboard has been notified.

THE OLD DARTS COACH – HOWIE REED

Like me, you may have thought that Howie Reed, The Old Darts Coach, would be writing about darts (and other sports and everything) forever and beyond. But in April it was announced that Howie had passed away.

Although I knew Howie (through his articles) and occasional contact, I could never do him or his career justice so refer you to his good friend Dartoid's dedication at

<https://dartoidsworld.net/2025/04/column-682-howie-reed-the-most-unforgettable-character-i-ever-met/>



When my friend in Seattle, Glen Huff, sent me a copy of Howie's book *One night, while out Drinking With The Fat Swede*, in 2018, Glen had had Howie sign it to me. Howie wrote:

'Doctor Darts. It is a pleasure to sign this book to you. The darts fraternity is the best in the world. We are members joined together with 90% tungsten – We are lucky...'

Indeed, we are. RIP Howie.

NATIONAL DARTS ASSOCIATION (NDA)

In Issue #179 I began recording the first 100 years of darts organisation and will, in due course, continue and conclude the history of the NDA.

Purely coincidentally, I have received an email, via my website, from Paul Griffin enquiring about a collection of gold darts medals which belonged to his Great Uncle ranging from the late 1920s to the early 1930s. Paul told me:

'They were given for team darts from the local brewery leagues, Style & Winch and Barclays in Kent – but I was interested in the 1928 NDA medal. Do you think it was awarded as an

extra medal for the team winning their Style & Winch league in 28-29 or for something else? I know this is at the start of the formation of the NDA and most of the information I can find online for this period is not for team darts, so I hope you have seen these medals before. Many thanks.'



Style & Winch were a Kent brewer, based at the Medway Brewery, St. Peter's Street, Maidstone, Kent and were very supportive of darts from the beginning of the game becoming a pub pastime. The brewery was acquired by Barclay, Perkins & Co. Ltd., which explains the 'Barclay link. (Information courtesy of the Brewery History Society.)

(Image of NDA team medal, left, courtesy Paul Griffin.)

I informed Paul that although I had seen one or two NDA medals, but I had never seen a medal for team tournaments before. I told Paul:

'Thanks for your email and the accompanying images. A great collection. The NDA tournament would not have happened as an 'extra' medal. It would have been competed for separately, nationally, and organised by the NDA Head Office in London. By 'national' the NDA would have meant England and (possibly) Wales and would not have included Scotland or Northern Ireland at that time.

From more or less the beginning of their setting up, the NDA organised men's, ladies, and team tournaments which were for NDA members. From 1927 the Association was responsible for organising the News of the World competition. In the first instance it was run as a 'darts test' in the London Area only until the mid-1930s when the NoW began to expand into a number of Divisions.

The Erith team you mentioned must have been very good but, remember, the NDA was based in London so the chances are that the competition(s) were probably restricted to London and the Home Counties. From my research thus far the NDA professed to be a national organisation but even as late as 1939 I have evidence that some emerging County darts leagues, such as Worcestershire and Cheshire, insisted that they received no approach/help from the NDA whatsoever and, in some cases, they'd never even heard of the organisation!

As far as your question, 'How many in a team?' the Morning Advertiser published the NDA rules for 'League and Cup Competition' Rule 7 in April 1926 which stated:

'That a team shall comprise of eight players, such players throwing alternatively with their competitors.'

All team games were played 1,001-up, finish on a double, 'one point to count for a win.' All NDA darts matches, singles, doubles or team, were thrown from 9 feet with the dartboard hung at 5' 9". The throw distance was called either the 'throw-line,' or 'hockey.'

FRENCH TV VISITS ‘DR. DARTS.’

A few weeks ago, I received an approach from Julie Peynard, a director/filmmaker, for the French television company “Arte,” a French-German cultural channel which features a daily programme titled, *Invitation au Voyage*, an historic travelogue which is viewed by over one million every day.

Julie asked if she could come and meet me and interview me so that she could “discover the game of darts and all of darts history.” She also wanted to learn more about my home town, Maldon in Essex.



Julie and her cameraman, Julian, visited on 6th May. I was interviewed at home before we travelled down to Hythe Quay, an historic part of the town, on the River Blackwater, where the interview and filming continued. After that we moved on to my ‘local,’ the *Queen Victoria* to finalise the interview and where licensee James Burrell-Cooke and I were filmed playing darts – sort of.

(The image above shows me (left) with Julie and James. (Photo © Bexsnaps))

It had been a great but very rewarding, tiring day for ‘Dr. Darts.’

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