

DR. DARTS' NEWSLETTER

Issue 25 May 2012



INTRODUCTION

Hi everyone and a very warm welcome to *DDN* #25.

This month's issue appears a little later than planned because I've been completing the text for my new book *180! Fascinating Darts Facts* that will be published by History Press in December. I've also been writing articles for *Inside Darts* magazine, undertaking more research and preparing for my English Heritage interview in London at the end of this month plus working with my new webmaster on my new website.



The lead image here this month shows England Team Manager Peter Melton presenting England Ladies' captain Trina Gulliver with a memento on the occasion of her receiving her 50th international cap. Congratulations Trina. (More about ladies darts later.) (Image courtesy of the BDO)

Finally, I hope I didn't catch too many of you out with my outrageous April Fool in Issue 24 about Brian Camlin. As regular readers will know, this happens only once a year so we're back to normal this month.

This issue's key feature is an exclusive interview with Mike Gregory and, of course, lots more.

FOLLOW UP FROM PREVIOUS ISSUES

(a) Homework

The answer to the question "Which three men's World Champions defended and regained their world titles at the first time of asking?" is Eric Bristow (1980 and 1981), Raymond van Barneveld (1998 and 1999) and Adrian Lewis (2011 and 2012).

(b) Jocky Wilson

Thanks to everyone who e-mailed me last month about the death of Jocky Wilson and for their memories of seeing 'The Wee Yin' in action.

Glen H. of Seattle "I was very saddened to read of Jocky Wilson's passing. I got to watch Jocky play in person and met him briefly when I was able to get his autograph at the

Sahara Hotel, Las Vegas at the old North American Open in the late 1980s. When I asked him for his autograph his face lit up with a huge smile and he warmly greeted me as if I was an old friend even though I was meeting him for the first time. We chatted briefly before he went off to play another game. I was struck by how genuinely friendly, warm, and funny he was. The world of darts has lost one of its true luminaries.”

Peter R. said, “What can I possibly say in tribute to Jocky Wilson the finest Scottish darts player ever? OK, the averages are notably higher these days but to win two Embassy World Championships during the halcyon days of darts, beating the two great English players of the day in Lowe and Bristow was a magnificent achievement.

When Jocky played Eric, my mate would shout for Jocky (being Scottish himself) while I would root for Eric. The great thing was that it didn't really matter who won because the matches were totally electric and we all enjoyed them so much. A Wilson/Bristow encounter was usually the highlight of any tournament.



While living in Brighton I got the chance to see Jocky play an exhibition in a pretty average pub in the town centre. It would be about 1984. He played nine matches of 1001 against local players and naturally won the lot. The finish that sticks with me was three double 10s to take out 60. I thought that was brilliant.”

Daryl H. added, “What sad news about Jocky. What a legend” whilst Warren A. commented “A sad loss in Jocky’s passing.” Indeed.

Eddie N., who has sold a few darts in his time, remembered Jocky playing darts in Bristol. He told me, “Jocky was on last playing Alan Evans. Jocky had had a skin full and as Alan went up to throw, Jocky walked behind him, took a backwards step, and lo and behold fell off the stage. Alan took his darts out and turned around and saw no Jocky.

Jocky was able to continue after being helped back on the stage but swore Alan pushed him off as he had only had sixteen cans which he could remember and no way would that affect him.”

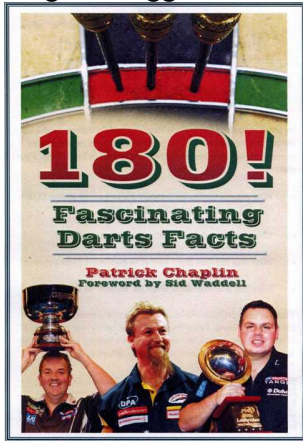
Eddie also recalled the time when he and Leighton Rees were in conversation with Jocky whilst having a few drinks. He said, “Jocky told Leighton and me about his family and his life over a lot of drink. Leighton and I listened and afterwards I said to Leighton, “I never understood a word he said” and Leighton replied, “Neither did I. I never do” and yet we had both sat there listening to him for an hour!”

Alan W. remembered an occasion when Jocky was on to achieve the first televised nine-dart 501. At the time pundits were predicting that either Jocky or Eric Bristow would do it. Alan told me, “I remember that Jocky was on a televised nine-darter and just wired double 18 with his ninth dart. As I recall, it would have won him a house and eternal fame as the first person ever to hit a televised nine-darter. The funny thing is that I have only ever hit one nine-darter myself and that was about 35 years ago in Kirkcaldy ...against Jocky!”

(c) 180! Fascinating Darts Facts

As mentioned in the Introduction to this issue, my new book *180! Fascinating Darts Facts* has now been completed and submitted to my publisher The History Press.

It was a hard slog as I had to complete it within three months but I sincerely hope that darts fans all over the world will buy it and enjoy it when it eventually hits the bookshelves in December. In the book I delve deep into my archive to present a wide range of nuggets of darting trivia never before gathered together in book form. My good



friend Sid Waddell has written the Foreword and has said, “I know of no other book that opens the doors on the wild and wonderful world of darts as this one. Patrick Chaplin is veritably the Herodotus of darts.” If you don’t know who ‘Herodotus’ was then Google the name and you’ll see why I was thrilled with that statement!

By the way, the cover image shown here is only a first draft prepared for a flyer for my forthcoming English Heritage interview on 31st May which I mentioned to you all in an update a couple of weeks ago. The final version of the cover may well be completely different.

Purely coincidentally, Manchester University Press has informed me that my academic work *Darts in England 1900-1939 – A social history* will be published in paperback in the autumn. You may recall that the cost of the hardback when *Darts in England* was originally published in 2009 was £55. I am assured by MUP that the price of the paperback version will be a lot less, and I’m guessing under £20, so that should put it within the range of all darts fans.

(d) Mark Powell – The Oche Jockey

In previous issues of *DDN* I have mentioned my friend Mark Powell who presents a two-hour programme ‘Oche on the Radio’ every Saturday on my local community radio station SAINT FM. I have been interviewed several times by him over the past six months. Mark has also interviewed darts luminaries including Rod Harrington and Bobby George.

‘Oche on the radio’ is a great concept but on Saturday 5th May Mark presented his show for the last time. Mark and his wife Charlotte had the opportunity to move back to Hampshire and within only a few weeks they had obtained work and were moving immediately after the final show ended. I joined Mark for that final show and we both had a great time.

Mark has promised to keep in touch and plans to get back behind the microphone and preach the word of darts just as soon as he possibly can. I thank Mark for the opportunity of being on his show and wish him and Charlotte all the very best for the future.

(e) Darts in India

Back in issue 23 I mentioned a young Indian darts player named Verdant ‘Prowess’ Dalmia and his passion for the sport and his wish to eventually ‘win in the PDC’.

Hot on his heels comes another young darter from the same continent, 17-year-old Akshay Mehta. Akshay (pictured), like Verdant, is full of enthusiasm for darts, a sport he first played in 2010. During that same year he won his very first tournament. This year he was runner-up to Amit Gilitwala in the Youth Boys category at the 9th International in Hyberdad.



Akshay told me that he practices two hours every day and says that the darts player who inspired him most is Wales’ Mark Webster. When I asked him what his ambition is Akshay replied, “I want to become the No 1 darts player in India and the world and make my parents and my country proud of me.”

It seems to me that India has some excellent emergent darts talent.

***DDN* EXCLUSIVE – THE MIKE GREGORY INTERVIEW**

Several months ago I promised to feature my interview with England’s Mike Gregory. For reasons I cannot recall the interview simply didn’t appear but now I am pleased to say, “Here it is.”

Mike was a top player of the 1980s and 1990s and is probably best remembered for being only the third player to successfully defend the *News of the World* Individual title (1986-87 and 1987-88) and for his Embassy final in 1992 against the then emerging star, Phil Taylor which went right to the wire.

Mike was born at St. Martin's Hospital, Bath, Somerset on 16th December 1956. His father George was a kerb layer while his mother Florence worked at a rubber company. When he was four or five years old Mike's step brother Roger Smith (another well-known name in darts especially in the West Country) gave him an old elm dartboard and a set of darts. Mike told me, "I used to put the dartboard on the settee and throw darts at it." As he became older Mike used to go and watch Roger play for the renowned West of England darts team. Mike said, "I used to go and watch them up on stage with the likes of Leighton Rees and Alan Evans, Doug Priestner and Harry Heenan taking part." Leighton was to become Mike's role model.

When asked, "What was your first major breakthrough in the sport?" Mike told me, "The year I won the Bath Open. I scored a maximum 180 in the final too." Then in the early 1980s at a tournament at Picketts Lock, darts player manager Mel Coombes approached him and they had a chat. Apparently Jocky Wilson had seen Mike play and had said Mel, "Go get this lad. He's going to be good." A little later Mike was offered a contract with Unicorn who, once he had established himself brought out the 'Mike Gregory' signature darts.

Mike played in the Embassy World Professional Darts Championship for the first time in 1984. He lost in the last eight to none other than Jocky Wilson. Mike commented, "Jocky always seemed to beat me in the Embassy and I always beat Jocky in the World Masters." Realising how much money could be made from darts even back then, Mike went professional. He told me, "I went from earning £75 per week spraying glue on to sheets of steel, plywood and aluminium to £2000 a week playing darts" adding, "After the Finland Open the points put me in the Unipart British Professional at Redcar where I beat John Lowe in the final and won £8,000. So it was no contest. I just *had* to go professional."

When I asked Mike about that tightest of Embassy's back in 1992 he told me, "I was a bit disappointed. I rushed it. A costly mistake. A little later at the Unipart European Masters against Peter Manley I had the same shot, double top, and I took my time. Had a drink of water and hit the shot first dart."

Mike won over twenty-five England international caps. He recalled, "It was a strange feeling playing for your country. The first time I had to follow Eric Bristow. I was nervous but Eric said to me, "You ain't world number four for nothing. Go out there and win" and I did."



In 1992 Mike was one of sixteen 'rebels' who split from the BDO and joined the World Darts Council. Mike said, "There was not enough money available with the BDO so I joined the WDC." Mike's success was instant as he won the inaugural WDC event, the 1992 Lada UK Masters at the *Talk of the East* club in Norwich defeating Dennis Priestley 8-5 in the final (see image, copyright holder unknown). The following year Mike successfully

defended his Masters title at the same venue beating Bob Anderson 8-6.

In 1994 Mike returned to the BDO for personal reasons but was not welcomed with open arms, many apparently believing that he was only coming back to take 'their' titles. Mike did indeed win a few major titles including the Belgium Open (twice), the Swedish Open (three times) and the Norwegian Open. But in 1996 Mike took the decision to retire from professional darts. However, he continued to play darts in his local pubs and during 2011 began to play exhibitions again and plans to do more in the future. (The image shown here of Mike was taken last autumn.)



Has Mike any regrets? He told me, "If I'd've known what was going to happen I would have stayed with WDC. Hindsight is a wonderful thing." And the PDC? Mike said, "I think the PDC has done it really good but I think the BDO should have taken up Barry Hearn's offer. Everything in one house."

And finally what does the future hold for Mike Gregory? Well, he's enjoying life with Sandra, his partner of over ten years. Mike told me, "I'm very happy. That's all I want to be. No stress."

ESSEX LADIES

It is with great pleasure that I include in this issue a few words of congratulation to the Essex (my home county) Ladies 'A' team who won the ladies' BICC Premier League title last month.



The image (© 2012 Kevin Stammers) shows the victorious team at the final match of the season against Cambridgeshire. The girls (left to right) are Julie Vickers (Captain), Sue Condon, Viv Dundon, Amanda Dodd, Mo Smee (Manager), Carol Pinfold, Sue Baker, Donna Russell and Stacey Ellis.

CONGRATULATIONS!

I must try and attend a few more Essex County matches next season.

DR. DARTS ON BELGIAN TV

What was a Belgian TV crew doing in my local pub, *The Carpenters Arms*, last month?

The crew from the national Brussels-based Redaction Sports TV were in Maldon to interview me as part of a series the team are producing called 'The English Way of Life'; a series that will be featured during the company's coverage of the Olympic Games later in the year.

Producer Emmanuel Debieve contacted me a few days earlier and asked if I would be prepared to be interviewed for their new series, to talk to them about darts as a traditional pub game and whether or not darts should be recognised as an Olympic sport. They wanted to film in a typical English pub and I thought my 'local' *The Carpenters Arms* would be ideal.



(The image shows (left to right) Bruno Gathy (cameraman), Emmanuel Debieve (producer), 'Dr. Darts' and Serge Schots (soundman). Image © 2012 Moppix)



After filming an 'international' darts match was staged England versus Belgium, the teams comprising (for England) Colin Kirby (a local darts player) and my wife Maureen and (for Belgium) Emmanuel and his cameraman Bruno Gathy. Richard Henfrey the publican at '*The Carps*' chalked the match. I am pleased to say that, after a tightly-fought game, England were victorious with Maureen hitting the winning double two. (The image (© 2012 Chippix) shows, left to right, Bruno, Colin, Maureen and Emmanuel.)

Afterwards, producer Emmanuel told the local press, “I am very grateful to Patrick. It was essential that our interview took place in the right surroundings and *The Carpenters Arms* was a great venue. Richard was the perfect host.”

It is believed that this is the first time a darts international has ever been played in Maldon and possibly in the county but I guess local *DDN* readers can put me straight on that.

And why didn't I play?

Sad to say I have not been able to play darts for over six months due to a frozen shoulder.

‘THREE MAIDENS’ DARTS

Sam C. from Southampton wrote to me about an interesting set of darts he had found amongst his late father-in-law Reg's possessions. These were a boxed set of three ‘Three Maidens’ brass darts (pattern no 8) (pictured) made by Henderson & Daughters. Sam told me, “They have obviously been fairly well used, as the red box is a bit tatty and the darts are a little moth-eaten in places but they must be at least 50 years old!”

As we know there have been hundreds of darts companies set up over here in the UK, many of whom did not actually make the darts themselves but bought them in from another provider and made them their own by designing their specific company-branded packaging. However, in my experience it is very rare in darts for a company to mention ‘& daughters’ so this is worth pursuing. Sadly I know nothing about this brand but am hoping *DDN* readers can help. It may well be that the ‘Three Maidens’ were in fact Mr. Henderson's daughters...



By the way, this set of darts is now in my possession and is secure in my archive, thanks to Sam. What Sam didn't tell me was that Reg's darts were not only in a ‘red tatty box’ but also that this red tatty box was protected by a metal box designed precisely for Reg's darts to fit into and presumably protect both box and darts from damage. The base of the metal box is engraved with the initials ‘ALS’.

If you have any information about Henderson and Daughters and/or the ‘Three Maidens’ darts please drop me a note via the Contact page on my website www.patrickchaplin.com. (My thanks to Sam for both the darts and the image.)

HOMEWORK

Earlier in this issue I mentioned that Mike Gregory was the third darts player to successfully defend his *News of the World* Individual darts title. For homework, can you

tell me who the other two were? There's no prizes. This is just for fun. I'll reveal the answer in the next *DDN*.

COMING UP IN ISSUE 26

Over recent months I have asked about the first Home International ever to be played in the UK. I am pleased to say that my research is now complete and that the tournament will be the key feature in a special 'Home International' edition of *DDN* in June.

Of course I will find space for some other items including a review of one of the most curious darts books I've ever seen.

FINALLY, A REMINDER

And don't forget that you can read my latest 'Appointment with Dr. Darts' in *Inside Darts*. Check it out at www.insidedarts.co.uk.

That's it for Issue 25. See you next time.

Best wishes,

Patrick

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