

DR. DARTS' NEWSLETTER

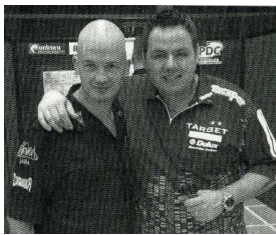
Issue 37 May 2013



INTRODUCTION

Welcome one and all to the May edition of *DDN*.

I hope that my story about 'Tumble Tompkins' in the April issue didn't fool any of you. I fabricated the whole tale and illustrated it with photographs I purchased from a car boot sale. In any event I hope you enjoyed it. You can all rest easy now for another year.



This month *DDN* welcomes Jamie 'Jabba' Caven, at the time of writing 33rd in the PDC Order of Merit, to the ever-growing list of subscribers and welcome too to all other fans who have joined since Issue #36. I'll have more to say about Jamie (pictured here with Adrian Lewis at Crawley earlier this year) later in this issue as I review his biography *The Way Eye See The Game* co-authored by David Kirby. (Image © 2013 Team Jabba)

As usual I have a packed *DDN* for you so here we go...

FEEDBACK FROM PREVIOUS ISSUES

(a) 'Weird' darts

In the last issue I featured subscriber Daz's 'weird' darts (pictured) and asked readers if they could help indentifying them as both Daz and I had no idea who manufactured them.

Although no one has come forward with an answer, Warren A from Australia writes, "I am very curious about Daz's brass darts he found. They look to me like brass bullets and a lot of hand crafting. I'm very sure they are one of a kind. The reason I say this is that is no company would make a line of those darts as there is way too much work in them. Well that is my knowledge opinion anyway."



Warren may well have come up with the reason why no one else recognises them.

(b) 180! Fascinating Darts Facts

My new book *180! Fascinating Darts Facts* continues to receive very positive reviews of which the one written by Charis of globaldarts.de in Germany is one of the latest. Check out what she has to say about 180! at the following link:

<http://www.globaldarts.de/globalDartsEN/misc/bookssonstig.html>

Charis. Thanks. I like it.

‘Dartoid’ (the infamous world syndicated darts journalist) has also recently produced his review of *180!* Check his review out at

<http://www.dartoidsworld.com/columns/446.html>

As usual ‘Dartoid’ winds me up a little by stating in his review that *180!* includes Mieke de Boer’s measurements (which it doesn’t), ‘which player French-kissed Prince Harry’ (which is a complete fib) and as for ‘Toid’...well...just read his review!

(c) John Gwynne

Issue #34 featured John Gwynne’s formal notice of his retirement from darts commentary for SKY. More recently subscriber Peter R. has written:

“I was shocked to hear of John Gwynne's retirement from Sky. He was the last (I believe) of the old guard following the sad death of Sid and earlier retirement of Dave Lanning. Of course, nobody can go on forever but nevertheless it will be a sad day when John does finally hang up his mic.”



I think many darts fans agree with Peter but, as I said in my reply to his e-mail, “You're right about the 'old guard' all gone although I suppose we shouldn't forget Tony Green who started out with Sid in the BBC commentary box and still features on the BBC coverage of the Lakeside World Championships.” (The image shows the original of a cartoon of John that appeared regularly in *Darts World* magazine; courtesy of The DW/PC Archive. Used with permission.)

In last month’s issue I featured an early image of John with Alan ‘The Man in Black’ Glazier; John armed with what was then a very hi-tech cassette tape-recording device. I wrote at the time that the copyright holder was ‘unknown’. I’ve now discovered, purely by chance, that the snapper in question was Bob Ward of Wythenshawe, Manchester; the image first appearing in John’s ‘Piccadilly Line’ report in *Darts World* in May 1988.

(d) Unsubscribing

Sad to report that one of our number has unsubscribed. I’m always interested to know why and in this particular case I knew the guy was a keen darts fan so wondered if it was something I said or wrote. He was kind enough to reply, “Hi Patrick, Just so you know, my reason for unsubscribing is nothing to do with you or your fine newsletter. A bout of

Dartitis and an eye sight problem have robbed me of any love for the sport. I no longer play or even watch.”

Let’s hope that these problems are short-lived and solved so that we can welcome AG back to the fold soon.

CONWAY REDDING

In March I received an enquiry from Colin Redding who is currently researching his late father’s activities as a darts player in the 1960s to the mid-1980s. Colin told me, “His name was Conway Redding and he played in and around Herefordshire and also for the Border Counties Team (?). He used to win quite a lot of trophies and medals. He also became friends with the top names...the likes of Eric Bristow, Jocky Wilson and Bobby George and holidayed with Leighton Rees. He played exhibitions with all these names at Camber Sands.”

Colin added, “He played on a TV programme called *Double Top*, hosted by Gary Newbon around the early 1970s. I have tried in vain to trace any footage. He also became an Area finalist for the *News of the World* in the early 1970s where he also played on TV. Would it be possible if you can point me in the right direction for any team photos or television footage of my father or any other information?”

I checked my files and my extensive photographic collection for any record of Conway Redding but could not find anything about him at all. I also spoke to Bobby George to see if he recalled playing against Conway in the past but sad to say he didn’t remember the name. As Bobby said, “I’ve played so many good players over the years.” I also e-mailed Leighton Rees’ former manager asking him if he remembered Conway but alas no.

Clearly Conway Redding was a good darts player and mixed it with the best but to date I can find no recorded trace of his achievements. So, hopefully this is where *DDN* readers in the UK can help. If you have any information at all about this Herefordshire player please contact me at info@patrickchaplin.com.

NEWS FROM ISRAEL

I recently reported that darts fans from Israel had signed up to *DDN*. It seems as though the *Newsletter* has gone down well over there as my contact George writes, ‘Dear Dr. Darts, Thank you for sending on the Darts News. It is absolutely brilliant and I will forward it on to players and officials here. We have over 2,000 players playing here in Beersheba, Hebron, Ramallah and Revohot and we are spreading onwards and upwards.’

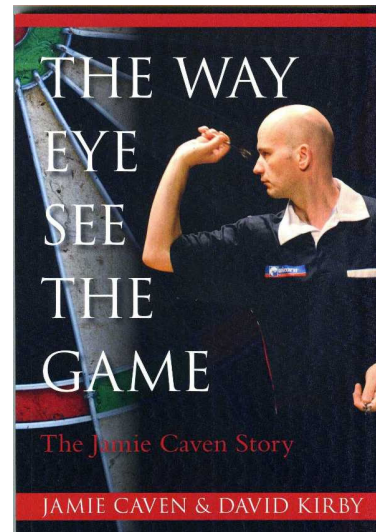
George went on to say that the leagues were set up in 2008 by Eddie Norman, the global darts ambassador, and have been expanding ever since. George added, “Our league nights are Tuesday and Friday and we play best of ten-a-side, each player playing best of three legs 501.”

Sadly, due to visa, security and other problems the teams are not allowed to play outside Israel and therefore would not join the World Darts Federation.

JAMIE CAVEN – *THE WAY EYE SEE THE GAME* – BOOK REVIEW

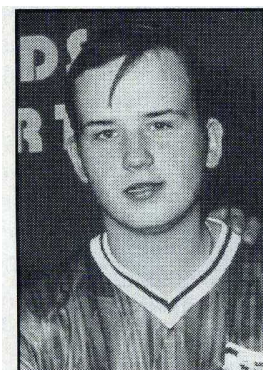
There can be no doubt that Jamie Caven is amongst the top darts players on the professional circuit at the present time: at the time of writing he is 33rd in the PDC Order of Merit. Jamie has yet to win a World Championship title so why choose now to publish his autobiography?

Jamie, born in 1976, suffered ‘a sting of some kind’ at the age of only 15 months and despite six operations lost the sight in his right eye. Despite this, and encouraged by his father, Jamie took up darts. At the age of 13 Jamie played his first league match and, at 17, in 1993 became the WINMAU Youth Master beating Merseyside’s Lee Palfreyman 3-1 in the final. Jamie recalls that match as ‘a very nervy event’ but took the first two legs in 23 and 20 darts. Lee fought back in the third leg with a superb 15-darter. *Darts World* (Issue 254, January 1994) reported that ‘Undaunted, Jamie slotted home three tons and took the vital fourth leg and the title in 22 darts.’ (See image (below) © 1993 Courtesy of the PC/DW Archive)



In 1996, after suffering a series of blackouts, doctors initially diagnosed Jamie’s condition as epilepsy. He subsequently collapsed at home and a thorough examination revealed ‘many tumours’ on his pancreas which resulted in it being removed. This meant that Jamie was Type 1 diabetic. Like many others when told their condition, Jamie initially believed that diabetes was a debilitating illness. Not so.

Jamie respected his condition and adjusted his lifestyle accordingly, ‘less beer and junk food in moderation’. He injects insulin four times a day which led to him being nicknamed ‘Jabba’. He writes, “I deal with my medical condition on a day-to-day basis. To be honest in the world of professional darts it does not make a difference.” However, Jamie later admitted that long matches under the stage lights can occasionally be a problem; something he is working on.



It seems today that diabetes is common amongst darts players (including myself) and we can all learn something about the condition and its relationship to the sport we love by reading his book.

In 2009, two years after going full-time professional, Jamie became one of the Unicorn team (Jamie had previously been sponsored by Red Dragon) about which Jamie comments, “Life as a darts professional does not get any better than that.”

The Way I See The Game covers Jamie’s long career in darts from that first-ever league game at such an early age to his recent successes with the PDC. All of Jamie’s Pro Tour finals since September 2008 and his quarterfinal runs up to March this year are recorded in an Appendix to the book and make for interesting reading; major scalps including Michael Van Gerwen, Ronnie Baxter and Adrian Lewis.

In 2012 Jamie’s beloved father died. (His mother Carole had died in 2000.) Jamie was devastated and writes, “The last thing I was interested now was in darts. Both my parents had gone and I was unsure of my current direction.” Jamie and his wife Debbie talked and Debbie reminded Jamie that he had promised his father to continue to play darts. Inevitably the decision was made to continue.

Indeed, Jamie has chosen 2013 as the year to re-launch his career and, in answer to the question posed at the beginning of this review, part of that re-launch is his book *The Way Eye See The Game – The Jamie Caven Story*. With Debbie and ‘Team Jabba’ in support I believe that Jamie with his natural fighting spirit, his skill and sheer determination is assured of much future success. Jamie’s life story so far will be an inspiration to all darts players and darts fans alike.

(*The Way Eye See The Game – The Jamie Caven Story* (co-authored by David Kelly) is published by DK Darts at £6.99 and is available via Amazon.)

THE YOUNGEST PERSON TO ACHIEVE A MAXIMUM 180

Edward Lowy, the Managing Director of Unicorn, contacted me recently asking if I could help in replying to an enquiry he had received via his website. Bobby B from Cleveland, UK asked, “Just wondering if there is a record for youngest kid to hit a 180? My son is 6 and hit his first 140 today so I am very proud.” Of course, I was pleased to assist and replied direct to the enquirer as follows:

‘Bobby... Firstly I must say that for any child to hit 140 or 180 is a fine achievement and your son is to be congratulated on hitting his first 140 at the age of only six.

However, the youngest player that I have recorded in my archive as achieving 140 is Nathan Bradley [*pictured*] who hit his first 140 at the age of three circa 2007. After a blaze of publicity locally Nathan, from Lancaster, joined the Hull Darts School of Excellence, obtained an agent (!) and received a 'mini-sponsorship' from WINMAU.’ (Image © 2007 The Bradley Family. Used with permission.)



For a while Nathan had his own website but when I checked recently the site was unavailable. I do not know if he ever scored a maximum. If he did, that would set an unofficial benchmark. My response to Bobby continued:

‘Unfortunately I have no record of any young (under 10 years of age) child achieving 180 which was properly verified by witness statements (which of course it has to be to be regarded as a 'record'). Even in the case of adults playing darts, despite many years or research, I have been unable to trace the first adult darts player ever to score 180!

Having said all that, if your son hits his first 180 some time soon, please let me know.’

Bobby’s e-mail set me wondering if any *DDN* reader knows of any very young darters who have scored a maximum. If you do then please contact me at info@patrickchaplin.com.

NEWS FROM PANAMA

It seems to me that wherever Dr. Eddie Norman has travelled he has left a darts legacy. I recently mentioned that my first subscriber from Panama, Lyn P. had signed up to *DDN* on behalf of the Panama Darts Association (PDA).

Lyn, who is Honorary Secretary of the PDA told me, “We are only a very small mainly Spanish speaking association that Eddie started after one of his visits to us here in Panama, but we enjoy the game very much and have played friendly matches against Jamaica and Barbados.” Lyn added, “Thank you Dr.Chaplin for the Darts News which is much appreciated and keeps us in touch with the darts scene. It has to be translated into Spanish but as soon as it is finished I will circulate it here.”



On his recent visit to Panama Eddie Norman arranged a friendly match for the PDA against a team from Monteria, Northern Columbia; this in conjunction with one of Monteria's universities. The match is to be played in Monteria in July. (Monteria is a city of 400,000 people and is known locally as La Perla Del Sinu or the Pearl of the River Sinu, and is an area first settled by Zenu Indians.)

Lyn told me, “We are quite excited here as this will be the first international match for us here in Panama. It will be a nine-a-side men’s match, best of five legs, five sets each player.” Lyn added, “For us it is a great start and Eddie has sponsored the Eddie Norman Challenge Cup and trophies for the teams which we hope will become an annual event.

Here in Panama City the city is made up of two areas - the old and the new. The old part of the city is full of Colonial Buildings and narrow streets and small cafe's which is where most of the darts here take place. In contrast to this the New area is very fast moving with high rise buildings, restaurants and night clubs and it is here that Eddie has been trying to move and expand our darts scene for us.”

I wish Lyn and her team all the very best for the forthcoming international match and look forward to receiving a report from her in due course.

(The image (© The House of Darts) shows Lyn with Eddie Norman and his brother Peter outside The House of Darts, Bristol, UK in 2000.)

VERY ENLIGHTENING

Lyndon H. has written to me asking, “Have you any idea how the PDC illuminate there dart boards with no shadow showing?” This was way outside my area of knowledge so I asked Dave Allen of the PDC for his advice and he replied:

“For TV events, there are probably six or so lights aimed at the board at any time. We have the lights rigged above the set (two to four pointing at the board), plus two built into the oche shining up at the board and sometimes lights set on the floor by the feet of the markers which shine diagonally at the board.

This means that the whole board is well covered with light and therefore reduces shadow. It’s obviously a lot harder in Pro Tour events when we have two lights set above the board. With the lights set above and out from the dartboard. This does not eliminate shadow totally because both are naturally aiming down at the board.”

Thanks Dave.

It seems to me that dartboard lighting has come a long way since the 1930s when author Rupert Croft-Cooke recalled in his book *Darts* (London: Geoffrey Bles, 1936) “I have played [*darts*] frequently and with pleasure by the light of an oil lamp set in the right position.”

‘DIAL-TYPE’ DARTS SCORERS

A while back Glen K from Newfoundland wrote saying how much he enjoys *DDN* and asked me, “Why did they stop making the dial type scoreboards?” adding, “They are really hard to find. And could you tell me what year they stopped making them & the company’s address if possible.”

I told Glen that, as far as I am aware, the last 'dial' scoreboard to be produced was probably the 'Bissett Automatic Dart Scorer' [see image courtesy of Will B. This shows only one scorer. For a match two similar scorers would be used.].



Actually there was nothing very 'automatic' about it. You stuck your finger in the right holes to input the score and turned the dials for each individual digit of the score.

Although the Bissett scorer was introduced in the 1960s it enjoyed a bit of a renaissance in the 1970s and 1980s and was probably the most popular scorer of its kind.

I also informed Glen that, as far as I can tell from my archive, the dial scoreboards ceased to be manufactured by the late 1980s at which time the Bissett scorer cost £38.50 (sterling). The main reason for their disappearance was the increasing popularity of electronic scoreboards.

There have been many similar scoreboards manufactured from time to time in the UK and doubtless worldwide. The earliest UK Patent I can find for such scoring apparatus is dated 1942.

NEWS OF THE WORLD – IN SEARCH OF THE CHAMPIONS

From time to time I receive e-mails from people who say that their father or, more often nowadays their , grandfather “won the *News of the World*” or was a “*News of the World* champion”; believing that they had won the Grand Finals of the competition. However, so often this proves not to be the case. But in terms of the *News of the World* there were champions and there were *Champions*.

For example, Karen Owens wrote to me saying, “I have searched for many hours looking for information about my father Robert Denis Owens who played darts for The Horse and Jockey pub in Rhosllanerchrugog, Wrexham.

In 1962 he won the *News of the World* individual darts championships. I have presentation photographs of this event but am quite surprised that there is no record of him holding this award. I see by your records that Tom Barrett won in 1961 and in 1963. As this is quite a prestigious award I feel that my father is worth a mention. It is part of my family history.

Many a person would challenge him to a game of darts in our local pub. He chose to settle down to family life but very sadly passed away very young, just 48 years old. I would appreciate a reply to my email if possible.”

I do try my utmost to reply to everyone who writes to me and it took me a while to research Karen’s father’s *News of the World* record. It is always very difficult to research darts even on the 'net as there are very few people bothering to look into the history of the sport. (I think I may be the only one.) I eventually replied to Karen as follows:

“You mentioned that your father had won the *News of the World* Individual Darts Championship in 1962. I am sorry to have to inform you that that year's title went to Eddie Brown the *NoW* Eastern Counties Divisional Champion. Brown beat the Western

Counties Divisional Champion Dennis Follett in the final that was held on Saturday 28th April 1962 at the Empire Pool, Wembley.”

However, the good news for Karen was that in the 1961/62 *News of the World* tournament her father did win the Divisional Championship for Wales and, according to the match programme represented the 'Horse and Jockey, Ponciau, Wrexham, Denbighs'. Karen had mentioned that the *Horse and Jockey* was at Rhosllanerchrugog so I assumed that the *NoW* incorrectly stated 'Ponciau'. Interestingly Karen's father's surname was spelt in the programme as 'Owen' - not 'Owens'.

The programme contains a photograph of Karen's father being presented with the Wales Divisional trophy by the Right Hon., the Lord Mayor of Cardiff, Alderman E. Ewart Pearce, M.B.E., J.P., F.C.A.

In addition the text of the programme states that Karen's father 'shocked his more experienced rivals, as this was his first bid in the competition.' It also mentions that 'Dennis Owen at 26 [was] one of the youngest of tonight's stars, is an electricity supply linesman, from Wrexham.'

Karen's father earned the right to play in the Grand Finals in London in April 1962 but was beaten in the quarter finals 2-1 by Frank Grimstone, the North of England Divisional Champion.

So Robert Owens was a champion; just not *the* Champion. To actually make it to the Grand Finals was an achievement in itself. Many hundreds of darts players set out in the autumn of 1961 in Wales and of course elsewhere to try and become the Welsh Divisional champion; having to win at their local pub and become 'house champion' then from there on to the Area championships and then to the Divisional finals. Karen's father did all of this and made it to the Grand Finals and I told Karen, “Your father is a credit to you and should be remembered for this.”

As for not mentioning Robert Owens on my website, unfortunately because of the sheer number of Divisional champions recorded since 1936 it is not possible for me to include a reference to them all.

HOMEWORK

Some time ago I received a plea from Steffen H from Adelsheim who is looking for Jim Pike and other darts stars of the past on film. Steffen wrote:

“Patrick, let me say to you thank you for your great work about the Sport of Darts. I'm a very passionate dart player and I'm searching for information about the old heroes like Joe Hitchcock, Jim Pike and others to hold their great performances in remembrance.

My problem is I cannot find any movies or films about from these days of darts history (although one film at YouTube of Joe, I know and some at British Pathé but 30 pounds for a four minute film is expensive. Do you have some information for me?"

If anyone can help then please contact Steffen at info@bambusparkett.de with a copy to me at info@patrickchaplin.com. Thanks.

That's it for *DDN* #37. I hope you've enjoyed it.

I'll see you next time.

PATRICK

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My academic work, *Darts in England 1900-39: A social history* is now available in paperback at £15.99 (plus p & p) and can be ordered from www.nbinternational.com.

