

DR. DARTS' NEWSLETTER

Issue 56 January 2015

Hi Everyone,

Welcome to the first *DDN* of 2015.

I trust all of you who celebrated the festive season had a great time whilst also managing to go to one or both of the World Darts Championships or watch them on TV or maybe even go to your local bar, club or pub and throw a few darts yourself.



A warm welcome to my new subscribers who last month included Nick D. from Canada and Idris A., both of whom found *DDN* via www.thedartsforum.co.uk and Sami and her husband Harith, my first-ever subscribers from Brunei. Sami and Harith had attended one of Dr. Eddie Norman's charity fund-raising darts lectures and learned a lot about the sport, so decided to subscribe to *DDN*. (The image shows Eddie on a patio somewhere in Brunei with two of my books.) Welcome one and all...

...and 'Cheerio' to a long-time subscriber, who will remain nameless. When I asked 'Any reason?' he replied, 'No. Just too many e-mails.' (!)

FEEDBACK FROM PREVIOUS ISSUES

(a) Nathan Young - Correction

I am grateful to Darren of *Darts Nutz* for his e-mail to me about the 'Nathan Young' article that appeared in #55. Darren wrote:

Great newsletter as per usual! Just a note about the pic of Nathan Young. I think that is a pic of one of his students. Nathan is a great moderator on our forum Darts Nutz but that is not him. Ron is a member too and it's good of him to write to you about Nathan. I'm sure Nathan will be very pleased to see his efforts being mentioned in your newsletter.

It is indeed one of Nathan's students. My apologies to Nathan for the error. It was clearly a misunderstanding on my part and I am pleased to set the record straight.

(b) Scott Needham Bullies 'The Power'

In response to the article in last month's *DDN* Scott's dad Stuart wrote to tell me:

Scott is still 'dining out' on beating 'The Power' at the event last November in Stockport (and to be honest - so am I!!!!) and, following on from this, Steve Metalman sent us something on Facebook to say he'd seen it in issue 55 of your

newsletter. I've not seen it yet and just wondered if I could buy one? Where can I order one from?'

Needless to say that a copy of #55 was sent to Stuart straightaway at no cost.

DR. DARTS ON TV

I hope that those who were able to managed to view the BBC Four TV programme *Bullseyes and Beers: When Darts Hit Britain* which was first shown on BBC Four on Monday 15th December at 9 p.m. and was then repeated a couple of times on the same channel during the same week.

Reviews in the UK national newspapers were generally very positive with a good number focussing on the history of the sport and in particular Christopher Stevens of the *Daily Mail* (a newspaper not well known for complimentary references to darts) but, seemingly without fail, each reviewer referred to author Martin Amis's reference to darts being 'tiddlywinks in a bearpit.'

Thanks to everyone who e-mailed me to mention my appearance on the programme. It was also good to be included in the credits at the end as I did provide a lot of the magazine covers and other images which were shown during the programme.

Also on the media front, I was interviewed by Martin Kelner of *The Guardian* on New Year's Eve for a long darts article which appeared in that newspaper on Saturday 3rd January.

GETTING THE POINT

John S., a visitor to my website www.patrickchaplin.com, sent me a question that had been puzzling him for a while. John wrote:

I would like an answer to a small point. While playing darts a player played his darts getting the double but his dart fell to the floor leaving his point in the winning double. Does he still get the game, as rules state that it is where the point lands?

John also sent his question to three-time World Professional Darts Champion, John Lowe, and together we set about finding the answer. 'Old Stoneface' told me he was aware that, 'This did happen in a league match and the player was awarded the game because the point was in the target area' and later added,

'I have a reply from a friend in America, a few years ago probably twenty-five, a company made a dart that collapsed when it hit the board leaving the point in the target. The idea was to have the clearest view of the target for the next dart thrown. Apparently it was approved by the American Darts Organization (ADO), so I think we have the answer. The point is the main part of the dart not the barrel, stem or the flight.'

Let's face it, you wouldn't discount a dart score if the flight fell out now would you?

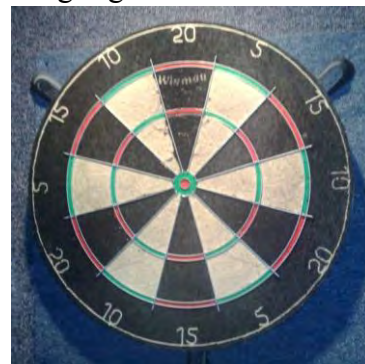
Just to be on the safe side I spoke to Freddie Williams (the well-known BDO and PDC referee (now retired)) and he confirmed that the score or winning double *would* count.

So that's another problem solved.

THE LONDON NARROW FIVES DARTBOARD

Occasionally I receive e-mails from darters who are preparing to visit London and want to include a game of darts in the capital on their itinerary. I always direct them to Justin 'The Bachelor of Darts' Irwin's website <http://bachelorofdarts.com> and then specifically to the 'Capital Arrows' section of his website. There you will find not only the locations of the standard, trebles dartboard but also the rarer London Fives Board.

The London Fives Board (see image) comprises twelve scoring segments and the games played include 305, 505 and 1,005. The board, the history of which precedes the standard board is available in two formats the 'Wide Fives' and the 'Narrow Fives.' The doubles and trebles in the former are as wide as the standard board (and is often called by the politically incorrect term 'the ladies board'; *real* men playing on the latter which has doubles and trebles about the size of the Champion's Choice dartboard.



Justin is always looking for more locations within the capital which are not included in his research and thus both the 'Bachelor of Darts' and 'Dr. Darts' are indebted to Brian S. who has contacted me to add to Justin's list. Brian wrote:

Hi Patrick, I play in the East London darts league which I am sure you realise plays on the East London Narrow Fives Board.

I have just read your reproduced article by Justin Irwin [on your website]. I thought you might like to contact him with some extra pubs where the Fives Board can be seen. [These are]...The Greyhound, West Ham Lane, Stratford E15. (nearest station Stratford or Plaistow tube), The Golden Fleece, Capel Road, Manor Park, E12 (Manor Park Station), The Lord Stanley, St Mary's Road, E13 (either Upton Park or Plaistow), The Tollgate, Frobisher Road, Beckton E6 (behind Beckton ASDA, Beckton DLR)[and] The Eagle, Stratford E15 (nearest station Stratford).

I hope you don't mind me contacting you but I am enjoying working my way through your site.

Of course I don't mind Brian. In fact I encourage contact with people who can add to my (and Justin's) knowledge of locations of the Fives Board. I have passed on the information to Justin and, undoubtedly, he'll update his records (if he hasn't done so already).

HALEX COLTS

Long-time subscribers may recall that in issue #28 (August 2012) I featured the Halex Darts Dollies, a group of attractive young ladies, all skilled darts players, who toured the UK playing darts during the late 1970s/early 1980s, beating many men at what they saw as *their* own game whilst raising thousands of pounds for charity.

More recently I received an e-mail from a gentleman named Reg Coward asking what I know about the 'Halex Darts Colts'. Reg wrote:

I was passed your e-mail address from Michael Beeken of Darts World and am hoping you may be able to help!

In the late 70s early 80s a group of us started a junior darts team that used to go around the local Crawley pubs raising money for charity by playing adult teams. We were eventually sponsored by Halex and became known as the 'Halex Colts and embarked on a nationwide tour of Debenhams stores as well as playing teams of celebrities at the Lords Taverners and other great nights out.



The legendary Ken Brown and his son Steve became patrons of our team too! What I am hoping you may be able to help with was that our team were on the front cover of Darts World back then. Do you keep copies of back issues or even just a copy of the cover pic? I'm pretty sure it would have been around 79/80/81.

Starting at the January 1979 issue of *Darts World* I soon came across the issue Reg was looking for, number 81, August 1979. An article on page 8 titled 'The Challenge of Youth' revealed that the Colts were a team of twelve youngsters aged between 14 and 16 based at Crawley, Sussex. All were members of the Broadfield Association, an organisation 'dedicated to improving conditions for the less fortunate members of local society - the elderly and infirm, for instance – and to improving the recreational facilities for the youth of the area'.

My contact, Reg, seen in the image (above left) second from the right, middle row, told me:

The conversation came about after a girl who I went to school with started a Facebook page and that's how I got back in touch with Ian Stovell (far right, middle row) after 35 years and he mentioned "Do you remember the Halex Colts?" I have this magazine in my mum's loft somewhere but do you think I could find it! So I turned to the chap cc'd on the first email I sent you who in turn put you in touch with me and I can't believe it!

I can't thank you enough for taking the time out to help me find it!

Reg said that he was going to paste the front page of the issue of *Darts World* on to his school reunion page ‘for all the others to see.’ Reg added, “My daughters haven’t stopped laughing yet at how girly I looked when I was 12.”

‘Girly’ Reg? Looks like the height of fashion at the time to me! Reg has also promised to sit down sometime and ‘write about all the antics we got up to and the history of the team and places we played.’

Reg, I look forward to hearing from you again soon.

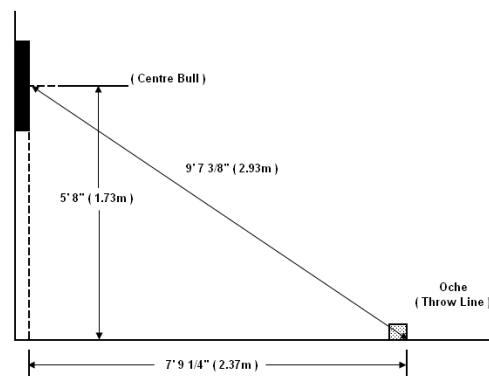
STRANGE LENGTH – JUST WHY IS THE OCHE LENGTH 7’ 9 ¼”?

Subscriber Pete Brown writes:

I was reading your interview with John Lowe, in which he mentioned the 8’ throw. I have searched the internet, without success, looking for why the throw changed from 8’ to 7’ 9.25” Can you shed any light on this? I started playing in Lincoln on a double board with an 8’ throw and moved down south where they were using a treble board at 7’ 9.25”.

This is one of the most popular questions posed of ‘Dr. Darts’, the answer to which has yet to feature on my website. But it has been answered in my book *180! – Fascinating Darts Facts* (2012). Here’s the appropriate extract:

‘When darts was originally standardised in the 1920s by the National Darts Association (NDA) the throw line (or ‘hockey’ as it was called and spelt back then) was set at nine feet from a plumb line dropped from the face of the dartboard and then measured along the floor. Before that the lengths of oche varied from place to place, some being set as close as six feet whilst others were massively long; up to ten feet.



(Oche set-up image © David King)

The first standard hockey

In 1927 when the NDA was called upon to organise of *News of the World* Individual Darts Championship their nine feet throw was adopted. However, when the *News of the World* resumed after the Second World War in 1947/48 the throw line was reduced to eight feet and this remained the standard in that and hundreds of other tournaments and leagues for many decades.

The NDAGB length

In the early 1950s, when the National Darts Association of Great Britain (NDAGB) (which was nothing to do with the NDA) was formed, that organisation’s rules included an oche length of 7 feet 6 inches. This was to remain constant in all of the NDAGB tournaments until it was overwhelmed by the BDO in the mid-1970s.

The BDO/WDF length

The BDO adopted the NDAGB oche length but after the World Darts Federation (WDF) was set up in 1977 its member countries looked for a 'world' standard length of throw, a happy medium between the NDAGB length and that of the *News of the World* of, say, 7 feet 9 inches but instead of setting the standard at that, the WDF came up with 7 feet 9¼ inches.

But why?

For many years it was believed and blogged that 7 feet 9 inches did not 'translate' into metric (which was all the rage back in '77) but 7 feet 9¼ inches did (2.37metres) so that explained the strange length of oche. This author included this 'fact' in a Unicorn blog believing it to be true but then some wise person responded pointing out that 7 feet 9 ¼ inches did *not* 'translate' into metric to 2.37 metres but 2.368852 metres.

On putting this to the WDF the truth was finally revealed. The measurement was never intended to be an 'exact' equivalent in metres but a compromise. At the WDF Meeting at Wembley in 1977 where the very first WDF World Cup was discussed the distance of 2.37m was adopted as the official WDF Standard. It was proposed (it is believed by the Swedish delegate) that the 7 feet 9¼ inches be adopted in its' metric equivalent which happened to be extremely close to 2.37 metres. This was seconded and approved unanimously by all countries present.

The WDF members appreciated that this was not an exact conversion but decided to accept 2.37 metres as a compromise. After all, one could hardly expect tournament organisers to measure out a 2.368852 metre oche! (By the way, for those who appreciate such comparisons, the difference between 2.37 metres and 7 feet 9¼ inches is almost exactly the thickness of a sheet of Standard A4 printer paper.]

Months after the WDF meeting in 1977 the 7 feet 9 ¼ inches throw-line was adopted as world standard for all major darts tournaments and this continues to be the case today.

But hang on...

Strangely enough, less than a year after the WDF decision, in 1978 at the inaugural Embassy World Professional Darts Championship the oche line was set at 7 feet 6 inches, the same as that established by the NDAGB.

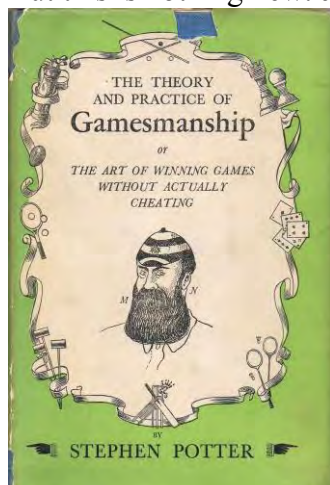
Stranger still, when the *News of the World* Individual Darts tournament was reintroduced for one year only in 1997 the throw-line was set, according to the rules in the tournament programme, at 7 ft 9 inches; this despite the official world standard oche length being fixed at 7 feet 9 ¼ inches (2.37 metres) by the World Darts Federation (WDF) two decades earlier. It was also a measurement never before used in the history of the *News of the World* competition.

Extracted from *180! – Fascinating Darts Facts* (The History Press, 2012) (See below for how you can obtain copies of this and my other darts books.

GAMESMANSHIP

We hear a great deal about ‘gamesmanship’ these days. Even in the professional ranks you find top players criticising their opponents for standing too close to them on the oche, talking to themselves whilst the other player is throwing, clicking their darts together, ‘accidentally’ dropping a dart and even, and I hesitate to say this, break wind: in fact anything to deliberately distract their opponent, to put them off.

But this is nothing new. Just after the Second World War, British author Stephen



Potter wrote his hilarious masterpiece *The Theory and Practice of Gamesmanship or The art of winning games without actually cheating* (London: Rupert Hart-Davis, 1947). The book was written very much tongue-in-cheek but indicated that, more than sixty years ago, darts was susceptible to such wiles as ‘gamesmanship.’

Amongst the many other sports featured, Potter had this advice for those wishing to apply his theories to the game (as it was considered in the 1940s) of darts:

Question your darts opponent closely on the exact area of the dart where he deems it wisest to exert maximum thumb-and-finger pressure. Continue to ask if he will be so

kind as to demonstrate for you the precise position of the hand in relation to the head at the moment when the dart is released.

What progress in the art of Gamesmanship has been made since Potter’s time!

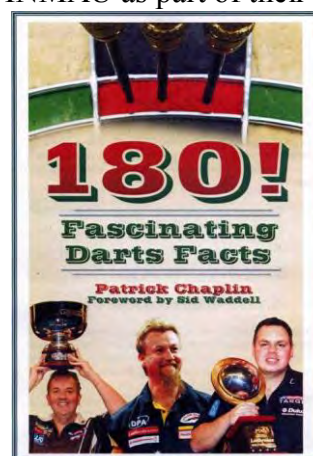
I deal in detail with that ‘art’, and how to cope with it, in my forthcoming book *Darts – Skills. Techniques. Tactics* which will be published by The Crowood Press later this year.

DR. DARTS’ PRODUCTS.



As mentioned in the previous issue of *DDN* my DR. DARTS flights, are now being produced by WINMAU as part of their ‘Rhino Long Life’ range, (see image, left). You can now purchase your very own ‘Dr. Darts’ flights through suppliers including Red Dragon Darts and Darts Corner.

My books *180! Fascinating Darts Facts* and *The Official Bar Guide to Darts* continued to sell well during the run-up to the festive season (one copy of *180!* was even used as a ‘Secret Santa’ gift!) as did the book based on my PhD *Darts in England 1900-39: A social history*. For details of how you can obtain signed copies please contact me at info@patrickchaplin.com.



AND FINALLY...

With the PDC/Ally Pally World Darts Championship over for another year and the BDO/Lakeside World Championships reaching its conclusion as I issue this latest edition of *DDN* to my global subscribers, I read that, as the old year closed, the BDO and the PDC are 'in talks.' I hope that both parties will only have the best interests of darts in mind as they prepare for further negotiations during the coming year.



And of course congratulations to Gary Anderson for lifting the William Hill/PDC world title; the first Scotsman to win the world title since left-hander Les Wallace back at Lakeside in 1997; which reminds me of the time *I* lifted the Embassy world trophy back in 1989...

OK. I admit that's all I did do, *lift* the world trophy. It was at the *Darts & Cue Exhibition* held at the G-Mex Centre, Manchester in 1989. Jocky Wilson had just won the world title for the second time and he was there at the exhibition with his sponsor Datadart (that company also sponsoring Mike Gregory and Alan Warriner at the time) and I was allowed to actually touch the Holy Grail of darts.

I was a lot younger then! (Image © Moppix International) Note too, the Unipart trophy standing nearby.

NEXT ISSUE:

The long-overdue interview with Swedish darts star Stefan Lord.

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