

DARTS HISTORY

(formerly *Dr. Darts' Newsletter*)

Issue 190

www.patrickchaplin.com

January 2026



HAPPY NEW YEAR TO YOU ALL

And what a great end to 2025 with Deta Hedman winning the WDF Ladies World Championship **at last**, and that youngster, Luke 'The Nuke' Littler, starting 2026 as he surely



means to go on, by winning his second and back-to-back World title. (See PDC report later in this issue.) Added to Deta's success, she was awarded an OBE for her services to darts and charity whilst MBEs (Member of the British Empire) were awarded to both Luke Littler and Luke Humphries for services to darts. Never before has the monarch awarded three honours to darts in one allocation.

As for Deta, (image, left © 2025 World Darts Federation) her chances of becoming Ladies World Champion began in 2001 when the BDO (British Darts Organisation) announced that (at last) they were to run a separate Women's World Darts Championship that year (6th January- Sunday 14th

January), England's Trina Gulliver stating at the time that "The announcement...is wonderful news and illustrates that they [*the BDO*] have not only listened but also done something positive to make it happen." For nearly a quarter of a century Deta had her eyes on the World title which eluded her. That was until last year.

I remember attending Lakeside for a good number of years whilst she tried so hard to knock down the multiple-champion Trina Gulliver and other challengers such as the Dutch star Francis Hoenslaar. In my heart of hearts, I believed that Deta would win the title but, as time passed, and despite her winning a great number of other titles, performing exceptionally in tournaments across the world, as she entered her 60s, it was tempting for me to think (but only for a moment) that her chance(s) had gone.

But no... Of course not. It was just a matter of waiting. CONGRATULATIONS DETA.

As for Luke Littler, the media attention, piled upon 'The Nuke' is unbelievable. In my 35+ years of researching darts, I have seen nothing like it. As for newspapers (Remember them?) all the main ones (not just the 'red tops') are all over young Littler especially at the run up to, during and after the PDC World Championship. Amazing. Even now, when in the past the media attention waned after the Final, they are still keen for more.

Even the bookies made investing a pound or two on Littler an impossibility as the odds went out to 33-1 on and sent punters seeking an each-way bet; the player he was going to beat in

the Final, that even before the first darts had been thrown by Luke in his First-Round match at Ally Pally.

I looked at Nathan Aspinall, Josh Rock, and the outsider and the ever-present, ever-dangerous James Wade but I still had my doubts. So, my money stayed in my pocket. ‘The Nuke’ was, as predicted by so many pundits, unbeatable.

The PDC recorded this darts history-making event as follows:

ASTOUNDING LITTLER RETAINS PADDY POWER WORLD DARTS CHAMPIONSHIP TITLE

Luke Littler produced a scintillating display to defeat Gian van Veen and retain the Paddy Power World Darts Championship title on Saturday evening, becoming the first million-pound World Champion on a night of history at Alexandra Palace.



Littler emulated Phil Taylor, Adrian Lewis and Gary Anderson by becoming the fourth player to retain the coveted Sid Waddell Trophy, averaging 106 to dispatch Dutch star Van Veen 7-1 in just over 43 minutes of play.

The world number one - featuring in his third consecutive World Championship final - produced a darting masterclass in the

capital, crashing in 16 maximums and pinning 46% of his attempts at double to cap off a mesmerising performance. (Image of The Nuke © PDC. Used with permission.)

Van Veen drew first blood after surviving four set darts in a dramatic opening stanza, before moving to the cusp of a two-set lead with consecutive 145 and 127 finishes.

However, Littler - courtesy of a clinical 116 combination - completed the turnaround to level at one apiece, before following up a 116 checkout and an 11-darter with a sensational 170 finish to move 2-1 ahead.

The 18-year-old extended his winning run with a hat-trick of 15-darters in the fourth, and although Van Veen halted Littler's charge with a sublime top-tops 137 to open set five, this only provided the Dutchman with temporary respite.

Littler produced another six-leg burst to extend his lead to 5-1, and Van Veen was unable to thwart the teenager's relentless charge, wiring double 16 for a 146 rot-stopper midway through set seven. The Dutchman then fired in six perfect darts as he fought to halt Littler's

march towards victory, but the Warrington wonderkid wasn't to be denied, firing in an 11-dart break to edge closer to glory at 6-1.

Littler then moved to the brink of victory with a 14-dart hold midway through set eight, before sealing the deal in sensational style, following up his 16th maximum with a magnificent 147 finish culminating on double 15.

"This feels amazing," reflected Littler, who also overcame Darius Labanauskas, David Davies, Mensur Suljovic, Rob Cross, Krzysztof Ratajski and Ryan Searle on his way to the title.

"I wasn't happy going into the first break at 1-0 down, but I had to kick on from there, and it came all together."

"Gian - what a tournament he had. He can be very proud of himself. In every set he was there, right behind me, so I had to take my chances."

"To win a million pounds - it is absolutely life-changing, and this win increases the gap between myself and Luke Humphries, so I'm further clear now as world number one."

"This is very special, but I've got to keep going. I want to keep adding more titles. I can't stop here; I'm still on this rollercoaster!"

Van Veen succeeded Michael van Gerwen in becoming the new Dutch number one following his remarkable run at Alexandra Palace, dumping out former champions Luke Humphries and Gary Anderson in the process.

The 23-year-old was bidding to follow in the footsteps of Van Gerwen and Raymond van Barneveld by becoming the third Dutchman to win the sport's biggest prize, but he was proud of his exploits over the last month.

"I'm obviously disappointed because I would have loved to lift this title, but I'm very proud to make the final," insisted Van Veen

(Image of Van Veen, right. © PDC. Used with permission), the two-time reigning World Youth Champion.

"In the last few games I took all of my chances, and tonight I didn't, but Luke was phenomenal. He put me under pressure in every single leg."



"Luke is a fantastic player. That's why he's the world number one and the back-to-back World Champion."

"I'm the Dutch number one now, so I'm very proud of myself, but obviously I'm disappointed with the result today."

"Looking back at this tournament, I'm very, very proud of what I've achieved, and hopefully 2026 is going to be a fantastic year."

Littler now becomes just the seventh player to win multiple World Championship titles, joining Taylor, Lewis, Anderson, Michael van Gerwen, Peter Wright and John Part in that decorated club, after conceding just four sets across the tournament.

Van Veen, meanwhile, has catapulted himself up to third on the PDC Werner Rankings Ladder after featuring in his second televised ranking final and scooping the £400,000 runner-up prize.

Why did we ever think otherwise?

But, is 'The Nuke' better than 'The Power' ever was?

'THE NUKE' VERSUS 'THE POWER' – A VIEW FROM 'DARTOID'

On Saturday 3rd January 2026 'Dartoid' (aka US darts journalist Paul Seigel) published his 705th column titled 'Luke Littler is better than Phil Taylor ever was!' In my view it is an exceptional piece of darts journalism. I have told Paul so and have gained his permission to reproduce the piece, to share it with all *Darts History* and beyond. Paul wrote:



'There are certain statements in darts that sound like heresy no matter how carefully they're made. This is one of them: **Luke Littler is better than Phil Taylor ever was!**

Not greater. Not more dominant. Not more accomplished. *Better.*

That distinction matters.

Phil Taylor's achievements are untouchable. Sixteen world titles. Decades of fear. A sport bent around his will. He didn't just win – he changed darts by making excellence unavoidable. Anyone arguing against his greatness is either unserious or ignorant. But greatness and ability are not the same thing. They never have been.

Taylor was the best player of his time, by a distance so vast it felt like a different sport. But his time was a sport still finding its ceiling. Luke Littler arrived after the ceiling was already built – and started trying to punch through it. This isn't about disrespect. It's about context.



[The image, above, shows Taylor after winning the 2013 World Championship title – a decade before Luke Littler first appeared at the Ally Pally. Image © 2013 Professional Darts Corporation. Used with permission.]

Taylor dominated an era where professionalism was uneven, sports psychology was barely discussed, data analysis was minimal, and the standard – even among elite players – was wildly inconsistent. He was ruthless in a landscape that allowed ruthlessness to flourish.

Littler, by contrast, has entered a darts world that is relentlessly professional. Every opponent he faces has grown up watching 110 averages on YouTube. Every weakness is studied. Every miss is punished. The margins are smaller, the pressure constant, the floor higher. And yet – he is already operating beyond it.

What separates Littler is not just scoring power, though that alone would be historic. It is effortlessness. The absence of strain. The sense that his ceiling is not visible even to him yet.

Taylor imposed himself through intensity and intimidation. Littler does it by simply playing his game, as if the stakes were optional.

There is also the question no one likes to ask: what would Phil Taylor look like if he had grown up in this era?

The honest answer is: different – but not necessarily better.

Taylor's greatness was forged in repetition, obsession, and an unrivaled hunger to win. Littler's is being forged in fluency. He doesn't need to grind the game into submission; the game already speaks his language.

Watch closely and you'll see it. The way Littler resets instantly after a mistake. The way pressure seems to widen the target rather than narrow it. The way big moments don't arrive as interruptions, but confirmations.

Taylor made darts professional. Littler is taking it into the stratosphere.

And yes, longevity matters. Titles matter. Survival across eras matters. Taylor owns all of that - for now.

But if we're asking a purer question – who plays darts at a higher level than anyone before him ever could – then the answer is already standing at the oche. Not because he will win more. Not because he might last longer. But because the game itself has moved on – and he has moved faster than all of it.

History will *always* belong to Phil Taylor.

But the future has already decided who plays darts better.

And it didn't need sixteen world titles to make its point.

Stay thirsty, my friends,'

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Thanks Paul. I am sure the article is already generating feedback direct to your website after the publication was originally posted earlier this month. I am sure that readers of *Darts History* will have views of their own which, I hope, they will share with me over coming weeks.

A DREAM IS TAKING PLACE

A special report by Ashfaque Sayed the 2007 India National Darts Champion.

I first met Ashfaque Sayed in person at the Alexandra Palace, north London in 2007. I had provided information to the PDC about Ashfaque, at the time the National Darts Champion of India, which resulted in him being invited to play at the World Championships and, as a result, my being able to meet him at the event. (See image of us, right. © 2007 Chiphotos)



Since (and before) then Ashfaque, his family, and friends, and others keen to become involved in darts, have worked hard to promote the sport in a country which, of course, sees cricket at their priority sporting event and passion. But darts is making its way to becoming one of the, if not the, growing sports in India.

This article provides us with just one example of how darts is making progress in that country. Ashfaque writes:

'Ahmedabad is a prominent city in India yet it never experienced darts being played in spite of the games' introduction to India 24 years ago.

It so happened when an old friend of mine, Rinju Zaveri, who represents top unique brands of Sports items in India catering to cricketers and most sports in Asia. frequented my home during his visit to our city of Pune. He was always fascinated by the game of darts especially when he saw my dartboard and my various darts-related items.

Rinju, along with his mentor friend, business partner, and a reputable national tennis coach, Mr. Pramesh Modi, decided to start the game at their residential Ace Tennis Academy in Ahmedabad.

I was invited to the city some months ago followed by two more visits, to plan the detail of setting a Darts Academy and introducing the game. I helped my friends set up a modest Dart

Academy named Sporting Ace Darts Academy. We set up using four NODOR/WINMAU Dartboards.



[Ashfaque later added “We have established a great relationship with NODOR/WINMAU since 2007 Patrick. All credit to you.” I told Ashfaque that all I did was make the contacts for him. The rest has happened due to Ashfaque’s and his friend’s incredible efforts.]

The team *[Some of the deaf and dumb team members are shown above]* got into action immediately and we started training about 75 enthusiastic youngsters, men, and women. Our players included young tennis players from the academy, their coaches, their parents, and a bunch of 50 especially abled (Deaf & Dumb) youngsters from average age 15-30 years.

Communicating during the training sessions was emotionally challenging I thought as Mr Ketan Shah - (National Project Coordinator for All India Sports Council for the Deaf) was there to interpret for brief periods. But I was taken aback with the eagerness and grasping power they possessed.

Within moments they started understanding and acknowledging the acceptance of the game. It has been three visits since then and the understanding of the game is just growing. During the last four months Mr Pramesh Modi, who has created National and International Champions in tennis, and Mr Rinju Zhaveri also introduced the game to prominent persons in Ahmedabad City, such as bureaucrats, educationists, municipal corporation members and bar council dignitaries, Fire & Police Depts, Clubs etc.

Another major development followed suit, seeing their zeal and enthusiasm. Our President of Indian Darts Council (IDC), Mr. Devesh Srivastava, visited them and eventually inducted them in the IDC by appointing Mr Pramesh Modi as President of the State Council/Mr Rinju as Treasurer. The excited team is already showing eagerness to hold National events.

I am personally so happy to see my passionate game gathering wings in Ahmedabad. With my friends at the helm of affairs, I have no doubts that this city very soon would have a large number of darters enjoying the sport.

I thank Mr. Modi and Mr. Rinju for inviting me and hosting me during all my visits. I shall always strive to reciprocate their requests to help promote the Game of Darts whenever they need me. Those involved that I also need to thank are:

Mr Pramesh Modi - Leading Tennis Coach in India created Champions and 40 Academies
Mr Rinju Zaveri - Partner with Mr Modi in Sporting Ace Darts Academy & Hi-tech Shoe laundry.

Mr Ketan Shah - National Project Coordinator for All India Sports Council for Deaf)
Team Official of three Olympics contingents for Deaf and Dumb.'

Thank you Ashfaque. I am so pleased to learn that darts continues to expand in India.

HISTORICAL DARTBOARDS

Eva L. recently visited my website and commented on the article relating the Bath Dartboard (pictured right) that I posted in 2019:

“This blog post about unique historical darts boards was fascinating to read.”

Thanks Eva.

I understand that the future of the Five's Board may be under threat which means that the leagues that currently play this version are will be. More about this next issue.



NEXT ISSUE

A tribute to Andrew Wood, creator of the TV game show *Bullseye* who passed away recently.

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