

DARTS HISTORY

(formerly *Dr. Darts' Newsletter*)

Issue 199

www.patrickchaplin.com

October 2026



BOBBY GEORGE'S *NEWS OF THE* WORLD RECORD

At the beginning of August, Marie George, wife of and PA to the legendary English darts player Bobby George, emailed me:

'Hi Patrick. Hope you're well. Would you have the name of the guy who beat Bobby in his first News of the World in 1978 please.'

I informed Marie that the player who beat Bobby that year was Jocky Wilson. Jocky met Bobby in the first round and beat him 2-1. Marie replied:

"Fancy forgetting him lol. Thanks. Can I be cheeky and ask who beat him in the other years he got beat at the Grand Finals?"

Of course, Marie. In 1978 Bobby did not know Jocky that well but, as we know, they became great friends and Bobby's memories of Jocky are recorded in his two books of autobiography

Bobby Dazzler – My Story (2006) and *Still Here – The King of Bling* (2025). In 1978 Jocky went on to the semi-finals where he was beaten by Stefan Lord 2-0 and then Lord went on to win the title. (Image (above right) DW/PC Archive.)



Not likely to refuse a lady, I told Marie she could be and I provided the basic information for her and then decided to expand on it for this article. In fact, Bobby qualified for the Grand Finals of the *News of the World* Individual Championship on five occasions, 1978, 1979, 1980, 1982 and 1986.

The 1978 Championship was held at the Empire Pool, Wembley on Saturday 29th April. Bobby had qualified as the Eastern Counties Divisional champion, playing out of the Catholic Club, Hainault, Essex. In the programme he was named *Bobbie* George and the mini-biography read:

'Bobby George, our representative from the Eastern Counties, is married, and is a floor layer from Barking. At Ipswich, the Divisional Finals, he took his own fan club with him, which

included four pretty cheer leaders, who certainly made a noise on his behalf. To the deafening cheers of some of the keenest fans in the sport, Bobby won through.'



[Image, left: *Darts World*/PC Archive – Charles Cramp. I could read what was written on their chests 'BO BO THE GREATEST' and 'BO BO' on their bottoms. I was unable to read the legend on their backs but it looks like an advertisement for a local butcher shop! Probably an early sponsor.]

'He is quite a newcomer to darts, and we hope we have the pleasure of seeing him play for many years to come. Bobbie

was presented with the trophy by Councillor D. Myer, Mayor of Ipswich.' (Image below, right, © *News of the World*. Used with permission.)

In 1979, Bobby was back, this time at the Wembley Arena on Saturday 2nd June, returning again as the Eastern Counties Divisional Champion to compete in the Grand Finals, this time playing out of the *King George V*, Ilford, Essex. The programme mini-biog read:

'Bobby George – last year's hot favourite to win the Championship at Wembley, has again won the Eastern Counties Divisional Finals. Bobby is 33...As usual, he took his very pretty cheerleaders along to the Corn Exchange, Ipswich, and I am sure we will not only hear them today, but also see them dressed in their Bobby George outfits.'

At Ipswich his comment after the game was "I can't tell a lie – I didn't play well tonight. I had a bit of luck." But don't be deceived, Bobby George has a great future in this game, and has a lot of talent.'



In the draw Bobby drew a 'bye' so moved straight into the quarterfinal where he met George Adams, the Western Counties Divisional Champion, who played out of the *King's Head*, Chard, Somerset. Bobby beat Adams 2-0 and progressed to the semi-finals where Wales Divisional Champion, Lance Richards, who played out of the *Rock & Fountain Inn*, Skewen, Glamorgan, was waiting for him. Bobby beat Richards 2-0 and reached his first Grand Final unbeaten, so far.

There Bobby met top left-hander, England's Alan Glazier who had beaten Sweden's Stefan Lord in the First Round 2-1, John Herrmann, the Lancashire & Chesire Divisional Champion, 2-1 in the quarterfinal and then Martin Humphray (London & Home Counties champion) 2-0 in the semi-final.

Bobby was incredible in the Final. Unstoppable. The programme I have in my archive recorded both players' scores. In the first match Bobby was on fire, scoring 100, 100, 100,

100 and 101 out in fifteen darts. Alan could not touch him, scoring only 40, 41, 41, 55 before Bobby took the leg.



In the second match of the Final, Alan played much better registering 140, 85, 100, 100, 40 but Bobby was still too good for him scoring 180, 140, 60, 46, 80 to record another 15-dart finish, winning the title on double five. (Image, left, shows Alan with the Yorkshire Divisional Champion trophy, 1979. © *News of the World*. Used with permission.)

Returning to the Wembley Arena as reigning *NoW* champion and, again, as Eastern Counties (1979/80) Divisional Champion, Bobby was hoping to become only the second person in *News of the World* history, thus far, to win the title in successive years. (The first had been the London & Home Counties Divisional champion, Tom Barrett, who had won the title in both 1963/64 and 1964/65.) No longer a 'new boy,' Bobby's popularity had grown over the years yet he was only fourth favourite as the men toed the oche, behind England's Dave Whitcombe (4-6 on) John Lowe (evens) and Stefan Lord (11-10).

In the first round Bobby beat Colin Kemeys, the Western Counties Divisional Champion 2-1, but came to a halt in the quarterfinals where he met 'Old Stoneface,' John Lowe, and was beaten 2-1. It would be Whitcombe and Lord who would contest the Grand Final (John Lowe has lost 2-1 to Lord in the semi-final); Lord taking the title for the second time, beating Dave Whitcombe 2-0, having lifted the title for the first time back in 1978.

Bobby's next qualification for the Grand Finals was in the 1981/82 season, at the Wembley Arena on Saturday 15th May 1982, again appearing as the Eastern Counties Divisional Champion, playing out the *Old Maypole*, Hainault, Essex.

The programme that year featured the following mini-biography of Bobby which read:

'Another familiar face here today is that of Bobby George, representing the Eastern Counties, who took the title in this Aren in the enthralling final against Alan Glazier back in 1979. That was certainly one of the most exciting, and memorable "News of the World" Finals we have experienced in recent years.

As you are probably aware, Bobby was seriously ill some time ago, but has shown he is determined to fight his way back to the top of the tree. It will be interesting to see if he has managed to regain his earlier form and see how today's performance compares with that of 1979. [He received] his trophy from the Mayor of Colchester, Councillor Roger W. R. Browning.'

On that occasion, Bobby earned a 'bye' which resulted in him meeting another Western Counties Divisional Champion, John Yelland, pictured right, who played out of the *London Inn*, Kilkhampton, Cornwall, in the quarterfinals. That was as far as Bobby reached that year as Yelland beat him 2-0. (Image: (© *News of the World*. Used with permission.)



It wouldn't be until the 1985/86 season that Bobby once again won through to the *News of the World* Grand Final. Held, as usual, at the Wembley Arena on Saturday 17th May. The programme announced 'A warm welcome to Bobby George, who's making Wembley almost a home from home' adding, 'There's no danger of big Bob going down with nerves - he's been here so often, he's almost qualified for his own dressing room!' and that he would be 'out to prove a point today.'

And he did.

Returning to playing out of the *Old Maypole*, Hainault, Bobby was drawn a 'bye' in the first round which led to him being challenged by Brian Hardy, the North of England Divisional Champion, who represented the *Globe Tavern*, Long Town, Cumbria. Bobby beat Brian 2-1. In the semi-final Bobby came up against his England compatriot, Richie Gardiner, who had also earned a 'bye' in the first round and had then beaten Wales' *NoW* champion Chris Johns 2-1 in the quarterfinals. Bobby took the match 2-1.

This led to a Final for Bobby against the USA *NoW* qualifier, Rick Ney, representing the United States Darts Association. Rick Ney has earned his place at the Grand Finals by winning the U. S. Open for the *fourth* time. Rick began his campaign in the Grand Final by beating England's Mike Gregory 2-1 in the first round. He then beat Mark Pope, the Lancashire & Cheshire Divisional Champion 2-1 in the quarterfinals before taking out Lars-Erik Karlsson, the Swedish champion (representing the Swedish Darts Association) in the semi-final. On his way, Lars-Erik had removed Scotland's darts star Ronnie Sharp 2-0 and Canada's very best, Bob Sinnaeve 2-1, before meeting Rick Ney in his semi-final which Rick won 2-1.

In the Final, Bobby was in his usual confident mood and beat Rick 2-0.



For his victory, apart from the magnificent *News of the World* trophy earning pride of place in the *Old Maypole* in Hainault and a permanent commemorative plaque to record Bobby's victory. He also won his own replica of the trophy plus £5000, a Tradewinds Caribbean Two-week holiday for two and a gallon of Captain Morgan Black Label Rum.

Bobby was the first *News of the World*/Captain Morgan Darts Champion. PLUS, he was presented with the trophy

by *The Sun* newspaper's Page 3 Girl, Maria Whittaker! (Image, above left, shows Bobby after winning the title, clutching the *News of the World* trophy and his 'replica' trophy. © DW/PC Archive/Steve Daszko.)

Bobby's reaching the Grand Final five times was a great achievement by any standards. It was also achieved by England's Mike Gregory (1982/83, 1983/84, 1985/86, 1986/87* and 1987/88* and Sweden's Stefan Lord in 1975/76, 1977/78*, 1979/80*, 1980/81 and 1986/87.

Only the Eastern Counties champion Eddie Brown beat that total – *six* occasions, playing out of the *Magpie Inn*, Stonham, near Stowmarket, Suffolk each time – 1960/61, 1961/62*, 1963/64, 1964/65, 1969/70 and 1973/74.

*An asterisk indicates that the player went on to win the title.

A few years ago, during a chat about the *News of the World*, Bobby was, naturally, pleased that he had reached the Grand Finals five times but told me “I should have won a lot more.”

Bobby’s victories at the *News of the World* were only a fraction of the successes that he achieved over fifty years in the game and only a fraction of the pleasure he has given darts fans over the years, not only in darts but as a TV personality and pundit.

MY 100th COUNTRY

Since the 1960s, Dr. Eddie Norman, founder of The House of Darts International with his late brother Pete, has continuously travelled the globe promoting darts and darts products. His journeys have often been noted in numerous editions of *Dr. Darts’ Newsletter/Darts History*. Indeed, Eddie’s lectures given *en route* to fascinated audiences around the world has also included a mention of or quotes sections from my newsletters, thus generating requests to sign up to *Darts History*.

Although he has, sort of, retired on a number of occasions in the past, he told me earlier this year that the thought retirement might genuinely be taken seriously if he could just reach the total of 100 different countries visited since the 1960s. Recently he wrote:



‘Patrick. Sorry for the delay in replying. I’ve just arrived back home and have had no wi-fi for four days as having been to Skopje, the capital of North Macedonia, [National flag, left] preaching the ‘gospel’ of darts to a nation totally unprepared for the sport. I have twice before tried to visit North Macedonia but problems with Greece and Bulgaria meant that the situation

did not work out safely. So, it was great to actually be able to visit and explain the sport of darts to a bemused crowd of 200 people.

It will be interesting to see how things develop in the country from here in the way of darts, but I have given details of where to get supplies and the interest is definitely there. I also gave out a few printed copies of” Darts History. Fortunately, the bulk of the younger audience spoke English but Macedonian is the main language. ’

Is Eddie calling it a day?

‘Now with the hundredth country behind me, I am not looking for any new countries, instead ‘re-visiting’ some of the countries I have made friends in before eventually, in a couple of years, calling it a day and, if still fit, spend much more time in our apartment in Marbella. ’

What an achievement! My congratulations to Eddie on achieving his 'ton.'

Dartoid and the lack of control of the crowds

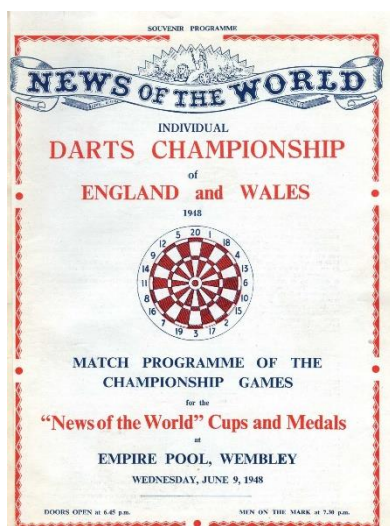
On 25th September 'Dartoid' issued his 725th column.

I have always enjoyed and will continue to enjoy, everything Dartoid (Paul Seigel) writes. Often witty, often pithy, but always spot on. Always honest and always worth reading. Just like this one. Please read:



[Column #725 The PDC Needs to Take Control of the Crowds – Dartoids World](#)

Old enough to remember how it used to be back in the 1970s/1980s, I congratulated Paul on another cracking article, adding, "What about this?"



'We want the best man to win tonight; we hope you do too. So please refrain your excitement. Keep your applause, or criticism, till the end of the leg, always remembering that one interjection may put a player clean off his throw and maybe lose him the match. And never call out to a player the score he needs, especially when he gets down to a double.'...This is a sporting contest...in our opinion the most sporting and most popular indoor contest in the country. Please prove that you are sportsmen too.'

I extracted that paragraph from a programme for the *News of the World* Individual Darts Championship Divisional games for the 1948 season; the first season that the tournament returned after cessation of the Second World War.

Does the PDC put a warning in the programme and/or on the tickets? If they don't, then surely, they should/could.

Feedback from #198

Brian H. wrote:

'Thanks yet again for another great read Patrick! The whole tungsten process surprised me... & as for 'darts for Tops'....amazing! Shame there wasn't a numbered log-end found in the Mary Rose! That would got the imagination working overtime! Would have been great though, to date the game back to Tudor times! Wouldn't have fancied a game against Henry VIII with his temper though 😊'

Mick S. emailed me:

'Patrick. Well, that is a very different DDN. Great to read about tungsten darts. The things we take for granted. I never knew tungsten has been around for such a long time. You never fail to amaze me Patrick. Thank you.'

James M. commented on tungstens:

Patrick. Excellent feature on Tungsten – very interesting, thanks. Tungsten dart prices have rocketed in the last year due to the price of Tungsten itself rocketing. I have not looked into precisely why that was but I assumed that it was something to do with Trump v China trade wars. May be worth including sentence on that in your next issue.

I replied:

Thanks James. I'll include your feedback next time to see what theories other readers have. I'm guessing that the cost of tungsten darts in general has rocketed because of the increased demand.

Does anyone have any other theories?

James H. wrote:

'Hi Patrick. Excellent newsletter as always. The tungsten story is a fascinating article. Great read. I can't wait to read Part 2 when it appears. Also, it's great to access the previous editions of the Darts History newsletter.'

Thanks James. Part Two of the Tungsten Story is in preparation.

NON-HISTORY 'HISTORY' DARTS BOOKS

You may recall that I recently 'reviewed' a dreadful darts book where, apart from numerous historical errors, the dartboard on the cover wasn't numbered properly. Such an error simply warned anyone to put the book down and not read on.

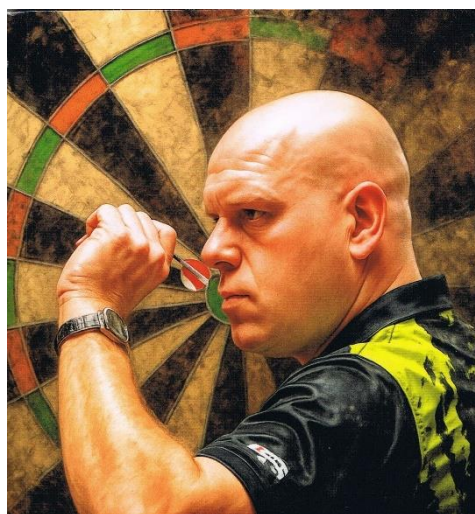
Another darts book published last year which promised 'amazing and surprising' facts was packed with errors. To mention only two, before I hide the volume away in the bin, let's start with the statement that

'In the 19th century, some bars banned darts due to the large number of fights that broke out between players and spectators.'

'Bars'? Our inns and taverns were never known as 'bars.' I have recorded no 'modern' darts matches with spectators ever being played in the 19th century. Puff and dart has been traced but not the game we know today until the late Victorian period. Male pub-goers were far too occupied, drinking, gambling, carding, and womanising, and the only 'pub games' played tended to be chess or possibly dominoes. Modern darts was a few years away.

Then what about the warning that

'Choking under pressure in darts does not only affect individual players, but it can also influence the overall flow of the game.'



“Excuse me landlord. But my opponent is putting me off by choking to death. Phone the DRA.”*

As for the lady’s game, one of the author’s ‘astonishing stories’ is titled ‘Woman Who Set a Record by Landing 10 Consecutive Darts on a Nickel Stuck to a Wall,’ they professed that

‘This kind of feat reflects the incredible skill and precision that some players achieve through dedicated practice.’

Excellent skills indeed. I’m sure it does. However, bearing in mind that a nickel is an alloy, currently made of 75% copper: 25% nickel, I would have thought sticking one dart, let alone ten, into a metal coin of 22.21 mm diameter (0.835 inches) would have been a great, if not impossible, achievement. Hang on though. The authors do also state that ‘...no official records confirm this specific achievement.’

In addition, you will not be surprised to learn that ‘no official records’ can be found to support the claim that a ‘player hit a nine-dart finish while talking on the phone during an informal tournament,’ or that a player ‘scored 180 while throwing from behind their back.’

Which reminds me of the time that I achieved a 170 shot out by throwing a set of the darts below (without flights), blindfolded, at the dartboard, turned and covered with newspapers, from the Saloon Bar through to the Public Bar (about 20 yards) back in the summer of 2020.



Unfortunately, I have mislaid the evidence to support this. (Image: © Winmau. Used with permission.)

Such books as these quoted from are assisting with the destruction of darts history as we know it. Buy them at your own risk.

And, of course, you will have noticed that the authors (possibly AI?) of the volume cited here have turned MVG into a left-handed darts champion!

* Darts Regulation Authority

NEXT ISSUE: *Another* missing link?

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