

DR. DARTS' NEWSLETTER

Issue 43 November 2013



MASTERFUL DARTS

Congratulations to Stephen Bunting and Deta Hedman on winning the Men's and Women's titles in the 40th year of the World Masters which has been sponsored by WINMAU since 1976. As you doubtless have read, Stephen was unstoppable in the



final as he whitewashed James Wilson 7-0. In the Women's event, Deta triumphed over England's Rachel Brooks 4-1.

Congratulations too to England's Shaun Lovett who won the Boys' World Masters' title by beating Colin Roelofs of The Netherlands 4-2. And let's not forget the girls as we congratulate Casey Gallagher for her 4-0 victory over Northern Ireland's Kayleigh O'Neill in the Girls' final.

My wife Maureen and I attended the Masters as guests of the sponsors WINMAU and we had a great time. I even managed to meet Justin Broton of the Gibraltar Darts Association (GDA), (pictured above with me). Justin is the man who has helped me with technical issues relating to the publication of *DDN* and he is no mean darts player himself.

Justin played in Group 1 of the tournament and told me, "In the last 32 of the Qualifiers I came so so sooooo close to the last 16." Justin eventually lost to England's Dean Stewart 2-1 in the tie breaker. Justin said, "My game with Dean was very exciting...I can only recall a few things! (Lots of adrenaline flowing!) What I do remember were key parts of the game which made a difference; these being a 158 finish, a bull finish followed by a 180 to start the next leg then going all the way to the tie breaker winning the bull starting with a 125 and nearly finishing the leg to win with 140 (T20, T20, missed D10)."

Justin was gracious in defeat adding, "Personally I could not be happier as it's very difficult when usually one has little time to train with work, wife and family and GDA commitments."

APOLOGIES

I apologise for not attaching *DDN* to one part of the October mailings. My thanks to Ad in Holland, Glen in Seattle and others for pointing out the error of my ways. Judging by this month's feedback it seems that everyone subsequently received their *DDN*. If not, then please let me know.

WEBSITE

Ashley D., has written suggesting that I include my website address in *DDN*. I'd always thought that all requests to subscribe came through there but, of course, they don't. So you'll see www.patrickchaplin.com included in all future issues. There are over 300 pages for you to search. Thanks Ashley...

FEEDBACK FROM PREVIOUS ISSUES

(a) SEWA darts trial and darts in America

In response to the SEWA review and Robin C's comments in *DDN* #42, Larry A., another of my American readers, wrote, 'As usual, the typical wonderful read from Patrick. The review of the SEWA darts by different players including females was entertaining as well as informative, way to go!'

My concerns with American players are numerous. One being knowledgeable about the game of darts! Many, many times I have mentioned Phil Taylor or Simon Whitlock and gotten nothing but blank stares from league members! Really!!

Keep up the good work Doctor as you're filling a massive void in many areas here in the good old USA.'

Can that be right? Multi darts world champion Taylor is unknown in the USA! It could be because if someone in the States greeted me with a series of names of US basketball or baseball champions, I would look blank too. What do others think?

However, I bet they know the name 'Taylor' in Chicago...

(b) Chicago Southside Dart League (CSDL)

I was recently thinking about the Southside darters and then what happens? Sharon Huffman of the CSDL writes, 'Hey Dr. P.! How the hell you been? Sorry I haven't kept in touch been busy with life... Hope you are well and always enjoy your great news letters. I sure wish I had you on my dart league to spread your word. LOVE IT!! Good Darts My Friend, Sharon'.

Sharon has promised to write more soon and bring me up to date with what's happening on the Chicago darts scene.

(c) The Standard Dart Flight

I've received quite a bit of feedback on the article in #42 relating to the origins of the standard dart flight. Among them, Mick S. wrote, 'Not sure how the standard flight came about but they look a lot like the old paper flights. So I think this may have been where it came from.' Possibly Mick but, of course, the design of those early mass-produced paper flights had to originate from somewhere and I think the making of flights using a coin and a piece of paper or card works. However, as always, I am very happy to be proved wrong.

Russell H. replied to that same article stating, ‘Patrick, as always I love DDN. You mentioned cigarette cards which were merely folded and pushed into a cane stem. When I played in the Philippines I had a set of 3gm Unicorn novelty darts with feather flights. I actually used them to play and eventually tore the flights off by striking them with the other darts.

One of my teammates took them and split the wooden shaft and inserted cut-to-shape x-ray film so I could continue to use them. I still have them somewhere. We used x-ray film a lot to repair our darts before the plastic standard flight came out. They were not readily available in the mid 70's in the Philippines.’

Russell has promised to send me a photo of those flights *if he can find them*. No worries Russell. Thanks for your feedback.

(d) Oche/Hockey length

Mick S. then raised an issue relating to the ‘Oche/Hockey’ article also in issue #42. He asked, “Was that a deliberate mistake on page 5? You used the word ‘HOCKEY.’” I told Mick, ‘I deliberately used the word ‘hockey’ on page 5 because that is the word that was used before the British Darts Organisation changed it to ‘oche’ in the 1970s.’

For detailed (and some might say hilarious) theories relating to the derivation and use of the word ‘hockey’ in darts, see Bobby George’s and my book *Scoring for Show, Doubles for Dough – Bobby George’s Darts Lingo* (Clacton-on-Sea: Apex Publishing, 2011) pages 65-68.

Even while the rule makers were using ‘hockey’ some other terms for the throw-line were in use. A cursory glance at the ‘Lymm and District Darts League Rules and Fixtures Season 1960-61’ (one of five such documents kindly donated to my archive by Bob Foster of Conwy, Wales) shows that those drawing up the rules used both ‘toe line’ and ‘footer’ rather than ‘hockey’. (Lymm is near Warrington, Cheshire in the UK.)

Interestingly another of the rule books Bob sent me, this time the ‘Grappenhall & District Darts League’ handbook for the 1969/70 season, utilises the term ‘toe mark’. (Grappenhall is also a village in Cheshire not far from Warrington.) Both of these 1960s leagues played ‘Round the Board’ rather than ‘501’.

(e) Arrows on YouTube

The article about the Eric Bristow movie *Arrows* in last month’s issue brought back some special memories for a DDN reader from Eire, Tom F. He wrote:

‘Loved the article on Eric Bristow and “Arrows” which I have watched. You said it was filmed in *The Crafty Cockney*. Well, I actually travelled over to from Dublin for the opening night in



1984. I stayed with my parents from Walsall and brought them with me when I went for the first opening night (the official Opening Night was a few weeks later). [I took some] photos from the occasion and here is one [see previous page] with Eric and my wife Ann. It was taken in his Private/ Snooker Room.” Tom added, I was amazed at the number of trophies in Eric's trophy cabinet. Keep up the good work Doctor.’

(The image, showing Eric and Ann with the *News of the World* trophy, appears courtesy of Tom Firth © 1984)

DARTITIS

This month's main article is another *DDN* exclusive; this time relating to 'dartitis' (the dartplayers' equivalent of the golfers' 'yips') which, judging from e-mails I receive regularly on the subject, is more commonplace than we may think.

Most recently Ashley D. has written, “I'm struggling a bit with the onset of dartitis. So I would be interested if you have any solutions to conquer the symptom.” For Ashley I am very pleased to be able to state that I *can* help or rather Bob Johnson, Honorary League President of the Larnaca Friendly Darts League, Cyprus can.

Visitors to www.patrickchaplin.com looking for advice regarding dartitis will have found Bob's earlier article about the condition but Bob (pictured right with the plaque presented to him in recognition of his contribution to darts in Larnaca 2000-2013) has extensively revised his advice and guidance which is now presented here for the first time. (I have enjoyed many a holiday on the island of Cyprus and met some fascinating darts people out there.)



Bob told me, “I received many enquiries about dartitis from as far as America but mostly countries throughout Europe. Without doubt they all had one thing in common. This was that they all had played to a high standard sometime prior to the dartitis setting in. One case referred to a bad cramping up of the throwing arm as progressive games were played. A few were able to perform well in free practice yet at the slightest hint of competition (even friendly) it was another story. Also a couple admitted to buckling before a match when it involved playing a better team.

Having kept all my suggestions and advice emails, during the last few months I incorporated them all into this article which helps a player hopefully to recovery from the deepest depths of dartitis or any situation which could lead to dartitis. As well as gradual build up practice session advice there is a short section on maintaining the throw and what to look for that can lead to a dartitis situation.’

I am very pleased that Bob has allowed me to publish his latest advice and guidance so without more ado...

Prelude

It was fifty years ago that I first suffered from dartitis, having played some good local league darts for about four years and it is only in recent years that I asked myself the question, "Why was I so much better when I started at eighteen and for the four years following until dartitis set in?" It took me quite a few years to recover from it and I have played reasonably well since doing so. The answer I came up with is that when I started playing, my throw was natural and uninhibited with the dart flowing freely from my hand to the target. Although I have now recovered from dartitis my throw has changed over the years; becoming slower and more deliberate and the missing ingredient was the freedom of throw that I had when I was eighteen and the four subsequent years.

What is Dartitis?

Most players, including professionals, have a stress point, for example, the pace is hot; a crucial high score or out-shot is required and on an important throw may hook; pull; sway; lean or tense up, causing them to miss. When composure is required at a time of stress it can be very difficult to retain a free and natural throw. Yet it is at this time that your throw needs to be as free as possible whilst maintaining composure. In my opinion, dartitis is the extreme way of showing any stress and occurs when you cannot release your dart due to the fear of missing what you are throwing for and the brain stops the arm from doing the throwing action.

Recovery from Dartitis and exercises

If your dartitis is very bad it may take much time and effort on your part to correct it before you can say you are cured. You should also lower your expectations for a period of time and maybe to go through re-learning the throw you previously had. To regain your confidence I would suggest you practice only on a board at home at first and not in public until you feel your confidence returning. If no board at home, find a nice quiet pub board and practice for about 15 to 30 minutes. This is about the time it would take to complete playing for most match formats.

If you are a severely affected player and you cannot throw at the board at all.

In my original article I suggested throwing caveman like and this still applies initially. Throw at the board with no target in mind. Forget that the board has doubles, triples and sections. Cover it over if necessary and just use the entire board as your target. Use the most relaxed and natural throw you feel comfortable with even if it is from the side of your head, as if a dagger was being thrown. Throw at the board area and just get used to the freedom of throwing.

If you are able to throw at the board or your arm cramps up

Free up your throw as if you were just starting a prematch warm up session. The idea behind this is to get your brain and arm accustomed to throwing freely and reinforce in your mind that you are able to throw albeit with limited accuracy. Throw without concentrating on any particular area of the board. As you warm up and the arm and

shoulder muscles relax you should get more consistent with your three darts and they will group closer together automatically.

The next step is to group your darts on or near any specific area on the board. Try any large whole number first before any double; treble or bull. Should dartitis occur at any time it is best to recompose yourself, step back if necessary and try again with your relaxed or warm up style. If unsuccessful put your darts to one side and return later.

Practice and gain confidence and consistency with private sessions. Always start a session with relaxed throwing and try to remember this action so you are able to recall it quickly, because you may need to recover this style of throw should you be playing in practice, friendly or match conditions.

Do not shut yourself off from the odd friendly game. Just remember that you are likely to get a hint of competitiveness only to discover that overtrying can be detrimental and cause you to lock up suddenly. Remember composure in times of stress and don't forget to breathe. Get your stance right. Take a good look at your target and repeat your natural throw on your 1st, 2nd and 3rd darts. The chances are you will succeed in getting what you want. If not you are likely to be very close. Try not to be disappointed should you miss as even professionals miss sometimes.

Thinking too much and over-trying is at the root of the dartitis problem and it does take quite a bit of composure to maintain consistency with a throw. Do not just hammer away at the T20s, move about the board and use 1, 2 or 3 darts at various targets. Try the occasional round the board on doubles, followed by 25 & bull with the relaxed throw. Then focus on some doubles; i.e. five relaxed doubles, then the 6th with focus. Note any different way that your body reacts when in the focus mode. Try to correct any twitches by being more relaxed. Your aim should be to complete all doubles with focus and relaxation without any re-occurrence of the arm locking up.

After some time you should feel confidence return to the point that you can throw your dart in a reasonable manner even when under pressure. You will however have to accept that not every throw is going to be perfect. You will get the occasions where you are on the wire and not in. At least you would have given it your best shot and you will find your consistency will improve over time.

Thinking can be a killer!

A technique I used to rid my dartitis was to walk up to the oche and with no study of the board for the usual moment. As I raised my head to look, my first dart was already in hand and being thrown. This kept the flow going and in fact improved consistency by not thinking too much about it. Give it a try and see how you get on.

Maintaining your throw

For me the biggest single cause of an erratic throw was not throwing freely enough. Over the years I had started to push the dart to the board affecting the wrist movement and release causing a drift to the right or loss of height. This can lead to overtrying and more problems. I now practice freeing up my throw more. Learn to relax more when in a pressure situation; and rely on my natural skill.

Check that your stance is balanced and that no unwanted body, arm, hand, or finger movements have crept in unnoticed. Bad habits with your throwing will lead to problems after a time and cause a loss of confidence. Possibly even darditis!

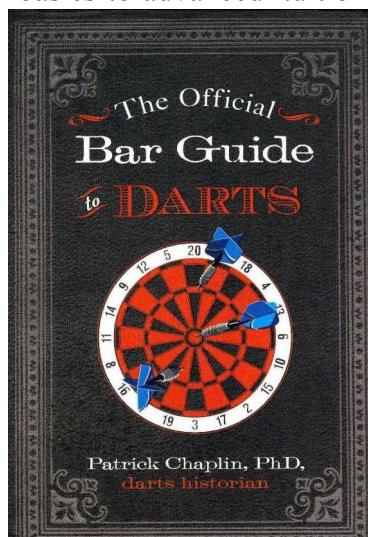
Use free practice time to hone your skills and maintain or improve your consistency and composure under relaxed conditions. You are not afforded this luxury when playing a match with someone else as it is pressure from the first throw.

Having said all this, it is with regret that I will be unable to give advice by e-mail in the future as I am now truly retired. Hopefully this short yet comprehensive article I have written should provide a good reference for players not only suffering from darditis but also some whose form goes a little pear-shaped from time to time.

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ANOTHER DARTS BOOK...

I have recently signed a contract to write yet another book on darts; this time a 'basics-to-advanced' tuition book. Even though I have already delved into how-to-play in my *The Official Bar Guide to Darts* (2010) (pictured) and with John Lowe in *The Art of Darts*, in discussion with darts players there still seems to be room for one more.



Imagine *you* are looking to learn about the game of darts for the very first time. You go into your local bookshop and see on the shelf a book called (for example) *Darts From Scratch*. What would *you* expect/want to see inside? A straw poll of a few friends indicates 'more photographs', 'more diagrams' and 'information about the range of darts available.'

I want to ensure that the new book covers all the elements darters and potential darters would want to see. If you have any thoughts on this please contact me at info@patrickchaplin.com.

DR. DARTS FEATURES ON LIVE.DARTS.COM

Earlier this year James Copeland e-mailed to thank me for my 'fantastic newsletter' and to alert me to his website www.live-darts.com. It's a fascinating site and James tells me that a blog is 'in preparation' and will be posted as soon as work commitments allow.

However, in the meantime, James has written an article about *DDN* and my work and it would, of course, be very remiss of me not to alert you to the site and the link:

<http://www.live-darts.com/category/Darts-News/Dr-Darts-Dr-Patrick-Chaplin-201310160002/>

James, I only hope I can continue to live up to expectations.

DARTS IN SOUTH AFRICA

Neil J. e-mailed me from Cape Town in search of information about early South African darts players.

He wrote, ‘Patrick, A great read again from your newsletter. It is with great interest that I am asking the question if you know of any South Africans that made it ‘big’ in the UK? Here in South Africa we have the "younger" generation coming through, but I'm interested to know if any guys made it in the 70's and 80's?’

I thought that the Embassy World Professional Darts Championship would be the best place to start so I consulted Colin Saunders' mammoth source book on that event (covering 1978 to 2012) and discovered that there *has never been* a representative of South Africa in that competition! Undeterred I contacted Colin and asked him if he would kindly look up his records of the World Masters to see if South Africa was ever represented in that competition since 1974 (its inaugural year). Thanks (once again) to Colin I was able to inform Neil of the following:

Men's WINMAU World Masters (in alphabetical order)

Player's name	Years played
Clifton-Smith, Michael	1996
Cottle, George	1975 and 1976
Ellis, Harry	1975
Meiring, Christo	1995
Michael, Eddie	1976
Mitchley, George	1977
Petersen, Devon George	2010
Rangana, Bala-Krishne	1994
Waterman, Jeff	2001
Van Rooyen, Ian	1996

Women's WINMAU World Masters Player's Name Years played

Koetze, Joey	2007
McIlvaney, Cybthia	1994
Spark, Felecity	2010
Visser, Karien	1996

(All names are as spelled in the WINMAU programme or on WDF website.)

THIRTY-FIVE YEARS OF THE TOKING MAGPIES

Back in February this year George B. wrote to me following my mentioning in *DDN* the amazing exploits of the Sports Argus darts team. George said, “Congratulations to

Sports Argus, for their longevity and their community service. I am a member of the Toking Magpies, Phoenix, Arizona, USA. Our team has played together, with the *same core line up* of dart shooters, since 1978. We bill ourselves as the longest running dart team in the Western Hemisphere and we celebrate our 35th anniversary with our match tonight. [28th February] Cheers!”

I asked for more details of this long-established team of US darters and in June George replied, “After talking with team Captain and Historian Gary ‘Max’ Smart, it seems that the first Toking Magpie season in 1978 was the fall season, so our 'official' 35th anniversary will be at the start of the fall season this year. We started playing together when we were students at Arizona State University. Here we are now, a bunch of grey-haired old men, 35 years (and almost as many sponsoring pubs) later, still at it.”



George has provided the photo above taken at the last match of the 2012/2013 season which shows (left to right) Marty ‘Big Guy’ Barnett, George ‘Bullseye’ Brennan, Steve Cowan, #1 shooter Tom ‘Ton’ Convey, Captain Gary ‘Max’ Smart and newest Magpie Dan Cronin. George added, “Max, Marty, Tom and I have been Magpies since the beginning but newer members Steve and Dan were a perfect fit. We love to get together once a week, tip a pint or three and get a little silly (hence the expression, "Magpie Antics").”

George also provided a link to an article that appeared in the *Phoenix Magazine* about the 'Pies which is:

<http://www.phoenixmag.com/lifestyle/valley-news/201103/dart-attack/>

There was also a mention by George of possibly hosting the Sports Argus over there. George told me, “If you ever get tired of the 'bloody English weather' and you need a little infusion of solar energy” which, at the time of writing (June 2013) was 111 F/ 43 C...” Sounds like a plan to me!

THE PORTSMOUTH DARTBOARD

Here’s a challenge for my UK readers who live on the south coast in the Portsmouth area. I have been researching the history and development of darts for many years and recently came across a reference to the ‘Portsmouth Dartboard’.

My source is the *Sunday Pictorial* Sports Annual (1949). In an article about darts titled ‘Don’t Get Your Feet Wet at Darts’ writer George Casey states, ‘There are

different types of boards throughout the country. There is the clock board, the fives board, the Kent board and *the Portsmouth board* and so on...'

Frustratingly Casey tells us no more about the 'Portsmouth board' and there is no accompanying image. In my research I have come across a good number of regional dartboards but never the 'Portsmouth board'.

With only that single mention as evidence that such a dartboard existed, I thought I would seek help from your readers in the hope that they can provide me with information to solve this mystery.

Does anyone recall playing on the Portsmouth board? What did the Portsmouth dartboard look like? Was it the same size as the standard trebles board? What games were played on it? 501? Round the board? Was there ever a league which played exclusively on the local board?

AND FINALLY...

Back at the WINMAU World Masters I was very pleased to meet the youngest-ever British Darts Organisation (BDO) referee/caller, Wales' Huw Ware. We chatted for a while before Huw was called away to call another match. Our meeting was captured



by my wife Maureen on camera. I forwarded the image (left) to Huw and he replied, "It was a pleasure to meet you this weekend, and great to talk to you about all things darts! Thanks very much for the picture - *you* look fine!!"

Actually Huw, you look really dapper with that most appropriate bow tie. That could really become a popular darts-wear (Pun intended.) accessory. I think I appear to look a little worse for wear. (No pun intended.)

IN NEXT MONTH'S ISSUE:

I know I said ages ago that I wasn't going to state what was to be included in the next month's issue because I often failed to deliver but this time it's different.

Since the end of 2012 I have been communicating with an amazing 86-year old darts player named Frank Sykes and it is his story I'll be telling as the exclusive article in the December *DDN*. You probably won't know his name but (Trust me I'm a doctor) Frank's story will amaze you.

Also in next month's issue I'll be looking into the art of beer mat collecting from a darts perspective. (Is there anyone out there who has the full set of Marlboro Team of Champions beer mats?)

...and of course I will feature the very best of the feedback I receive from my global subscribers.

OK.

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

I'll see you next time. In the meantime, GOOD DARTING!

Patrick

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PUBLICATIONS:

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

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.

Check out even more fascinating darts facts by visiting my website www.patrickchaplin.com