

DR. DARTS' NEWSLETTER

Issue 34 February 2013

INTRODUCTION



Hi everyone and welcome to the first issue of *DDN* for 2013.

I am very pleased to welcome all of you who have subscribed to *DDN* over recent weeks; new readers including darts fans from Greece, Kuwait and Greenland!



I hope that a good number of you were able to watch some or all of the two World Darts Championships that took place across December and January. I was lucky enough to pop down to Lakeside during the main week of competition and witnessed several top matches but then returned home in time to watch the semi-finals of final from the comfort of my own armchair.

The image shown here of 'The Power' after winning the PDC world title is a particularly poignant moment in darts. As

you probably know, the trophy is now named after the legendary darts commentator Sid Waddell who died last year. Sid and Phil Taylor were close friends and of course it was Sid who ghosted Phil's autobiography 'The Power' back in 2003. It is, therefore, in my view singularly appropriate that Phil should lift that trophy. (Image ©2013 Lawrence Lustig/PDC. Used with permission.) Shortly after Phil's victory I was interviewed by Lee James of BBC Radio Stoke about Stoke as a darts 'hotspot' and enjoyed every second.

Congratulations too to Scotty '2 Hotty' Waites and Anastasia Dobromyslova for winning the BDO/Lakeside Men's and Women's world titles, Anastasia for the third time and Scotty his first victory. (Image © 2013 Chris Sargeant Tiptoppics. Used with permission.)



In this issue I am featuring (At last!) the promised interview with one of the darting greats of the 1970s and 1980s, Scotland's Rab Smith. In addition guest writer Wayne Baker brings news of the twenty-eighth running next month of 'The Jewel in the Irish Sea', the Isle of Man Festival of Darts. Add to that news of John Gwynne's announcement of his forthcoming retirement from the darts commentary box and I've filled one page of this *DDN* just with the Introduction!

I hope you all enjoy this issue and, as usual, I look forward to receiving feedback from you.

FEEDBACK FROM PREVIOUS ISSUES

(a) December *DDN*

Barry S. of OckeyesRus wrote, "Patrick. Just a quick line to say thank you for the article [*which featured Barry*] in your December issue. Loved it. I have also received your book which I bought online before Christmas. Great read, very informative and entertaining. Will recommend it to *everybody*."

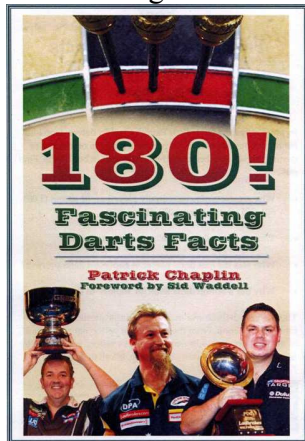
David B. sent me greetings from the Phuket Island Lager Bar, Thailand, writing "Hi Patrick, A great read!!!! Have circulated *DDN* to darts friends here in Asia...so the word is spreading....!! Here's wishing you and all your *DDN* Readers a very successful darting year in 2013..."

Ad K. loved the piece about his team in *DDN* #33 writing, "Thank you for the supplement. My whole team, cafe 'tHaantje, and Jelti darts are very enthusiastic about it!" whilst another subscriber said of the same issue, "A great read once again, got me in the mood of ordering your book." Speaking of which...

(b) *180! Fascinating Darts Facts*

It seems that, like Barry S. (above), many of you have bought and are enjoying *180!* The book is also receiving some great reviews. I was particularly pleased with the one recently submitted to *Darts World* by Darts Entrepreneur Dr. Eddie Norman. He wrote:

"This little gem of a book written in his own unique way by the most knowledgeable author in the world on the history of darts is a must for darts players whether professional, a pub player or even an observer of the sport.



Author Patrick Chaplin has put together in this book, many facts on darts that have never before seen the light of day and except for the patience and research of Patrick into his chosen sport, many of these intriguing facts would never be known.

Most books on darts today concentrate on statistics and scores of the sport, merely passing details from one book to another, so in the end the facts and figures become a blur and indeed of little interest as it has all been seen before.

But in *180! Fascinating Darts Facts*, Patrick has accomplished something totally different, and once one starts to read the first page it is impossible to put the book down until the final page is reached.

For all those players and supporters of the great sport of darts, *180! Fascinating Darts Facts* is the darts book that without doubt needs to be on your bookshelf.

Dr. Eddie Norman MBE. FFMSc
International Darts Consultant"

Darren at Dartsnutz.com has been very complimentary too. Check out his review at

<http://www.dartsnutz.com/t5176-180-fascinating-dart-facts-by-patrick-chaplin-book-reviewed-by-getagrip#70185>

[*180! Fascinating Darts Facts* can be ordered via my publisher The History Press at www.thehistorypress.co.uk.]

(c) *Darts in England 1900-39: A social history*

I was absolutely thrilled to discover that my book *Darts in England* had been included in the *Morning Star* newspaper's list of 'Books of 2012'. For full details of the review please go to the following link:

<http://www.morningstaronline.co.uk/news/content/view/full/127604>

(d) Harry Heenan

Danny D. from Belgium contacted me after the obituary for Harry Heenan was published in *DDN* #32 providing some more information about that great Scottish dartsman. Danny told me, "Harry was twice a quarterfinalist in the Scottish Masters (1977 and 1980)" adding that "Harry also had international appearances, winning nine of them."

Thanks Danny. I appreciate you taking the time to write to me. As usual, all feedback on any issues raised in *DDN* is welcomed.

DESIGN YOUR OWN DARTS

A while back I received an e-mail in which the writer asked where he could obtain "a machine for making my own flights." My investigations showed that, quite naturally, the global darts industry keeps such processes very close to their collective chests and thus no such 'machine' is available to the general darts-playing public.

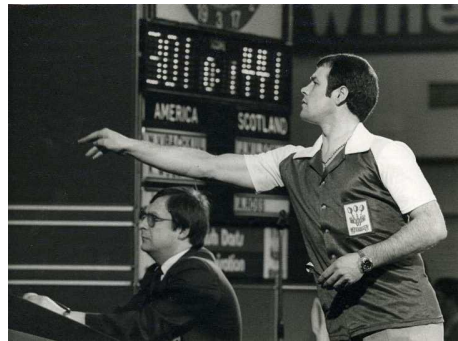
But the good news is that at least one darts company has its own On Line Flight Designer feature which enables customers to design their own flights and order short runs with the company directly. Red Dragon Darts launched such a facility a couple of years ago. A company spokesman told me recently, "We have the full on-line design facility and all four vanes of the flight are printed as standard."

So for all those of you who have wanted personalised flights should wait no longer. Go to <http://www.reddragon.darts.com/flightdesigner/> for further details and tell them 'Dr. Darts' sent you.

THE *DDN* EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW - RAB SMITH

In the late 1970s a Scottish national team without him was unthinkable.

Within the space of two years Dumfries' Rab Smith (pictured, image © LAT Photographic) had won the *Sunday Mail* Masters (1976), become the 1976 National Darts Association of Great Britain (NDAGB) Scottish Champion and won the Evo-Stik "Golden Darts" TV tournament in 1977. Amongst other successes in 1977 Rab won the prestigious British Pentathlon and the Ladbrokes British Matchplay. When the world rankings were announced in early 1978 Rab Smith was in fourth place. If he had won just one more major tournament during 1977 he would have been Number One.



Robert 'Rab' Smith was born 29th May 1948 at Moniaive in Dumfriesshire, the only son of Robert (a dairyman) and Kathleen Smith. Rab also has a sister, Kathleen. Rab is married to Doreen and they have two children Kathleen (43) and Robert (41)

After leaving school (the Wallace Hall Academy) in 1963 Rab was employed in the timber trade, in forestry. In 1981 darts writer Derek Brown described Rab as 'only 5ft 7in (1.70m) and is wiry with a muscular build one might expect of a woodcutter.' In 1993 Rab changed his career and became a crane operator a job he held until he retired.

A future champion and Scottish international, Rab was introduced to darts by his father Robert when he was nine or ten years old. Rab loved the game. He told me, "The family lived in a big house in the country and I used to practice and practice."

Rab's childhood passion for darts took a serious turn when he was 16-17 years old. He joined a pub league in Dumfries; the *Dumfries Arms*. Rab recalled that his role model was not someone on the professional scene at the time but a local player at *The Hole I' The Wa'* (*The Hole in the Wall*) pub, Dumfries, named Joe Little.

Rab told me, "From the age of sixteen I would go into town to play darts. I met Joe Little in the pub and we played darts and he beat me. I kept going back and he kept beating me. I *really* wanted to beat him. I practiced and practiced and worked on my game, mostly on Saturday lunchtimes and at night because I worked all day. I also practiced 12 noon and 1 p.m. most days as well... practice, practice, practice. Then all the practice paid off and I beat him." Rab was later to reveal the secret of his success as being 'a combination of regular practice and being 100% dedicated to the sport.'

As a Dumfries county player, playing right-handed and throwing 21 gram tungsten darts, his success was soon recognised by the newly-formed Scottish Darts Association (SDA) and Rab was selected to play for Scotland in the 1973 Home Internationals for the first time in 1973. Rab continued to be selected to play for his country until 1982, the year he withdrew from the professional game. For five of those years Rab captained his country having taken over from George Nicol.

According to Derek Brown (*The Guinness Book of Darts* (1981)) in 1974 Rab was on the bus out of Dumfries heading for the second Home International series when he was taken ill. Derek wrote that 'Rab had a stomach disorder and this lasted for two years before vanishing as unaccountably as it had appeared.' Rab was later to tell me that the 'disorder' was actually diagnosed as ulcers and that the condition soon cleared up.

Rab's first major breakthrough on the tournament scene was winning the *Sunday Mail* Masters in 1976. Thereafter he took the world of darts by storm; seemingly omnipresent wherever there was a major tournament to win. He became the NDAGB Scottish Champion that same year and NDAGB British Champion in 1977. In the latter match Rab played the north-west's Eric Barlow in the final; Barlow having earlier brought off the shock of the tournament by knocking out the world number one, John Lowe. Rab was not fazed by this and won the title 2-0.



During 1977 whilst title followed title and he appeared to be virtually unstoppable, Rab decided to turn professional. In 1978 Rab was selected to join the newly-formed Marlboro Team of (Darts) Champions. John Lowe recalled recently, "Rab was a member of the Marlboro team from the start which also included Leighton Rees, Tony Brown, Colin Baker and me as Captain. Alan Glazier was the reserve player." (Image courtesy PC Archive)

When asked what his finest moment in darts was Rab chose three, not surprisingly perhaps all from that same year. He told me that winning the Queen's Silver Jubilee 3's International Classic in March 1977 with fellow countrymen George Nicol and Eric McLean at the West Centre Hotel, Fulham, London was very special.

With everything equal between the finalists (Scotland and England), the teams chose Rab and Eric Bristow to represent them in the deciding match. Bristow was way ahead after twelve darts but experienced 'double trouble' which allowed Rab, who according to one report 'had stolen up like a black cat in the night', to shoot out on 72 to secure a memorable victory over the 'auld enemy'.

The image below (courtesy of Rab Smith) shows Rab celebrating that winning dart whilst 'Big Cliff' and 'Old Stoneface' watch, able to do nothing to prevent the Scottish win.)

Rab's second 'best memory' was beating Eric Bristow (again) this time in the Ladbrokes British Matchplay final. With the final level at 3-3, Rab stood at the oche with only 36 points left between him and victory. Bristow seemed to know what was to happen next as 'The Crafty Cockney' put his darts down on the table and Rab hit single 18 then double 9. Rab had hit four maximum 180s during that final.



Victory in the Evo-Stik Golden Darts tournament that same year concludes Rab's 'best moments' of an illustrious darts career. Having beaten Belgium's Andre Declercq and Wales' Alan Evans in earlier rounds, Rab was to meet England's John Lowe in the final which the Scotsman won. In addition to the winning cheque of £1,000, Rab was also awarded a set of 18ct 'golden darts' plus a special prize of 'a mere quarter ounce gold nugget' for scoring 180. More recently Rab told me that he later gave the 'golden darts' to his grandson Rory on his first birthday in 2007.

John Lowe was able to exact his revenge later when he beat Rab 2-1 in the semi-final of the *News of the World* Individual Darts Championship at Wembley Arena in 1981. Rab recalled, "I was on double four with John back on 140 or 160. He threw and left double top. In my next throw I clipped the top wire of double four *three times*. Then John hit double top."

Another key moment in Rab's career was being selected to represent his country at the inaugural Embassy World Professional Darts Championship in 1978. He beat Ireland's Pat Clifford 6-0 but was then beaten in the quarter finals by Stefan Lord 6-3.

By the early 1980s Rab was still at the top of his game but in 1982, and by his own admission, he had 'had enough'. Rab told me in 2011, "The kids were young and I was never at home; sometimes being away six days a week. I didn't want to lose my family life so I gave up." During that year Rab also ceased playing for his county, Dumfries.

When asked if he had any regrets about leaving the professional darts circuit whilst still relatively young Rab told me, "Not really. There was always too much travel: hundreds of miles." He then paused and added, "I think I might have organised exhibitions better."

Asked about the coming of the ‘modern era of darts’, Rab told me, “Darts has changed now. You used to have a wee drink and a smoke on stage. It’s getting very serious with big money now. I don’t know what will happen. The crowds are very loud these days.”

Rab took early retirement in 2011 and told me that he now does anything that takes his fancy and nothing. However, he ensures that he sees his grandson Rory every week.

Although Rab has not played darts for eight or nine years he long ago left his mark on the world of darts and Scottish darts in particular.

Text © 2012 Patrick Chaplin (Images © as stated)

‘DARTING JEWEL IN THE IRISH SEA’

It has become a darting jewel in the Irish Sea and fittingly, has a palatial home, the Villa Marina (pictured), for its annual tournament *writes Wayne Baker*.



The Isle of Man Festival of Darts celebrates its **28th year** in March 2013 but despite its near veteran status on the calendar, it continues to flourish, attracting new competitors each year.

The multi million pound luxurious Georgian-style sea-front Villa Marina has been the home of one of the sport’s most popular festivals for several years. Cascading waterfalls, stone staircases and ornate metal railings provide an eye-catching approach to the pillared entrance of the sandstone palatial three storey complex – not the normal venue for the traditional pub pastime.

But the perfect venue for a spring time sports event which attracts combatants from all over the UK, the Channel Islands, northern Europe and Ireland has in the past drawn players from Japan, Australia and Switzerland.

Last year the tiny island, which has in the past been invaded by the Vikings saw the darts oche overrun by the “orange army” as more than two dozen players from the Netherlands joined the chase for rankings points and a share of the multi-thousand pound prize purse.

They were not disappointed, as Jeffrey de Graaf, - who would make his world championship debut at Frimley Green last month - emerged from an entertaining all-Dutch encounter, toppling fellow countryman Jan Dekker 4-2 to lift the £5,000 top prize.

And not to be outdone, former women’s world champion Francis Hoenselaar reclaimed the prestigious women’s singles title after toppling Deta Hedman 4-3 with an eye-catching 27.25 average to lift her fourth Manx title, firing out a 13-darter en-route.

The island tournament was launched in 1986 by Lancashire promoters Les France – the former BDO director and England selector – and his business partner, the late Colin

Evans under the banner of LF Promotions. That first event was won by a promising but youthful Lancastrian male nurse called Alan Warriner, who went on to twice finish runner-up in the world championships.

Within two years the event had grown to attract many top-line county players and internationals with Yorkshireman Dennis Priestley winning back-to-back victories, matched in the women's singles by Staffordshire's Sharon Colclough. England international Colclough went on to add another title but Essex's talented Deta Hedman managed to chalk up her fourth Manx win by 1996, the year that "Rocket" Ronnie Baxter collected the first of three Manx titles. Nine times world champ Trina Gulliver had to wait several years to add the impressive Manx trophy to her bulging silverware cupboard but then added a second just two years later.

The form player of recent championships in the women's singles has been Welsh skipper Julie Gore who won four titles in succession between 2007 and 2010, before Hedman annexed her fifth title.

World champions Priestley, Phil Taylor, Andy Fordham and Richie Burnett all have their name on the Manx trophy and in 2011 Ted "The Count" Hankey emerged from the shadows to lift his first island singles title, a big success for a player who openly prefers the much longer format of sets. But for one man – three times world champ Martin Adams – the Manx title continues to elude him. Perhaps 2013 could be his year?



Two Martins who have chalked their names on the island board of honour are Martin Holt (pictured, image copyright holder unknown) and Martin Phillips. Both have notched perfect nine dart finishes in the competition. Holt recorded his against Ronnie Baxter in 1979 (180,180, 141 – finished with 60, 57, double 12), while Welsh veteran Phillips hit the perfect game against Shayne Burgess during the Millennium year competition, using the same finishing format.

But the island tournament has not been without its troubles...

Ice cold temperatures once forced organisers to introduce huge industrial blower heaters in the Palace Lido venue as players were forced to don coats on the oche! But coal merchant Dennis Priestley shrugged off the conditions in the "ice palace", producing a red hot performance to collect one of his two Manx titles.

During the 1990s the tournament continued despite the crippling effects of the industrial recession which hit travelling numbers. The island's tourist board remained loyal though and the festival emerged stronger and even more popular. Even a rock fall which left the former Summerland playing venue unsafe failed to prevent the spring-time tournament

from going ahead one year with an eleventh hour switch to a seafront discotheque venue enabling play to go-ahead.

The controversial split between the WDC (now PDC) and BDO in 1993 also failed to halt the tournament which continued as an “open” event before becoming a BDO/WDF ranked competition. And not even a restrictive “foot and mouth” disease outbreak across the UK failed to ground the tournament as players were forced to pass through special foot-wash dips when they arrived on the island before playing darts!

The tournament regularly attracts more than 1,000 travellers to the island giving its tourism industry a huge springtime boost. Thirsty darters once drank the venue dry forcing tournament organisers to hire a lorry to bring in beers and spirits to lubricate dry throats.

This year there is £22,000 on offer across the three-day tournament (March 8-10), although for those arriving early on the island there is also the winner-takes-all Okells “Early Bird” competition.

Friday evening will see the mixed pairs running in tandem with the Winmau World Masters youth qualifier where “stars of tomorrow” have an opportunity to not only win through to the grand finals in the north east of England at the end of 2013 but also pick up the top prize of £160– not bad pocket money for an evening on the oche!

There is £5,000 and £3,000 on offer the respective men’s and women’s singles competitions plus the all-important BDO Invitation Tables (Category A men’s and women’s) rankings points. Both events are held on the traditional Saturday staging date, played down to the semi finals. Sunday morning will see the men’s and women’s doubles competitions followed in the afternoon by the final stages of all competitions.

Tournament director Les France - the former BDO director (pictured right with his promotional team and referee Rab Butler) - said: “The Isle of Man International Darts Festival is one of the most popular competitions on the darting calendar and despite its veteran status – it’s 28-years-old – continues to attract more than 1000 travellers each year.



“We could not run the event without the support and enthusiasm of the island’s tourism department, Winmau, Okells Brewery and the Isle of Man Steam Packet Company. All that has been missing in the near three decades of competition is a home victory by an islander – perhaps 2013 will be their year.”

Just as cycling Manxman Mark Cavendish has set himself up as the “fastest man on two wheels” the island darts festival continues to sprint ahead of its many rivals as one of the most popular “holiday” tournaments on the darts calendar.

Darts festival contacts Les France 0161 793 6909 (Mobile 07974 806168) and John Denny (Isle of Man) 01624 824951

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KIM 'THE FOX' BROWN



Sad to note that another great British dartsman died as the year 2012 was reaching its end. Kim 'The Fox' Brown was one of the star players of the all-conquering West of England County team of the 1970s and, amongst many other tournaments, won the inaugural Swedish Open in 1973.

A more detailed obituary will be featured in the March issue of *DDN*.

JOHN GWYNNE ANNOUNCES HIS 'RETIREMENT'

I have known John Gwynne for a number of years and I am sure the majority of *DDN* subscribers will know John as one of the *real* voices of the TV darts commentary box, for many years on Sky TV commentating on major PDC events. Indeed I was very proud and privileged to be the first person in the darts business to be notified by John of his intention to retire from darts commentary. Here's what the great man had to say in his formal announcement to the darts world:

"Friends,

I have decided to end my near 20-year association with Sky Sports as a darts commentator at the end of the World Matchplay in July.

Sadly, last year I was not invited to commentate on the World Cup of Darts and I was required only for the first four days of the week-long World Grand Prix in Dublin. This was the first time in 19 years that I was not involved in the final stages of a major event.

I feel the time has come to move on.

After discussion with head producer, Rory Hopkins it has been agreed that I finish in Blackpool this summer with the 2013 World Matchplay; my last day in the commentary box being on July 28. By then I will have commentated on 20 World Championships and 20 World Matchplays.

I have no alternative plans at the moment although I hope to continue my long association with Sky Sports as a football and rugby reporter.

It is the end of an era.

Dave Lanning and I commentated on Sky's first event, the 1994 World Championship at the Circus Tavern, Purfleet. We were joined by Sid Waddell at the World Matchplay in Blackpool a few months later and what a time we had since then!

Stuart Pyke was added to the Sky darts commentary team in 2003 and since several other talented operators have been taken on board. Darts on Sky will continue to be vibrant, informative and entertaining, because of them.

I am greatly indebted to Sky Sports for giving me two decades of bliss and I feel privileged to have been a part of one of its biggest successes.

I will walk away with no regrets, only happy memories and having made many, many friends.”

John, I agree that it is indeed ‘The end of an era’ and on behalf of *DDN* subscribers and all other darts fans, I thank you for all your years of wise, informed and exciting darts commentary and wish you all the very best for the future in whatever you chose to do.

BRUCE SPENDLEY

One of the world’s top referees, Bruce Spendley, retired from the sport after he called the grand final of the PDC world championship and was immediately inducted into the PDC Darts Hall of Fame. I will be interviewing Bruce in the coming weeks especially for *DDN*. In the meantime, I thank Bruce for his many years of service to the sport of darts and wish him a long and happy retirement.

COMING UP IN ISSUE 35

My New Year’s Resolution is not to say what’s coming up in the next issue as so often items are pushed back. So far that resolution is holding fast.

So that’s it for *DDN* #34. I’ll see you next time.

Patrick

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