

DARTS HISTORY

(formerly *Dr. Darts' Newsletter*)

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AMAZING FEEDBACK

While I work on other major articles for *Darts History*, such as the early days of darts in The Netherlands (coming soon), I have no choice but to put some feedback on the back-burner for a while. I tend to place some feedback on the back-burner.

However, the last two issues, and especially #193, when I have been overwhelmed with feedback; enough to dedicate this issue to them. (I immediately apologise for those omitted.) The feedback received from Issue 193, was amazing and the majority about just one man: a man who can't play darts to save his life! In general, I have responded to 99% of the cases but not passed the detail on to you, my readers.



THE MIS-HISTORY OF DARTS

In #193 I wrote a review of a book which purported to be *The History of Darts*. Some of you may have thought it was an April Fool joke, something that I have occasionally added for the amusement of readers of *Darts History* and its predecessor, *Dr. Darts' Newsletter* over the years.



As I wrote in my closing remarks on page eight of #193, only the wacky photographs I added to the text were foolishness on my part. The rest was a *real* review about a book that should never have been published: so much damage it has done to people's understanding of *real* darts history.

I should have realised that the book was a danger to any serious person who had decided to study darts history and who had decided to start there. (I always recommend my *Darts in England 1900-39* as a starting point.) Just look at the cover of the 'new' book (extract shown above, left). What's wrong with it? No prizes to spot that the number ring is totally crazy and, I guess, was created by AI: either that or by someone who has/had not even the basic knowledge of our sport.

David King (he of darts501.com fame) wrote:

“DDN 193: Watch your blood pressure, Patrick!

I am beginning to think that some are trying to benefit from false news, and the history of the sport of darts probably started it all. LOL

If the history doesn't fit well, then some make it up. It draws people to read the stuff, and many still swallow it hook, line and sinker!”

Thanks David. I’ve just checked my bp and it’s fine.

Then Chris Lovell, a regular contributor to *Darts History*, contacted me to say:

“Hi Pat. Another good read. I also bought a copy of that book a couple of months back.

I'd have rather bought two pints of water down the pub. Utter AI rubbish but it's possible it was written as a light-hearted joke than an official history. Anyway, it's now safely in the history bin.”



Thanks for your feedback, Chris. I’ve secured my copy in a secret place where no one can find it. (See above, right.)

DR. EDDIE NORMAN – FEEDBACK FROM ACROSS THE WORLD



I have been very lucky to have met Dr. Eddie Norman some years ago, united by our love of the game/sport of darts. What Eddie has achieved for the development and spread of darts over more than sixty years is amazing. And he’s still going strong.

Brian H. in the UK wrote:

Thanks for another great read Patrick! I wonder what would the darting map of the world have looked like without Eddie Norman! Congratulations to him on his incredible achievements so far & I hope he scores the ton very soon!

Brian, that wouldn’t surprise me at all! You’ll read it first here in *Darts History* (if I’m still about).

(The photo of Eddie, above left, shows him giving a lecture in Parimarimo, the capital of Suriname, recently.)

From Santa Monica, USA, Alan H. writes:

Hi Patrick. Greetings from a very Sunny California.

Thank you for the April Darts History which is always a great read and this edition was no exception. Love the magazine. I loved the article on early darts in Germany as I lived in Munich for several years and it was so good to read how Darts Pioneer Eddie Norman laid the foundation of darts in the country long before I and probably many other readers of Darts History were even born.

I have been to two of Eddie's lectures on darts here in the US and it is a fantastic experience listening to him and his knowledge as he talks on the origins of great darts firms like Target Darts, Winmau, Nodor, and Unicorn is amazing. His knowledge is insatiable and players and officials earning a living from the sport of darts today should thank Eddie for his 65 years of unbroken service to the sport. I am one who would like to say a very big thank you to this remarkable man for introducing me to the sport.

Cannot wait for your article on the birth of darts in The Netherlands that you mentioned.

Patrick, you and your dear wife please keep up the good work with Darts History. We would be lost without it each month.'

Thanks Alan. Maureen thanks you too.

As for the early history of darts in The Netherlands, I can report that work is continuing apace and will be published in the summer: maybe earlier.

And then from Hamburg, Germany, Ben Sheppard added:

'Dear Dr Darts,

I would like to drop a line to you to say thank you for continuing to send me your monthly Darts History which I appreciate very much.

This month I really enjoyed your second article on the early days of Darts in Germany, as I wrote to you some time ago wondering if you were going to write an article on early darts in Germany and your mind-blowing article this month was the second response.

As one watches the darts here in Germany, we have to say a big thank you to the owners of The House of Darts International, in particular the Norman brothers Pete and Eddie, who sponsored so much here in darts in Germany in those far away days when there was no money in the sport.

Based for many years in The Netherlands I asked also if you might consider an article on early day darts in The Netherlands which you mention in Darts History this month.

Through your columns may I please congratulate Dr. Eddie Norman for his 65 years promoting the sport of darts around the world. I feel sure that no one else will achieve such a record and darts owes him a great thank you.

Again, thank you for such a great magazine that arrives on time every time and must take you forever to write. A big thank you to you and your lovely proof reader.

PS. It would be great to see a photo of you at work preparing Darts History.

I replied to Ben: 'I have tried to find a vaguely interesting photo of me 'working' but can only find the one at the top of the front page that Maureen took in 2019. I hope it's OK.'

Also from Germany, David M. wrote:

'Hello Patrick...

Writing from Erlangen here in Germany where I am currently living and working. May I thank you for the April History of Darts Magazine.

It is a lovely edition, and may I thank you for the wonderful write up on the early days of darts in Germany. So nice to hear how it all happened and showing how those great founders of the sport in Germany like Eddie Norman started the ball rolling in Germany for others to take over. Without your magazine we would never learn where world darts began and where today's rules of the sport came from.

[Eddie, right, pictured with her personalised NODOR dartboard.]

I met Eddie at a showcase lecture of his on the sport of darts in Austria three years ago when he had his 'travelling' Nodor dartboard show with him lecturing on British darts firms and great darts players of the 1970's. A true gentleman of darts and a polyglot who had time to answer questions from everyone. Where would darts in Germany be today without his initiative all those years ago and what it has become today. Thanks again for a great magazine.'*



*Polyglot - 'a person who knows and is able to use several languages.' (I had to look it up!)

And Roger Christian from Singapore wrote:

Hello Patrick. Greetings from a very warm Singapore.

First thank you for April edition of Darts History which my wife and I enjoyed very much. I have currently been seconded to Singapore from Thailand. Congratulations to Dr Eddie Norman on his 65 years in darts. What an achievement! I would like to offer my congratulations to him. And many congratulations to him for establishing darts in Germany and, as is generally known, he ignited the sport of darts in both Belgium and The Netherlands.

After listening to Eddie preach the darts gospel you are convinced you have to get involved in the sport. And one day you will be world champion.

Your Darts History asked why so many darts champions came from The Netherlands as against Germany. I have lived in both countries and I think part of the answer is in Germany a lot more people play soft-tip darts, whereas in The Netherlands it had always been a steel-tip darts country and basically no soft-tip darts.

I think another reason The Netherlands was ahead of Germany for World Champions was Germany never had a German Darts Organisation for 35 years after The Netherlands had a national darts organisation, so The Netherlands were first out of the traps.'

James King, of the Europe Ex-Pats Darts Federation, wrote:

Dear Patrick. Thank you so much for a wonderful edition of *Darts History* April edition. I am always amazed at what Eddie Norman has done for darts across the world, and reading the letter from the early days of darts in Germany from your reader Roger Daniels in *Darts History* helps to shine a light on some of his achievements and what he has put into the sport he obviously loves so much.

As the players like Luke Littler, Luke Humphries, Gerwyn Price and others play the sport today, where would they be without the likes of Eddie Norman taking the sport out of the public houses and on to the big stages so many years ago?

Thousands of people now earn a living, managing players, putting on darts tournaments, playing exhibitions, and so much more, but, without the genius of Eddie Norman, darts around the globe would probably be still a pub game played in local pubs (still in the dark ages).

We in Europe and around the globe have so much to thank Eddie for, and without doubt so many earning a living from the sport today probably without realising it, owe so much to this remarkable man who has asked for nothing in return, who after 65 years in darts is still promoting the sport around the world today and earning so many a living from the sport.

From the bottoms of our hearts, thank you Eddie for what you have done, and are still doing, for the sport of darts and we wish you well on your exciting journey promoting the sport to your next five countries to achieve your total of promoting darts in one hundred countries.

Patrick, your *Darts History* is circulated here to over 220 of our members by e-mail across Europe all who love it. Kindest Regards.'

AND FROM MY WEBSITE

Richard J. F. wrote to me recently on the subject of 'Pre-war Dart Manufacturers':

'Good afternoon, Dr. Chaplin. I was wondering if you know of any manufacturer of darts pre-war other than Unicorn? Your article about Trevor Peachey [See my website <https://patrickchaplin.com/2019/05/22/trevor-peachey/>] mentions his first darts came from Woolworths. I've searched through newspaper archives but no luck.

Most old brass darts are chunky and more often or not heavy. I think the reason heavier darts prevailed is that lighter darts would fall from the board more often or not. Boards in pubs would not be renewed often so a heavier dart is advantageous. However, Unicorn made a

dart called the "Half Pint" - I believe I have a set. The point is 13 AWG and allows the lighter dart to penetrate better.'



I replied to R. J. F. as follows:

'In response to your enquiry about pre-war darts manufacturers I can tell you that Unicorn was only *just* pre-war. Frank Lowy patented a metal, chromium-plated dart, the *Silver Comet*, in the late 1930s which was marketed through John Wisden & Co. [See, left, a set of Silver Comets, sold under the Wisden brand 'By appointment.'] In 1938 the branded sports goods division of Wisden went into bankruptcy leaving Lowy £800 out of pocket. For a while he traded as 'F. Lowy' but by late 1938 the name was changed to Unicorn Products Ltd. Lowy saw the unicorn as part on the royal appointment logo; saw

the point of the horn of the fictitious animal and then named his company thus.

At the beginning of modern darts (late 19th century) there was no British darts manufacturer. Wooden, feathered, darts (primarily used in fairgrounds) were imported from France where, in that country, they were used in a target game called Flechettes. For decades the 'French darts' were popular, and cheap. Shops bought them by the gross and sold them individual for a few pence. But by the mid-to-late 1920s, NODOR began producing darts with brass barrels. They were quickly followed by such companies as Jack Hood, C. Giles and Co. (later to become M. Y. Games) and Abbey Sports.



You mentioned that Trevor Peachey had told me that he bought his first set from Woolworths but this would have been post-WW2. Indeed, Marks & Spencer jumped on the darts bandwagon post-war as indeed Harrods much later.

The earliest wooden 'French darts' [see above right] were very light, just wood, turkey feathers, and a point, but later the weights were added (light, medium, heavy) by adding lead either inside the barrel or pressed around them. Actual weight in grams were not added to product information until much later when *exact* weights became more important to players.

Post-war dartboards were all made of elm or poplar wood unless you were very rich in which case you could, from the mid-1930s, purchase a NODOR bristle dartboard manufactured from sisal (as indeed they are today).

The actual weight of the darts has little to do with darts falling out. The secrets back then was to keep the dartboards subtle (often by dunking them in water overnight) and your dart points



sharp. If they were allowed to dry out, the metal 'spiders' (segment dividing ring) would buckle and the dartboard become unusable and, as you say, be replaced.

Finally, you mentioned the Unicorn 'Half Pint.' These were half-size darts, with brass barrels and either feather or, as in the example right, plastic stems and were purchased as a novelty rather than being used in any serious games. The example shown here are 1950s/early 1960s. The case is made of Bakelite, as were many early telephones and other utility items.

And yes, as you say, searching old newspapers rarely produces anything!'

A PRESUMABLY POST-1896 DARTBOARD.

Graham S. wrote to me recently,

'I'm a volunteer in a local museum. One of the exhibits is shewn below. I think that it's cork (so maybe pre-1940) and presumably post 1896 given the numbering. It also looks perhaps hand made. What do you think?'

I replied:

'Hello Graham. Thank you for your email and the attached photo of the dartboard you have in your museum.[See right]

As for what the dartboard is made of, it is difficult to determine from your photo but I'm pretty sure it is made of coiled paper. If you look on the reverse you should see the marks where the paper has been tightly rolled and then each dartboard sliced off. Cork was rarely used for dartboards as they tended to dry out very quickly and if they were soaked overnight, they would fall to pieces when removed from their container, unlike wooden boards (elm or poplar) would retain their shape.



The dartboard in your possession looks either homemade by a hobbyist or manufactured by a small company. The giveaway is the number ring being stencilled around the board. You can see, for example, where the black ink of the number six segment has oozed into the next door 10 segment. (I assume there is no information given on the reverse of your board.) These types of dartboards would, more likely, to have been played on at home rather than in serious competition or in a pub. Such dribbling of black ink into other segments would not been allowed in any organised tournament.

Also, the way in which the dartboard is hung from the top by a wire hook indicates its home use: dartboards in pubs would have been housed in a cabinet.

As for the actual date, I'm thinking that it is wartime quality: Second World War. Not before. But I could be wrong. The year 1896 means nothing at all, as I proved years ago that the man named Gamlin, who was credited with the 'invention' of the numbering system on that date, never existed.'

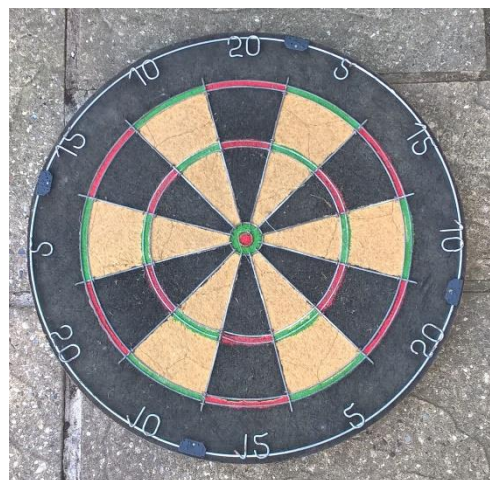
Do any readers have any other ideas or have you seen this type of board before? If so, please contact me at patrick.chaplin@btinternet.com.

REGIONAL DARTBOARDS – THE FIVES BOARD - UPDATE

Great news that WINMAU has placed the Five dartboards back into the company's schedule. This information has come to me from Andy Jones, the Senior Accounts Manager, who I had been dealing with for some time and know well.

Andy added "I'm not sure when these will be back in stock but it will probably take a few months..."

Colin Lloyd, one of the WINMAU ambassadors, along with Trina Gulliver MBE and David King of darts501.com, have also been fighting the Fives corner so it's thanks to them too.



Please spread the news! And when the Fives are back on the schedule, place your orders!

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