

DR. DARTS' NEWSLETTER

Issue 45 February 2014



WHERE DID 2013 GO?

Welcome everyone to the first issue of *DDN* for 2014.

I am still recovering from the excesses of both the festivities and the world darts but hope that Issue #45 will still come up to your expectations.



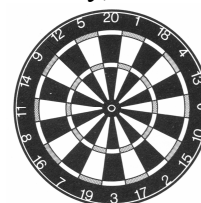
There were some great darts from both codes of play during the two World Championships. I won't go into any detail as by now it is 'old news'. Pre-the Internet thousands of darts fans, including me, used to watch the Embassy/Lakeside on TV, watching the early superstars such as Leighton Rees (pictured). We'd then have to wait for the February (or in the early

days the March) issue of *Darts World* to find all the detail and read the debate but nowadays that's all been available at the click of a mouse and comment immediately posted in on-line reports and forums.

However, the one thing I *will* mention and what did impress me was the, in the main, very high standard of ladies darts during the Lakeside tournament. I wonder if this will inspire more sponsors of the ladies' game to come forward. Maybe, but I guess that without regular TV exposure here in the UK any offers will be small.

DR. DARTS ON *THE ONE SHOW*...Well nearly

I suppose this is a bit of non-news but worth reporting. Back in November 2013 I was approached by a producer of films for *The One Show*, an extremely popular prime-time TV programme on BBC1 here in the UK. He wanted to feature Bobby George and me in a piece about the legendary/mythological Brian Gamlin, from Bury, Lancashire who is purported to have been the 'inventor' of the numbering system of the dartboard which is nowadays accepted as standard. (Dartboard image © NODOR International.)



So on 11th December I arrived at George Hall where, over a period of 4-5 hours, Bobby and I were interviewed individually by comedy legend Arthur Smith and filmed by the crew. A couple of weeks later we were told that the show date was Friday 11th January; nicely placed approaching the final two days of the Lakeside World Professional Darts Championship. We told friends that we would be on and then, after an e-mail from the producer close to the proposed time of the broadcast, had to 'untell' them. Transmission of the film had been 'delayed' but the producer hoped that it wouldn't be for too long. I left it a week or two and then, a bit irritated, I e-mailed him again and asked if the film had been binned. The producer

replied grumpily, “No it has not been binned. Since the story is timeless, with no deadline, it is among the scores of films that still have no transmission date. As I've said, when I find out the date I will let you know.” (Of course he will.)

Neither Bobby nor I were paid for the filming but at least the producer did buy a copy of my book *Darts in England 1900-1939 – A social history* in which I reveal that Gamlin was a myth. I also name the person my research shows *was* responsible.

‘THE COUNT’ RETURNS TO THE BRITISH DARTS ORGANISATION (BDO)

Why wasn't I surprised when I received the news that twice World Champion Ted Hankey announced that, after two years playing darts on the Professional Darts Corporation (PDC) circuit, he will be returning to the BDO?

Despite his undoubted skills as a dartsman, to me “The Count” (pictured), one of the few characters left in the professional game, never seemed to me to be comfortable playing under the PDC code. A recent WINMAU press release revealed that Ted ‘now feels the time is right to return to the BDO to progress his career.’ Ted said: “I’ve had two very enjoyable years at the PDC and I would like to thank Barry Hearn and everyone involved for making me feel so welcome and for giving me the opportunity to play on their tour. However, something just didn’t feel quite right and the penny dropped when I watched the opening game of the Lakeside this year – I really miss playing on the BDO circuit!



It has been said time and again, but it is a true family atmosphere and I miss everything about it. Following a terrible year with illness and injury, I need to get my career back on track and I genuinely feel that the BDO offers the best opportunity for me to do this. I can't wait to tell all my old BDO foes that “This is My Territory – Be on Your Way!”

Ted's return to the BDO fold begins with what his sponsors WINMAU have described as a ‘baptism of fire’; ‘The Count’s first event being the inaugural *Daily Mirror* BDO World Trophy which is being held 4th-9th February at the Blackpool Tower. As Ted has no BDO ranking points he must play through the qualifiers but he is confident of reaching the Eurosport televised finals.

Ted said, “I’m really starting to play some of the best darts of my life on the practice board and I just need to translate this form to match play. I know I can beat anyone on my day, and if I can just get the consistency back then I have a good chance of picking up a major trophy this year.”

The one tournament ‘The Count’ really wants to win is the WINMAU World Masters, one of the hardest events to win and which, to date, has eluded him. He added, “WINMAU are my main sponsors. They have been so good to me and stood by me through thick and thin, and it would be nice to reward them by winning their tournament for the first time.” What a return to the BDO oche that would be!

Ian Flack, Sales and Marketing Director of WINMAU, added: “Ted is and always will be one of the most charismatic characters in the game. No other player divides opinion as much as Ted but, love him or hate him, he draws the TV audiences and gets the crowd worked into a frenzy like no other player! We have a 40-year relationship with the BDO, and I know they are as thrilled as we are that Ted is once again going to be pitting his wits against the BDO’s finest players. Wherever Ted plays there is always high drama, controversy and an incredible atmosphere and this is what we all love about him. Ted is a true friend to myself and our company, and we will support him in this new chapter in his career.”



A spokesman for the PDC told me, “Ted’s time on the PDC circuit wasn’t as successful as he had hoped, but his run to the William Hill Grand Slam of Darts quarter-finals in November showed his quality. We wish him and Co Stompe, who has also returned to the BDO/WDF circuit, the best of luck in the future.”

...and so will all ‘The Count’s loyal fans. Good luck Ted.

(Image of Ted Hankey on page 2 © Chris Sargeant. Used with permission. Lakeside image (above) © 2010 Chipsnapz. Used with permission.)

‘DR. DARTS’ LECTURES TO VISITING STUDENTS FROM THE USA

When I accepted an invitation late last year to lecture to students from the USA in January I did not know what to expect. The information I was given by the organisers was a bit thin. All I knew was that there would be ‘about sixteen students’ from a university in America and that they wanted to learn about the history of darts.

And so, on 7th January I duly arrived at the venue, *The Peacock* pub in the City of London, with my wife Maureen where we were greeted by the landlord and shown upstairs to the function room, a spacious area with two dartboards and a pool table plus ample space to circulate.

At the appointed time the organiser of the trip, Jason S. Milne PhD (known as ‘Jake’) and his colleague Jennifer arrived with eight students, all girls. These were followed a few minutes later by seven more girls and one young man, all aged late teens/early twenties.

The students, studying sport, and staff were all from the Longwood University, Farmville, Virginia. Their visit to London had also included a tour of Wimbledon all-England tennis club, Twickenham, the home of English rugby plus watching a football match at the Emirates Stadium, north London where Arsenal took on Tottenham Hotspur.

To be honest, for whatever reason, I wasn't expecting so many ladies in the group but such was their enthusiasm and their eagerness to learn that the lecture went, in my view, extremely well, especially given that the majority had never played darts! I asked, "Have you ever heard of Phil 'The Power' Taylor or Eric 'The Crafty Cockney' Bristow and they all shook their heads! Mind you if they had named a couple of top baseball players I'd've looked blank too! (Darts, it seems, is little played in Virginia!)



However, with such a huge blank canvas, I was able not only to give my talk a slight emphasis on the ladies game but also to reveal what I know of the game in America. I also introduced them to the complexities of the standard dartboard and the basic rules of darts play. I spoke for over an hour and was asked a good number of quality probing questions along the way. It was an absolute pleasure to lecture to such an interested and interesting audience. (Image of the group, above, © Moppix. Used with permission.)

Their evening ended with Essex County darts captain, Darren Weetoom, teaching them all how to play and it was amazing to watch the girls, the boy and their tutors learning the rudiments of the sport so quickly.

The group returned to Virginia on 9th January having sampled all manner of English sport. I wish Jake and his 'team' all the very best for the future.

THE LIGHTNING DARTS SCORER

I doubt that even those *DDN* subscribers who have been with me three years will recall my publishing the story of the 'Lightning Darts Scorer' (pictured below right) and its inventor Oliver Hilson (pictured left), as told to me some time ago by his son Barry, in Issue #11, February 2011.



The 'Lightning Darts Scorer' was the first of its kind to feature the 'telephone dial' style of scoring mechanism. Hilson's patent was accepted on 31st March 1932 and improvements to the machines were patented in February 1935 and September 1938. Housed in a very fashionable Bakelite case, the scorer proved very popular and was endorsed by the National Darts Association (NDA). The *Morning Advertiser*, the newspaper read by all licensees at the

time, described the product as 'popular', 'successful' and 'foolproof'.

Sadly, Oliver Hilson, having evacuated his family from his home in Hounslow to avoid the heavy bombing of London and the surrounding area, was killed on the night 10th



October 1940 when the family home was hit by incendiary bombs for the third time.

The reason I raise this thirty-four issues on is because I have an apology to make to Oliver Hilson's daughter, Mrs. April Bell. April was good enough to e-mail me via my website in March last year. April wrote, "It is great that you have recorded the details of the Lightning Scorer invention and the family history" but added, "I would just like to correct one error. My mother, brother and I were evacuated to Brighton -



not Reading - prior to my father being killed during the London Blitz. I know it's only a minor point but it is good to have the fact right."

I replied to say that I would be pleased to set the record straight by way of the correction appearing in *DDN* and an amendment being made to my website.

But of course I never let a good contact go without making a few enquiries of my own and, as a result, discovered that April actually still possesses a 'Lightning Darts Scorer' and she was good enough to send me some images for me to consider including in the follow-up article which I said I would publish in *DDN* 'probably June or July.'

For whatever reason that did not happen. Thus April sent me a very pleasant reminder last month (almost a year on) and I am very happy to make amends. (The photograph shows April proudly holding her father's invention.)

For the full story please go to my website www.patrickchaplin.com and search 'Lightning Darts Scorer'.

(All images ©April Bell and the Hilson family. Used with permission.)

FASCINATING FACTS FROM THE LADBROKES WORLDS CHAMPS

Ever watchful for more fascinating darts facts, here are a couple from the PDC Ladbrokes World Championships.

The 2014 Final was the first *not* to include at least one Englishman. (About time too!)

Dean Winstanley hit a nine-darter in the quarter-finals and made history by becoming the first darts player in that championship to record a perfect game yet lose the match.

DARTITIS...More follow-up

Bob Johnson's article about dartitis in the November *DDN* inspired some readers who suffer from the condition to re-examine their game. Thanks again Bob.

When looking through some old issues of *Darts World* I came across an interesting darts-related piece by Dave Lanning in which he looked back at Eric Bristow's 'troubled' 1987 season during which he became the first high-profile sufferer of the condition in the sport of darts.

In the February 1988 issue Dave recorded the comments of the then England captain, John Lowe. John said that Eric's problems might simply have been due to 'off-stage pressures.' John added that young, single players had 'a distinct advantage over players with families to look after in any sport.' He continued, "Pressures can be intense and can cause all kinds of problems for any sportsman or woman, not just darts players."



John went on to comment on Eric specifically and said, "I don't think Eric was suffering with dartsitis so much as 'pressuritis.' He has made the transition from a single man to a person with responsibilities and, believe me, they can weigh heavy. There is nothing worse than playing a top class tournament knowing one of your kids is ill in bed or you have a close relative seriously ill."

He then added, "Whatever his problems were, Eric now seems to have recovered, and I think he will look back on the past twelve months as an important period in his career, experience-wise."

As we know, up to 1987, Eric Bristow had won the Embassy World Championship five times (1980, 1981, 1984, 1985 and 1986) and was expected and expecting to win many more but dartsitis stopped him in his tracks. As Eric said in a TV documentary broadcast on ITV4 last autumn, "If someone had told me then that I would never win another world championship, I would never have believed them."

BRIAN VAUX

In the last issue of *DDN* (December 2013) I included an obituary relating to the 'King of the Midlands,' Birmingham's Brian Vaux. (The obituary was also featured in the 2014 *Darts Player*, once a separate magazine but now a supplement to the January *Darts World*.) I was delighted to hear from my good friend Ken Herbert of the Sports Argus Charity darts team (which has been featured in previous issues of *DDN*) who wrote, "Patrick. Once again a great read together with the article concerning a former Sports Argus star Brian Vaux, still remembered by many, simply the best."

Ken, it is always a pleasure for me to record the lives of the greats of our sport.

Talking of which, I am extremely proud to be able to report that I have been commissioned by the editor of the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* to write the *DNB* entry on Jocky Wilson who, as we know, passed away in 2012. My earlier contribution to the *DNB* was in respect of the late, great Welsh star, Leighton Rees.

PRODUCT REVIEW – ‘DARTSIGHT’

Subscriber Steve ‘Metalman’ was good enough to bring my attention to a fascinating new product on the market called *DartSight*, the invention of brothers David and Stuart Needham of Oldham, Lancashire.



Billed by its inventors as a ‘revolutionary new darts training aid’ the purpose of *DartSight* (left) is to ‘align your throw and develop a reliable and repeatable muscle memory for your action.’

Sounds complicated? Well it isn’t...

DartsSight is a small plastic device comprising a twistable push-fit ‘sighter’ that seats on to a split ring designed to fit any finger. Once placed snugly on your middle digit, the product helps you develop a greater level of accuracy on a more consistent basis.

DartsSight is a small plastic device comprising a twistable push-fit ‘sighter’ that seats on to a split ring designed to fit any

Eager to trial this new device, I took *DartSight* and the instructions to my local pub and asked some friends of mine to try out the product. One or two laughed in my face and thought I was playing a joke on them; that it was some kind of gimmick. Others, who were less rigid in their well-established darts-throwing ways, gave it a go. I have to say that it didn’t work for me (What does?) but others found that, with a bit of application and concentration, *DartSight* did seem to improve their accuracy.

Another friend assumed that the product was aimed at the novice or players who are having trouble identifying an issue in their game. He added, “However, I can see how, if taken seriously, *DartSight* can help refocus a players’ attention.”

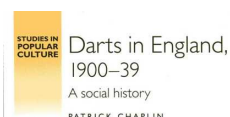
After the ‘trial’ the general consensus was that *DartSight* is a product that, for the price of a pint, has the potential to improve anyone’s game. The Needham brothers are to be congratulated on producing such an effective and inexpensive darting aid.

For more information go to the *DartSight* website at <http://www.dartsight.com>.

DARTS IN ENGLAND 1900-1939 – A SOCIAL HISTORY

I have received a couple of enquiries from subscribers who have been trying to buy my book *Darts in England 1900-39 – A social history* from the Manchester University Press book distributors but have failed because the website was ‘not available.’

That’s entirely my fault. In my haste I missed a letter out! The correct address is www.nbninternational.com. Orders can also be e-mailed to orders@nbninternational.com. My sincere apologies for this error. As readers may already know, the new



paperback edition costs £15.99 plus postage and packing.

CHARLES ELLIS OR ELLIX?

Sadiq, the Secretary of Middle East Darts, e-mailed me towards the end of last year thanking me for my work and asking a couple of questions. He wrote:

‘Dr. Patrick. Thank you for the wonderful latest darts news. We learn so much. Could you tell us please where the first British Open Darts was played? We [*would like to*] learn about Charles Ellis? Ellix? He won twice. Can you tell us more about him in a future edition of your magazine? We learn more about darts in this way and we are excited to learn.’ Sadiq added, ‘We learn from you and we learn from Eddie [*Norman*]. Great people.’

Spookily, back in 2011 I was asked a similar question by Sgt Les M. at the time a member of the UK Armed Forces in Afghanistan. “Was it Charlie Ellis or Ellix who won the first two British Open Individual Darts Championships?” My reply was featured in the September 2011 issue of *DDN* (#18). The man both Sadiq and Sgt. Les M. were thinking about is Charlie **Ellix**; a name well known to older darts fans.

My task to find out more about that ‘first’ British Open was difficult as there has been more than one ‘British Open.’ The first British Open organised by the British Darts Organisation (BDO) was held at the Mount Royal and Europa Hotels in London on 28th and 29th December 1974 (although this is shown in the records as ‘1975’). The winner was Alan Evans (Wales) and the runner-up was England’s Alan Glazier.

The second British Open was held at the same venues on 3rd and 4th January 1976 and on this occasion Jack North (a joiner from Burnley who had won the National Darts Association of Great Britain (NDAGB) Men’s Individual title in 1975) won the title. The runner-up was Birmingham and England’s Brian Vaux.



But before those Opens NODOR ran their own British Open and Charlie Ellix won the title in its first two years (1974 and 1975). (The photo (above, right) shows Ellix in action. (Image © Charles R. Cramp, courtesy of PC/DW Archive))

Held in Bristol and organised by the West of England Darts Organisation, the NODOR-sponsored Open was promoted as being ‘the first of a series of open championships to be held in the UK and Ireland.’ This knockout tournament was played utilising sixteen dartboards and attracted almost 200 entries.

In the inaugural tournament held in September 1974 Hertfordshire’s Ellix beat Brian James (Thames Valley) in the final by two games to one to win £150 in prize money plus a replica trophy and silver salver. In the 1975 competition, Charlie, described in *Darts World* magazine as ‘almost unknown...this time last year’, retained his NODOR Open title at the Patchway Club, Bristol. In the quarter final he beat Wales’

Alan Evans, then knocked out another Welsh demon of the dartboard, Tony Ridler. Charlie then secured victory in the final over England's Dave Whitcombe to win prize money of £350.

Charlie (born 18th October 1941) was described by Derek Brown, author of *The Guinness Book of Darts* (1981), as 'such a gifted thrower' which prompted him to add that 'it is perhaps surprising that he has not had greater success. Charlie had a long career as both a London and an England player and, in addition to his two NODOR British Open titles, also won the CIU (Club and Institute Union) Individual title in 1976 as well as the Kent Open that same year.

Derek Brown also remarked about Charlie's abilities in marathon matches stating that 'over the longer distance [he] is a hard man to stop.' Ellix won the Greater London Super League 1001-up title in 1976 and 1977. Brown also refers in *The Guinness Book of Darts* to Ellix hitting a record-breaking 79-dart 3001 at the Victoria Hotel, St. Ann's Road, Tottenham, against Bill Lennard on 29th April 1977. Ellix beat the previous record of 81 darts previously set by another darting great, Leighton Rees, on 5 April 1976. I do not know if Charlie's record has been broken by anyone else more recently. Perhaps *you* can help clarify this for me.

Sadly, I have very little information about Charlie Ellix after the early 1980s. Thus I am keen to learn more about this skilful darter. If anyone can provide more details about Charlie's career I would be grateful. Please contact me via my website www.patrickchaplin.com or by e-mail at info@patrickchaplin.com. Thanks.

TRINA AT THE PALACE

As we all know, and as reported in Issue 39 (September 2013), Trina was awarded an MBE in The Queen's Birthday Honours, as announced on 15th June last year in the *London Gazette*, for 'Services to Darts and Charitable Fundraising'.



Trina's investiture took place on Friday 24th January at Buckingham Palace where she was presented her MBE medal by HRH Prince Charles. The original scheduled date for the presentation was 3rd October last year but this clashed with Trina's participation in the Darts World Cup in Canada. Permission was obtained for her to receive her MBE at a later date. Trina was accompanied to the Palace by her civil partner Sue, her sister Denise and her brother

Andy. The nine-time Women's World Darts Champion will now be known formally as 'Catrina Elizabeth Gulliver MBE' but still prefers to be called 'Trina'.

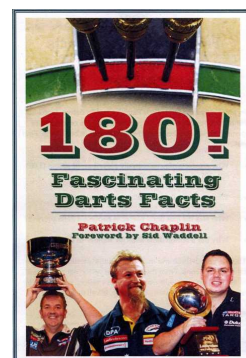
For more information and images of Trina's special day please visit Trina's website at <http://www.trina-gulliver.com/MBEMedal.html>. (Image © 2014 Sue Gulliver. Used with permission. Special thanks to David King of Darts501.com for providing assistance with this item.)

BEFORE I GO...

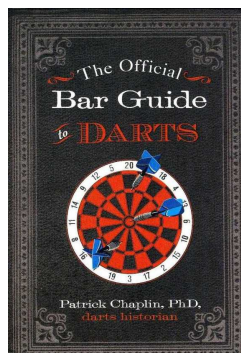
Here's my regular reminder about my books.

180! Fascinating Darts Facts

Published by The History Press *180! Fascinating Darts Facts* is available in both paperback (£7.99) and as an eBook. Copies can be purchased direct from www.thehistorypress.co.uk or Amazon.com



The Official Bar Guide to Darts



My comprehensive work on darts published in 2010 by Puzzlewright Press (an imprint of Sterling Publishing, New York) about which Dan Peek, author of *To the Point – The Story of Darts in America* wrote, 'In my opinion, *The Official Bar Guide to Darts* is the only book on the theory and practice of the sport of Darts that anyone will ever need. Forget about the Rest – Seriously.'

Signed copies of both *The Official Bar Guide to Darts* and *180! – Fascinating Darts Facts* are available from A180.co.uk and dartscorner.co.uk.

...so that's it for another month.

I hope you have enjoyed this issue and, as usual, all feedback is welcomed.

Best wishes,

Patrick

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