

DR. DARTS' NEWSLETTER

Issue 42 October 2013



WINMAU COMPETITION – WINNERS ANNOUNCED

Thanks again to all those *DDN* readers who entered the special WINMAU World Masters competition in issue 40. The answer to the question 'In what year did the WINMAU



Dartboard Company become the main sponsor of the World Masters? Was it (a) 1974, (b) 1976 or (c) 1996?' was (b) 1976.

The three lucky winners drawn out of the hat on 1st September and who will have by now received a set of Scott Waites' darts (kindly donated by the WINMAU Dartboard Company) are Paul Coppard of Norfolk, Ron Speidel of Mission, Texas and Mike Cowell of Essex.

For those of you not lucky enough to win this time, you can of course learn more about the Scott Waites darts and all the other top WINMAU products by visiting winmau.com.

FEEDBACK FROM PREVIOUS ISSUES

(a) The WINMAU World Masters Special *DDN*

Received too late for inclusion in the September issue was the following e-mail from Coleen from Albania. She wrote, 'Dr Darts. Thank you for your sending the Darts News to us. We learn so much about darts from them and you sir. The article on the World Masters in August was amazing and we say, "Many congratulations to you for such a fine article. We now know how the World Masters started."'

Another response, this time from the USA, was even more enthusiastic. 'Dr Darts,' writes Robin C, 'Thank you so much for the Darts news. What can one say, except "A fantastic read, from page 1 to the end"? A wonderful read on the first World Masters. As they say, "From small beginnings," and one person's brainchild. Your write up was brilliant.'

On the general darts scene in the USA, Robin told me, 'Darts has declined somewhat in the US. We used to have many big competitions but it is the expense of travelling to them and the general recession in the US. Still many out of work here...'

Is that how other US readers of *DDN* perceive the darts scene over the big pond? I would be very interested to receive your views. Just drop me a note at info@patrickchaplin.com or via my website.

Robin ended his message with, 'Regards to you all at Darts News. Please keep up your wonderful, wonderful work. The magazine is forwarded to all our darter members by e-mail, then onwards to their darter friends.'

Thanks Robin. Let's hope that other readers pass *DDN* on to all their friends too. The more the merrier and, of course, individual subscriptions are to be encouraged too so I can continue to gauge the 'reach' of *DDN*. Talking of which...

(b) *DDN* reaches Croatia...

Coleen (mentioned on the previous page) has been working in Croatia with her husband and she told me, 'We are going to try to get darts here off the ground in Croatia more. It is gradually becoming more popular here,' adding, 'Albania darts is going very, very good.' Coleen is also passing on the word about *DDN* in addition to circulating to her friends in Albanian darts. She told me, 'I have given your magazine to them [*the Croatian darters*] for them to learn about darts.'

(c) ...and Ecuador

Senora Jacky Duggan was given my e-mail address by 'a mutual friend' and asked if I would send her my 'monthly darts magazine.'

Jacky told me, "I live here in Quito [*the capital of Ecuador*] with my husband, but I am originally from New Zealand. I stayed here after university, got married and love the place and have two daughters."

Once again the inspiration to play darts in a country that up until his visit was relatively 'dartless' was Dr. Eddie Norman. Apparently Eddie, told Jacky that I am 'the greatest darts writer ever and also a very good darts player.' I do not confess to being either and for certain I am not a very good player but, I *will* admit, I *am* a better darts-player than Eddie.

As for darts in Quito, Jacky told me, "We only play darts in people's houses, and a friend of yours [*Eddie*] set us up into a darts league. We will never be big in darts here, as it is a very poor country, but your friend has worked miracles for us."

Jacky is the only one in her darts league who speaks English, so will be translating the magazine for the other darts players. She has now been added to the subscribers' list which means that *DDN* is now read in **over forty-five countries!** (I never, ever dreamed...)

(c) Durro dart flights

The article in *DDN* #41 relating to Durro darts brought back some darting memories for subscriber Chris Murray. He wrote, 'I remember the Durro flights, Tommy Cooper to the fore - he was extraordinarily popular at the time. The characters chosen for the flights seem arbitrary to say the least. I took part in the Leyton Open, once only I think, in the pairs competition decades ago and players were using them.'

Durro being the locally-based sponsor of the event would explain the proliferation of the company flights at that time but did Chris use them? "No," he told me. "I didn't because I preferred the slimmer elliptically shaped flights."

Another reader told me that Durro flights were slightly smaller than standard. Is this correct?

(d) Denmark and Greenland

In response to another piece in #41, headed 'Early Stirrings of Darts in Denmark', Chris added, 'I would be interested to know more about the Danish darts scene. I must say I didn't see one dartboard when I was in Copenhagen a few years ago (and I did visit a few bars). The piece about Greenland is interesting and of course being part of Denmark feeds into the Danish darts scene.'

I am hoping that I will be able to provide more information about both Greenland and Danish darts in future issues of *DDN*.

(e) Wheelchair Darts

Regular readers will recall that I have mentioned many times the sterling work being



undertaken by Russ Strobel and his team with regard to wheelchair darts. Having set up the World Disability Darts Association (WDDA) (with which I am glad to be formally associated) Russ achieved a huge breakthrough in 2012 when the World Darts Federation (WDF) approved the amended dartboard height of 137cm as ‘fair and equivalent’ for wheelchair players. Since then wheelchair players have the option to throw on either height board in competitions.

The image (left) shows Russ presenting the Wildfire 137 at the World Masters a couple of years ago. (Image (c) 2011 Moppix) I am glad to report that Russ and his colleagues on the WDDA continue to spread the word and make giant leaps in representing the wheelchair darter’s interests across the globe. In fact, Russ recently gave a full and fascinating interview to Charis Mutschler of Global Darts.de. Here’s the link:

<http://www.globaldarts.de/globalDartsEN/interviews/RussStrobel.html>.

(Thanks Charis.)

SEWA DARTS REVIEW

As reported in issue 41, Erik McVay of SEWA Darts was kind enough to ask me to ‘trial’ his new SEWA darts and the folks at Red Dragon Darts sent along a 24grm sample set for us to try.

A small group of friends gathered at my local club and gave the darts a fairly stringent test in games of 501 and straight-in 101. As probably the most consistent player in our group, Colin,



who is used to a 26grm Red Dragon dart, was able to adjust straightaway to the SEWA darts and score 140 with his first three darts. As you can see from the image (© 2013 Chipsnapz) Colin was quite pleased with the result. He later commented that the barrels seemed to enable a player to adjust to *any* grip.

Yvonne, the only lady darter in the group found adjusting from her normal throwing weight of 30grm difficult: the position of her darts in the board after each throw reflecting that. At the other end of the darts weight scale, I, having up to recently thrown 17grm Elven darts, had problems but the fitting of shorter stems helped.

Then it was team member Bob's turn. He played well; the darts suiting his unorthodox style. Bob felt that the narrow tapered dart would lead to potentially better grouping. Then the highly experienced (in local darts at least) Peter W., President of the club, stated confidently, "I could beat anyone with these after a few throws."

I appreciate that this 'test' was totally unscientific but a great time was had by all and the outcome? A big "YES!" to team SEWA darts. (My thanks to Erik at SWEA and Simon at Red Dragon.)

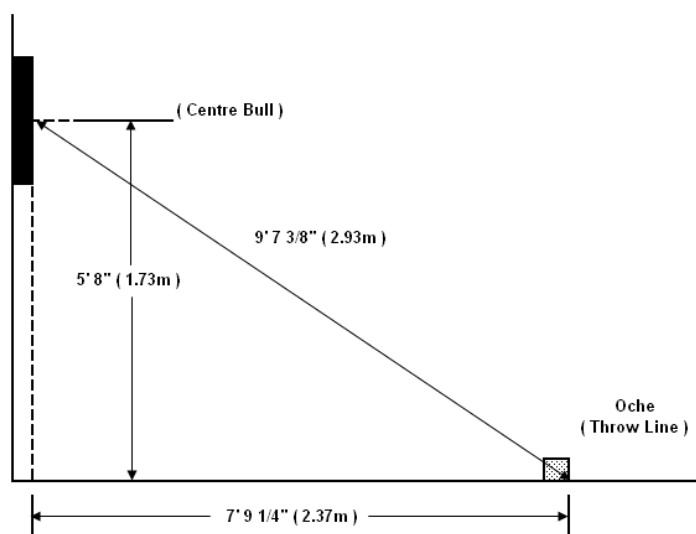
If anyone else would like my team to trial their products please contact me.

[Before leaving SEWA I'd just like to mention that over 200 people have viewed my article 'What exactly is the history of darts in America?' since it was posted in August. That seems a relatively small number but then perhaps darters in the US are disinterested in the history of the sport in their country. (I personally don't believe this to be the case as between 60%-65% of visitors to my website are from the USA.) Anyone can view the piece by going to sewa-darts.com and then to 'Stories archive' – August 2013.]

OCHE/HOCKEY LENGTH

Mark R. from Australia has asked me, 'Why did the oche line move $3\frac{1}{4}$ inches, from 7ft 6 to 7ft $9\frac{1}{4}$? What was the reasoning behind it?' This is one of the most common questions asked and I am pleased to share with *DDN* readers my response to Mark.

The World Darts Federation (WDF) determined that the world standard darts oche (formerly



'hockey') length should be 7' $9\frac{1}{4}$ " in 1977. Up until then the National Darts Association of Great Britain (NDAGB) played tournaments from 7' 6" and the *News of the World* was played from 8'. For a while the British Darts Organisation followed the NDAGB line even as far as the first Embassy World Professional Darts Championship in 1978.

It would have seemed logical for the WDF to have chosen the midpoint of 7' 9", but no.

Apparently at the WDF meeting there was some discussions about making the oche length one that equated exactly to metric. However, nothing seemed to fit so, according to my sources, the Swiss representative (presumably to curtail any further discussions) suggested 7' $9\frac{1}{4}$ ". That was then voted on and agreed and is now the world standard. (Image © David King. Used with permission.)

Mark's supplementary question was "Why were the *News of the World* and the NDAGB using different distances?" My response was as follows:

‘The original *News of the World* hockey was set at nine feet and this was used right up to the outbreak of the Second World War when the competition ceased for the duration. When the tournament returned in the 1947/48 season the hockey length had been reduced to eight feet.

The NDAGB was established in 1954 with support from *The People*, a very popular British Sunday newspaper; the other key players being the existing county organisations and those county sides newly-formed that year so as to be able to qualify for *The People* competition. From the very beginning the NDAGB hockey length was 7' 6"; which I can only assume was introduced so as not to impinge upon *News of the World* territory or be accused of copying the *NoW* rules, although of course one was a team competition and the other an individual event.’

THE STANDARD FLIGHT

Steve M. wrote to me last year wondering if he might prevail on my insights into the development of the ‘Standard Flight’ by which Steve means of course the type of flight shown below. (Image © 1989 Ian Hughes. Used with permission.)

Steve told me, “My guess, and it’s only a guess, involves a feather and a pair of scissors, as the bottom of a feather would correlate with the bottom angles of a Standard Flight, and possibly they would have tried to match the tops. But I was wondering if there was a slightly more scientific explanation than that. I’m wondering is there a history of the dart flight, and why the standard...is standard. Obviously once you have the Standard, the evolution into Pears, Kites etc is just a matter of time and material science.”



‘[T]ime and material science,’ eh Steve? Perhaps I ought to refer this to Stephen Hawking! I thought my reply to Steve would be of interest to *DDN* readers. I wrote:

‘The way I heard it was that the development of the so-called ‘standard flight’ was the invention of a dartsman in

London; at least he was the first one to build a jig (or whatever it was called) that actually made what was to become known as the ‘standard flight’. During the 1970s a goodly number of other darts flights manufacturers brought out the same shape of flight and then I understand there were some disputes as to who officially ‘owned’ the design.

However, my theory is that the ‘standard flight’ (for want of a better name) was around for many years before someone decided to make it their own and claim ownership of it. My thoughts on this issue began some years ago when I interviewed a Scottish darts champion who told me about his use of paper and cardboard flights. The latter, he said, were usually constructed using cigarette cards which were merely folded and pushed into a cane stem. However, his *paper* flights were made by folding a piece of (usually) brown paper in half and then half again and then placing an old one penny piece on top and cutting round it and then gluing them together. During the cutting of the flight, the scissors did not follow the roundness of the coin but were straight cuts. The result, a more or less precise replica of what we know today as a ‘standard flight’.

So my view is that the standard flight has nothing to do with feather flights at all. However, having said that, I believe Steve's 'guess' might be correct with regard to the modern 'pear' shaped flight. This could well be a derivative of the feather flight, most of which were in fact pear-shaped.

ARROWS ON YOUTUBE

From Denmark *DDN* subscriber Kent B. brings news of his recent delving on YouTube which resulted in his finding a darts film he had been searching for for ages. Kent wrote:

"Yesterday I did a search on YouTube as I do regularly for darts and some of the characters in darts. To my big surprise I found the Bristow documentary *Arrows* there! This is the 1979 documentary I have been looking for, for so many years and I also remember asking you about it and as far as I remember you didn't know of any copies.'



That's very true. Kent did write to me a few years ago (probably pre-YouTube) but I was unable to help him on that occasion. I had always thought that *Arrows* was a TV documentary rummaging through my archive recently I found that back in 2004 Dick Allix (Eric Bristow's manager) had told me that it was actually a 'B movie' made for cinema in, as Kent said, 1979. Dick added, "*Arrows* supported an American film called *The Warriors*. It was a fly-on-the-wall look at the rising sport of TV darts as seen through the eyes of Eric and directed by a then young Scottish Director,

John Samson. It ran for 40 minutes."

Kent said, "It seems *Arrows* has been on YouTube there since July 31st 2012 but I have no idea why I haven't found it before." He continued, "In my opinion it's a very rare and important documentary about the lifestyle of Eric at that point in time, but in particular the story of darts evolving as an accepted way of pro living. The money, the working men's clubs, the travelling – it's all there. I've been looking for for so long."

Kent was kindly provided the [Link](#)

Dick Allix also mentioned another film focussing on Eric, this time made-for-TV and titled *Arrogant, irresponsible, genius*. Dick informed me that it was filmed at Eric's club, *The Crafty Cockney* for Central Television Sport and produced by Gary Newbon. My records show that the film was featured on Channel 4 here in the UK in April 1986 when, as Dick Allix remarked, Eric was "at the height of his winning ways." (The image above shows Eric at *The Crafty Cockney* in September 1984. Image courtesy TW/*Darts World* archive.)

I haven't checked to see if this film can be found on YouTube but doubtless Kent will let me know. (I was also wondering if Kent can help by providing information about the early darts scene in Denmark...)

SIR DAVID FROST

Sad to hear of the death of Sir David Frost recently. His *Frost Programme* and the satirical series *That Was The Week That Was* were essential TV viewing during my formative years.

Back in 1985 David Frost was President of the Lord Taverners (a UK-based charity chockfull of top entertainers and based at Lord's cricket ground) who, with comedian, writer and satirist Willie Rushton, a long-serving member of the Taverners' ruling council, helped launch the *Daily Star*/Whitbread Inns National Pairs Darts Championship.



The tournament was open to all-comers with a chance to win a share of the £6,500 prize pot. The cash raised from entry fees was used by the Lord Taverners to help provide mini-buses for under-privileged and handicapped children. A worthy cause indeed.

When preparing to play a game of lawn darts as part of the publicity campaign to promote the event, Frost told reporters, "It might be

safer if I just watched rather than played," and then admitted, "I am to darts playing what [*Liverpool* songstress] Cilla Black is to prize-fighting."

As for the tournament itself, the winners (who received a cheque for £1,000) were the UK, Cumbrian pairing of John Kane and Richard Smith (shown above with the *Daily Star* darts girls). (Image © *Daily Star*/Darts World archive) They beat Cheshire's Austin Courtier and Ron Lee in what *Darts World* described as 'a thrilling final'. In addition a cheque for £15,000 was given to the Lord Taverners'.

DR. DARTS AND 'THE GODFATHER OF DARTS' INTERVIEWED BY ITV4

UK-based *DDN* readers will be aware that the channel ITV4 has been covering the Grand Slam of Darts for a number of years; a welcome policy for anyone without satellite television.

In mid-September I was invited by the former top man at the British Darts Organisation (BDO), Olly Croft (often described as 'The Godfather of Darts') to his home in Muswell Hill, North London to 'sit in' with an interview he was going to have on 27th September with ITV4 relating to a programme being produced titled *The Power of Darts*. I was very happy to accept.

The programme is the brainchild of producer Jonathan Sides, the story is to cover the organisation of darts since the 'boom' of the 1970s and 1980s through to the 'split' and the growth of the PDC.

John and his camera/sound man Damian met us and interviewed Olly for about an hour and then, to my surprise, asked to interview me too. That lasted about half an hour. John seemed very pleased with both interviews.

John has promised to keep use apprised of developments and clearly I will let all *DDN* readers know when *The Power of Darts* is to be broadcast.

WINMAU WORLD MASTERS

Ian Flack, the Sales and Marketing Director of the WINMAU Dartboard Co. Ltd., has formally announced that the 40th World Masters is to be broadcast by Eurosport and WINMAU TV. He said, “This year’s landmark 40th Winmau World Masters, in association



with EY Events and Hull City Council will be broadcast to seventy-one countries by Eurosport (Europe’s leading sports multi-media group) with a reach of 139 million homes in 20 languages across the UK, Europe and the Asia-Pacific region.”

Ian added, “The Men’s semi-finals and final will be shown internationally by the broadcaster and the good news doesn’t stop there! Darts fans worldwide will be able to watch the women’s semi-final and final, girls final, boys final and the men’s last 32 down to the quarter finals live via Winmau TV on the Winmau website.

The Winmau World Masters field has never looked stronger with defending champion and current world number one and number one seed Stephen Bunting leading the race for the Masters crown. Bunting faces some tough competition from the likes of Darryl Fitton, Tony O’Shea and current Lakeside World Champion Scott Waites who are hot on his heels to claim this prestigious title and the £25,000 champion’s purse.”

EVEN MORE FASCINATING WORLD MASTERS’ FACTS

Yet again I am grateful to darts author and statistician Colin Saunders for providing *DDN* with more fascinating darts data relating to the World Masters. This time Colin focusses on the WINMAU Youth events.

Colin told me, “Between 1986 and 1998 over 400 young darts players from 33 countries participated in the joint youth event with top averages per dart of 28+. Then, in the

subsequent separate Boys' and Girls' events held between 1999 and 2012, over 500 boys from 32 countries played with top averages being in excess of 29. As for the girls' event between those dates over 300 girls from 22 countries participated with the top averages exceeding 23."



And who can forget Wales' Leeanne Maddock (pictured left in 1993. Image courtesy PC/DW archive) who achieved darts history in 1992 when she became the only youth player to ever win both the Youth Masters title (whilst the boys and girls still played in a single event) and the ladies' senior's event in the same year. Leeanne beat Germany's Christian Lechtken to lift the Youth title (remarkably she had been runner-up to

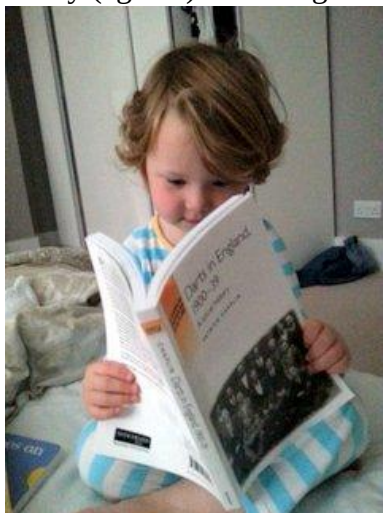
England's Michael Barnard the previous year) and achieved the double when she beat Wales' Sandra Greatbatch in the Women's Masters final.

As regards the Youth Masters (separate events for girls and boys since 1999) Colin commented, "In real terms the youth events must have spread the sport of darts across the world as it has been and still is the major world youth event covering many countries."

I was wondering... Does Leeanne still play darts? Perhaps *DDN* readers can provide me with some information. Please write to info@patrickchaplin.com.

IS THIS YOUNG PERSON DR. DARTS' YOUNGEST READER?

Justin Irwin (aka 'The Bachelor of Darts') sent me this lovely photograph of his daughter Molly (aged 3) thumbing through the softback edition of my book *Darts in England 1900-39 – A social history*. She looks fascinated by it doesn't she? (My thanks to her dad for providing the image.)



Whilst writing Justin (author of *Murder on the Darts Board* (London: Portico Books, 2008) and ardent darts fan) asked if I knew anything about the 'Black Irish' dartboard, a miniature replica of which he recently spotted in the *Royal Oak* pub near Waterloo station in London.

I had to admit to Justin that I don't know much about that particular regional dartboard except that in the only illustration I have of the board looks more or less and maybe exactly like the Lincoln Board and that they both appear to be black-stained versions of the Yorkshire Board. However, the illustration does not refer to the size of the Black Irish

dartboard.

Checking my archive I find an e-mail from a darts fan named Steve McAulay who told me last year that he had searched parts of Ireland for sightings of the Black Irish dartboard which, he says, is 'a smaller version of the Lincoln Board', but all to no avail.

So, this is where *DDN* readers come in. Does anyone in the UK (or ex-pats) know the derivation and/or history of the Black Irish dartboard? Is it still played on in either Northern Ireland or Eire or anywhere else on the planet? If you have any information, then please contact me.

AND FINALLY...

Frank Quinn, one of the founders of the Scottish Darts Association (SDA) back in the very early 1970s, has recently joined our happy band by subscribing to *DDN*. In conversation recently Frank told me that in the mid-1970s Pat Harkins, the son-in-law of Scottish International footballer, Kenny Dalglish, bought a pub in Glasgow Road, Rutherglen, South Lanarkshire called *The Old Spot* and renamed it *The Dart Inn*. This proved very popular but a few years ago Pat sold the pub. The new owners moved in and almost immediately changed the name to *The Sportsman*.

I wonder how many other pubs there are (or were) in the UK and elsewhere that are (or were for a time) named after the second most popular indoor activity in the world. (Replies to the usual address please.)

OK.

So that's it for another month. I hope you have all enjoyed this issue and, as usual, all feedback is welcomed.

I'll see you next time.

Patrick

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PUBLICATIONS:

My latest book *180! Fascinating Darts Facts* published by The History Press is now available. Copies can be purchased direct from www.thehistorypress.co.uk or Amazon.com.

UK subscribers can obtain signed copies direct from me at an inclusive price of £7.50.

Contact info@patrickchaplin.com for details. (It is hoped that this service will be available to international subscribers soon.)

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.