DR. DARTS' NEWSLETTER

Issue 77 **September 2016**

SPORTS ARGUS CHARITY DARTS SQUAD HITS 70!

I have written in the past about the Sports Argus Charity Darts Squad, probably the World's longest running charity darts team but this report records something *very* special. This month the team embark of their *70th* season of charity fund-raising.

Forming the *Sports Argus* Charity Darts Squad was the idea of Harold Beesley who was the local darts correspondent. writing as 'Treble Twenty,' for the *Sports Argus* Saturday evening sports paper assisted by other members of staff of the newspaper.

For several months trials were held throughout Birmingham before the first squad were selected. The first official evening was staged in August 1947 and since then players from the counties of Warwickshire, Worcestershire & West Midlands have all been members of the *Sports Argus* team at various times. The team's main catchment area for players has tended to be Birmingham. For several years the *Sports Argus* have been sponsored by various companies and individuals. At present E.J.S. Roofing Ltd, of Birmingham sponsor them.

The team have recently completed their **69th** consecutive season during which the team played twenty-five matches and won twenty-three of them. The two defeats came from Tamworth and a North Birmingham Select team which contained several top stars. My contact, Ken Herbert, was invited to become Manager of the *Sports Argus* Squad in 1974 and since then the team have raised **£205,682.85** for various charities. Amazing!

Ken, who is now the Life President of the *Sports Argus* team, told me on the completion of the 69th season:

Special mention must be made of team member Wayne Matthews who gained a 2-0 win over former World Champion Jelle Klaasen. Also staged during the season was the Christmas Charity Knockout won by Ian Jones, and the end of season Sports Argus Championship which went to Nuneaton's Craig Allen.

As regards the best performance of the 2015/16 by a *Sports Argus* player, Ken said:

It has been a hard battle between two players as they put in a top display to win most games and most tons during a season. Pat Sinnett (pictured above, left) (Image © *Sports Argus*. Used with permission.) *topped the most games won with a total of 20*

wins in 25 games: he rattled in 91 tons . In second place was Phil Whitlock with 19 wins in 24 games but he did top the tons table recording 103 tons.

But of course the *Sports Argus* Charity Darts Squad is primarily about raising funds for charity. Ken told me that, on completion of the season, **£9,427** had been collected from the various darts evenings and donated to the following good causes: Birmingham Children's Hospital (£2,520), County Air Ambulance (£3,000), the Royal National Lifeboat Institution (R.N.L.I.) (£2,500), Armed Forces (Queen Elizabeth Hospital) (£1,100) and the Phoenix Group for dementia, Nuneaton (£307). Ken said:

We sincerely, send a big thank you to all our friends who have helped us in raising funds and, personally, I would like to mention the wonderful effort put in during the season by all players and officials.

We are now preparing for our coming season; a very special one as it will be our 70th season which will commence on September 23rd 2016. We look forward to being back on the oche again.

I wish Ken and the team well for the forthcoming coming 70th season. Doubtless their darting skills will help raise many more thousands of pounds for charity in the years to come.

NEWS OF THE WORLD – SNIPPET

This month's 'snippet' is in response to an enquiry from subscriber Daryl H. who wrote to me:

I read some info in this news letter regarding the News of the World comp. I have these two badges which I suspect are 180 badges of their time. I wonder if you or any of our readers can give me any info on them and as in what year each may be from.

Although I know that the badges were awarded, as Daryl suggests, for achieving 180, I did not know when the award was first introduced, although I had always assumed it to be before 1939. Thus I referred the matter to a personal contact of mine who knows more about the *News of the World* tournaments than anyone.

He told me that the Treble 20 Guild was inaugurated in 1938 and the first mention of this award appeared in the programme for the *News of the World* Darts Championship of Lancashire (there was no national *NoW* tournament at that time) which was held at the Free Trade Hall, Manchester on Wednesday 27th April. The text reads as follows:

The "News of the World" prize of a set of silver darts for the best individual performance of the week has created enormous enthusiasm among darts fans, so

much so that we are continually receiving numerous claims from players scoring 180 with three darts.

These performances, admittedly skilled, are not good enough to win the prize for the best performance of the week, but we consider such play is worthy of recognition.

The "News of the World" has, therefore, inaugurated a TREBLE 20 GUILD. Darts players who succeed in scoring 180 with three consecutive darts, in a friendly or league match, duly witnessed and certified by responsible persons, will receive a specially designed badge, appropriately engraved.

Our Silver Darts Contest for the best performance of the week will, of course, continue as before.

Claims, giving the necessary details, for the Treble 20 Badge should be addressed to "News of the World," 30, Bouverie Street, London, E.C.4. and "Treble 20 Guild" written in the top left-hand corner of the envelope.

It appears then that the badges were only awarded in 1938 and 1939. The first year the *NoW* was contested after WW2 was the 1947/48 season. The Divisional programmes for that year refer to *certificates* being awarded 'to any player who in a game, match or friendly, scores a maximum – three darts in the treble twenty,' adding 'To achieve this is the ordinary darts players' greatest ambition.' Contrary to the general belief that women rarely played darts at this time the programmes noted 'Many women throwers have in recent years qualified for membership of out Treble Twenty Guild.'

It is believed that the certificates continued to be awarded right up to 1990 when the *News of the World* sponsorship of darts ceased. Certainly I have one (pictured, left) that was sent to me in the 1980s by the *News of the World* organisers. However, please note that it is not filled in or credited to me. I only asked for a copy for my archive!

So, does anyone remember the badges being awarded *after* 1939? If not, then that surely makes them collector's items. I would suggest that the blue and gold badge was the first of the two to be introduced as the black, red and gold looks more 'modern' to me. I could be wrong so, if can clarify the matter, please e-mail me at patrick.chaplin@btinternet.com.

WELCOME TO ALL NEW SUBSCRIBERS

A warm welcome to all of you who have subscribed to *DDN* since the beginning of August. Internationally, these include 'Aussie Terry' and, returning to the fold after changing his e-mail address and missing a couple of issues, Gerry MacD., who I believe is my only subscriber from Nova Scotia. (Gerry lives in the suitably name town of *Dart*mouth.) Gerry wrote:

Thanks again for adding me to your list of subscribers. I live in Dartmouth, Nova Scotia, Canada. I play darts with the Over 50 League in the Royal Canadian Legion. I think informing people about dart history and what you do for darters around the world is absolutely great. I always look forward to your very interesting newsletter.

FEEDBACK FROM THE EXTRA *DDN*

Thanks to everyone who responded so positively to the extra *DDN* published in August. Ad Kobbenhaegen from south Holland told me "*Patrick, I have only one word for this extra issue of DDN, FASCINATING"* while Ian from Germany e-mailed to say *"A long overdue topic I thought. Can't have been easy finding enough usable info to complete the PhD within certain parameters. Thx."*

Ian, you're right. Before I started out on my darts research what remnants of darts history there were could have been written on the back of a postage stamp. OK, not perhaps that. Let's say the back of a postcard!

Bill Bell wrote:

Patrick, Very good extra DDN. If you had moved somewhere else, you wouldn't have gone in the Blue Boar and most of the true history of darts would have been lost forever! 'The Godfather of Darts' is definitely a book that I would read. What a shame that Olly Croft said 'no'. Maybe you and Bobby can talk him round!

Thanks Bill. I know you should never look back. The past cannot be changed but I sometimes wonder what *might* have happened if, instead of going to the *Blue Boar*, I had gone to another, less darts-oriented, pub.

Clearly I was, and still am, disappointed about the Olly Croft book, *The Godfather of Darts*, which we both spent so much time on, but there's nothing Bobby or I can do; not at this late stage. My biggest disappointment was that publishers I sent the synopsis to told me it was very good but they just didn't see the book working for them. (That is, they couldn't see it making money for them.) I consider myself lucky that I've known Olly for some years and that, whilst drafting the synopsis of *The Godfather of Darts*, I learned more about him than I ever had before.

Thanks too to David Brook who e-mailed me to say

Hi Patrick, Just had to write and say how much I enjoyed your most recent DDN. "Why Darts?" is indeed a great question...and your answers certainly address that question!! Keep it going!!

Best wishes from the North of Thailand. We now live in Bueng Kan close to the Laos Border and the banks of the Mighty Mekong River, having moved from Phuket earlier in the year. Not seen a dart board yet but still looking...

Brian H. wrote

Hi Patrick. Thanks for the extra DDN issue. Very interesting how it all started with a small circulation pub round-up! Having just got back into darts the past year or so you reminded me how enjoyable it was to turn out at a pub, either local or in passing, and knowing your way round a dartboard was your passport to a good evening out amongst similar minded people...

Most of the pubs I remember have either gone or, like your Blue Boar, no longer have a board. I've started calling into a pub with a dartboard nearby when I visit my mam to chuck a few over a coffee (!) but I've yet to have anyone come up and offer to give me a game. Very sad!

Keep going as long as you can Patrick...I'm sure you know how much your work is appreciated by all your readers!

Thanks Brian. I'll keep going as long as folks read and enjoy what I do.

The 'offering to give me a game of darts' happened to my best friend Colin and me at our local the *Carpenters Arms* a few months ago. That's how we met Frankie; a useful darts player who we've played singles and doubles off and on for several weeks since. But you're right Brian, it doesn't happen like it used to. Do others find this to be the case? (Let me know at patrick.chaplin@btinternet.com.)

Darts is, and always has been, a great way to meet new friends, some that can last a lifetime.

Mick Simpson wrote of the extra issue:

Well done Patrick. Very good read I must say. I should imagine many, many people have thought that about you and "WHY DARTS?" Well now you have told them. Fantastic.

Finally my thanks to Martin D. (a former *Blue Boar* team mate) who rang to say how much he enjoyed the extra issue of *DDN*. It brought back some great memories for him. Cheers Martin. We'll see you at the *Carpenters Arms* again very soon.

MORE DARTS LINGO…

Many of you will have (hopefully) read or even bought Bobby George's and my book *Scoring for Show, Doubles for Dough – Bobby George's Darts Lingo* which was published back in 2011.

We thought that we'd covered the lot in that book but, of course, we were wrong. How could we possibly have included *every* example of darts terminology (or 'lingo')?

Some of it is only used in specific locations. For example, back in the 1930s, in a very rural part of the Cotswold hills when a score of 33 was recorded, the cry went up "Lord Sherborne!"

This 'Lord Sherborne' was probably James Huntley Dutton, 6th Baron Sherborne (1873-1949) who had succeeded his uncle in 1920. The family seat was Sherborne Park, near Northleech in Gloucestershire and he would have been the leading landowner in the Cotswolds.

Apparently Lord Sherborne used to own a car - a rare sight in those days - which bore the registration number '33' and it was this link that found its way into the early 'local' darts language in pubs such as the *Puesdown Inn*. This was one of the pubs frequented in the 1930s by Rupert Croft-Cooke, the author of the very first book dedicated *totally* to darts. It was titled, rather cunningly, *Darts* and was published in December 1936. (Cartoon above from *Scoring for Show, Doubles for Dough* © Chip. Used with permission.)

So any effort to collect *every* example of darts language is impossible. Here's a question I received via my website www.patrickchaplin.com from a darter, Barrie West.

Playing in the Yeovil area of Somerset, a score of 3 with 3 darts is referred to as a "Bobby George" as he reportedly had this score in a televised match, not sure which competition. Any chance you could clarify whether or not this actually happened? Many thanks.

So I asked the man himself. Bobby's wife Marie replied:

Bobby can't remember what it was in on TV but yes he probably did lol. It can happen to anyone!

I passed Marie's reply to Barrie who appreciated 'The Dazzler's reply.

Please thank Marie for her answer and pass on our regards to Bobby. Back in the 80's and 90's I had the pleasure of meeting many of the darts greats such as Keith Deller, Cliff Lazarenko, Eric Bristow, John Lowe, Leighton Rees, Alan Glazier, Jocky Wilson (our son has a shirt that Jocky gave him) plus a few more.

Unfortunately I never had the chance of meeting "The Dazzler." I always had great respect for him and I have carried on the 3 score – 3 dart in the league I now play in in Spain. (I usually get one every week these days!)

THE DARTS PLAYER I WISH I HAD MET

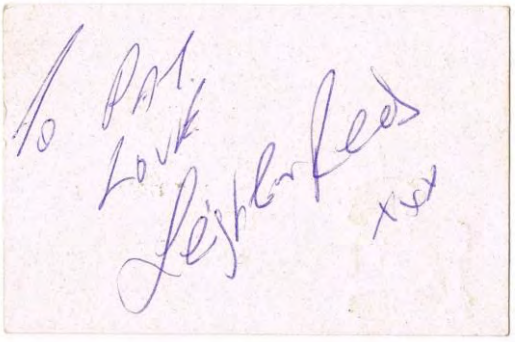
In addition to his comment on the "Why I do what I do" issue, above, Mick S. asked an interesting question.

"*Can you tell me is there any dart player you have not met that you would like to meet? Including those no longer with us."*

In reply to Mick's question, the one darts player I wish I had met was Leighton Rees (pictured below winning the first Embassy World Professional darts championship in 1978). (Image: *Darts World*/PC Archive. Used with permission.)

In 1986 Leighton wrote to me in reply to a question I had raised with him but he forgot to sign the letter! So, at that time, no chance of having his autograph in my collection. Then on 27th July 1999 Leighton played an exhibition night at the *New Welcome Sailor* at Burnham-on-Crouch, a few miles from where I live but, for whatever reason, I failed to make that event. So near, yet so far…

Then again Leighton played at a pub even nearer to me, my own local at the time, the *White Horse*, Mundon about three miles distant from my home. This time I was away when Leighton played so I asked the landlord, John Vincent (another ex-*Blue Boar* darts player) to obtain Leighton's autograph for me. He said he would and, true to his word, he did.



However, whether John did it as a wind-up (he was a bit of a practical joker) or when John asked Leighton to sign it 'To Pat' the Welshman assumed 'Pat' was female, I don't know but he signed it 'To Pat, Love Leighton Rees xxx'! (Image of autograph, right. From my private collection.)

The nearest I've been to the great man (apart from learning so much about him from his former manager Dr. Eddie Norman) is that I own one of Leighton's Marlboro

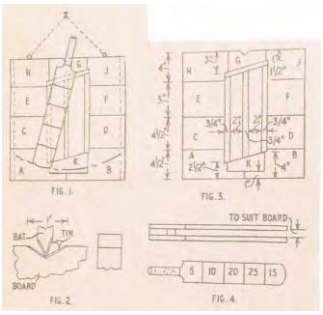
Team of Darts Champions shirts which I purchased in a televised auction of Bobby George memorabilia a few years ago. (You will note from the photo that the shirt is a snug fit on me!) (Image © 2014 Moppix. Used with permission.)

Fortunately I was able to pay tribute to Leighton Rees when in 2008 I was asked by the editor of the prestigious *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (ODNB) to write an obituary about Leighton for that esteemed publication. (Leighton had died in 2003 at the age of only 63.) The *ODNB* records great British men and women who have made a lasting impact during their lives. Leighton, as the first Embassy World Professional Darts champion, was regarded worthy of inclusion. It was one of my proudest moments to be able to record for posterity Leighton's life in the *ODNB*. (I am pleased to say that, subsequently, I was asked to do the same for Jocky Wilson.)

As you will have gathered, I still regret missing the opportunity of meeting a true 'Gentleman of Darts' in person.

THE CRICKET DARTBOARD

You may remember that, back in April (Issue 71), I published instructions for the construction of a 'cricket dartboard. Steve Pittard had enquired via my website why 'Nelson' was called in a game of darts for a score of 111). I answered that question and in reply Steve asked if I would be interested in an extract from *Hobbies Weekly* dated 8th May 1957 showing how to make this most unusual dartboard.



On receiving the information, and revealing extracts in *DDN* #71 (see image, right), three subscribers (two of whom were from the USA where 'cricket' in darts has a totally different meaning to that of players in the UK) asked for a copy of the full instructions.

Duly sent I can exclusively reveal in this issue that Mark Brindza from across the pond is the first to send me photographs of the completed cricket dartboard. Mark said:

Hi Patrick, I finally finished the Cricket Dartboard you posted the instructions for. It was fun making. The paddle sways but you would have to be pretty quick to throw your dart before it stops.

The result of Mark's labours can be seen left. (Image © Mark Brindza.) What a great achievement! Well done Mark.

I know that Scott H. from Texas is working on constructing the board too. Scott sent me his working drawings earlier this year so I eagerly await an update on his version of this project. I may be wrong but I think Scott was looking to possibly *motorise* his version.

George H. from the UK has not contacted me since receiving the full instructions but hopefully he is working on his 'British' version.

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