

DR. DARTS' NEWSLETTER

Issue 80

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SEASONS GREETINGS TO YOU ALL!

Well, here we are at the end of yet another darting year but there is much more darting action to come with the WINMAU World Masters at the beginning of this month and not one but *two* World Championships to enjoy during December and early January.



"It's the same every Christmas Eve . . . he pops in for a quick pint, three double twenties . . . then woosh he's gone!"

I realise that not everyone celebrates the festive season but to those who do I wish you all a very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year and to everyone else my heartiest good wishes to you all for the coming year and, of course, 'Good Darting'.

Special thanks to the WINMAU Dartboard Co. for continuing to support my research and to everyone who has contributed in any way to my research and raised issues that have been included, debated and even solved in *DDN* over the past twelve months

Thanks too to my wife Maureen who patiently proof-reads each and every issue thus ensuring that my errors are kept to an absolute minimum.

(The seasonal cartoon shown here (credited to 'Butch') was first published in *Darts World* in December 1979 and appears courtesy of the PC/*Darts World* archive.)

Sad news indeed of the passing of renowned TV darts commentator Dave Lanning whose obituary appears elsewhere in this issue. He was one of the key people responsible for popularising darts on TV from way back in the early 1970s right up until 2011 when he retired from our screens.

First some feedback...

THE DIFFICULTIES IN RESEARCHING DARTS – FEEDBACK

In the November issue of *DDN* I explained to you all how difficult it is to research darts and darts people when only very limited information is available. In that issue (#79) Mark Williams had set me a task of finding a player named J. Fermor. Despite looking at numerous records and books in my archive I found nothing.

I had, for all intents and purposes, given up the search. However, I had one more possibility; publish the story in *DDN* with an outside chance that perhaps a subscriber

would know something. Within only a day or two of #79 being sent out Ken Herbert (of *Sports Argus* charity darts squad fame) e-mailed me the following:

Hi Patrick. Regarding your query about J Fermor, many years ago in the early 60s, way over 60 years ago, when I played for the Ring O Bells, Yardley, Birmingham we were playing in the Sheldon & District Darts League. One of the strong teams in the league were the Three Horse Shoes, Coventry Road, Sheldon. Jim Fermor was a member; an excellent player who was selected to represent the Sheldon League against the Sports Argus Charity Darts Squad on several occasions. Not a lot of information but I hope it helps.

Indeed it does Ken. Many thanks.

When I informed Mark W. what had occurred he replied:

Patrick that is amazing, I cannot believe Ken was the missing link. I am over the moon! It seems so sad that these tankards (pictured right) who someone once fought hard to win and cherished so much ended up in an antiques shop in Wooton Woven. I have a number of trophies from when I played darts and they gave me so much joy and pleasure not only winning them but receiving them at the league presentations.



Many thanks to Mark for raising the query and to Ken for responding so quickly. All we need now is a *photograph* of Jim Fermor to really complete the search.

OBITUARY - DAVE LANNING - THE DARTS COMMENTATOR WHO BROUGHT THE SPORT OF DARTS INTO THE MAINSTREAM

The journalist and commentator Dave Lanning, who has died after a short illness, aged 78, covered sports as diverse as speedway (his first love), stock-car racing, motorcross and arm wrestling, but was best known as a commentator on darts, often alongside his great friend Sid Waddell.



A great breakthrough for televised darts coverage came in 1972, when John Bromley, head of ITV Sport, was persuaded by the News of the World to give the final of the newspaper's darts championship air time on World of Sport. "This really started things up," Lanning said in 2011. He was asked to commentate on this first "live" networked transmission of darts action. The News of the World championship, held at the Alexandra Palace, north London, had a live audience of more than 12,000 darts fans, attracting an audience of three million.

Peter Jones, a director from Leeds who worked on the event, was so taken with the fervour and potential of televising darts that he persuaded Yorkshire Television to produce their own show. They called up Sid Waddell, a

producer on their regional news programme Calendar, to organise what became The Indoor League. An original, unusual and sometimes bizarre show, compered by the Yorkshire cricketer Fred Trueman, The Indoor League brought together in competition experts in pub games including bar billiards, arm wrestling, table skittles, table football and darts. Lanning was engaged for the original darts and table skittles commentary, and would later describe working on the show as “an outrageous blast of fun and spectacular characters”. The series ran from 1972 until 1977.

Lanning’s commentary style was cool, knowledgeable, insightful and extremely well-prepared, whilst Waddell’s, while also well-informed, was manic and packed with hyperbole. These two men (one from Dorset and the other a Geordie) complemented each other marvellously, managing to entertain viewers with their infectious enthusiasm for darts. Together they helped raise the profile of the “working man’s sport” into a national and international success.

Born in Poole, Dorset, Dave was the second child of Catherine (nee Brown) and Ernest Lanning. His father was a fitter and turner and both parents had also been licensees for a short period after the Second World War.

Dave was educated at Poole Grammar School and when he left school he became a reporter for the local newspaper, the Bournemouth Echo. He subsequently moved to London, where worked for, among others, the *Daily Sketch*, *Daily Mail*, *TV Times*, *The Sun*, *Darts World* magazine and the Mirror Group. He joined ITV Sport in 1965 and spent 27 years with the company. From 1990 until 2011, he also commentated for Sky.

Asked later about his finest moment in commentating, Lanning replied without hesitation that it was John Lowe’s first televised nine-darter (the perfect game of 501) in 1984. He also commentated on Phil “the Power” Taylor’s first nine-darter for Sky Sports in 2002, the first two nine-dart finishes in one match (Taylor v James Wade) in the Premier League final at Wembley in 2010 and (with Waddell) the first time darts was transmitted in 3-D at the World Matchplay that same year.

Lanning travelled the world covering darts, and was inducted into the Professional Darts Corporation’s Hall of Fame in 2008 in recognition of his lifetime’s contribution. On his retirement in 2011, he said, “After 38 years, I felt that I’d had a pretty good run. It was becoming clear that my style of commentary did not fit entirely with the way the Sky producers wished to project the sport.”

He retired to Poole, planning “to play a great deal of golf. I also enjoy walking on the local beaches, trying to grow orchids and bougainvilleas, spectating at cricket matches, writing a bit and, of course, watching my grandchildren blossom beautifully.”

When asked how the future of darts on TV could be secured, Lanning said: “Stick like glue to Sky. Try to find genuine championship-challenging contenders from the US, the Far East and South Africa and make [the sports promoter] Barry Hearn minister of sport.”

He is survived by his wife, Leona (nee Linford), whom he married in 1959, by his daughter, Alyson, and sons, Philip and Russell, and by seven grandchildren.

David Ernest Lanning, sports commentator, born 24 March 1938; died 29 October 2016 (Photo, above, © Lawrence Lustig/PDC. Used with permission.)

[This obituary, written by me, was first published in the UK in a slightly different form in *The Guardian* on 15th November 2016 and online a few days earlier. It was a privilege to be asked to write about a man who I only met a couple of times, spoke to on the phone on a number of occasions yet felt I had known personally all my life.]

ALWYN MULLINS – AMAZING FINAL REPORT

Further to the articles about the 1957 *News of the World* winner Alwyn Mullins (pictured below, right) in the previous two *DDN*'s, I have now received, from an important contact of mine, the brief report of Mullins' win in what turned out to be an amazing win for the Yorkshireman.

Having beaten the Western Divisional champion Len Cox (playing out of the *Railway Tavern*, Pensford, Somerset) 2-1 in the quarter-finals, Mullins (representing the *Travellers Rest Hotel*, Tickhill) beat Jim Gibbons, the Midland Counties Divisional champion (*Open Hearth Hotel*, Corby, Northamptonshire) 2-1 in the semi-final. Mullins met the Wales Divisional champion Len Baker (*Corporation Hotel*, Cardiff) in the grand final. The *News of the World* report by 'The Champ' reads as follows:



ALWYN MULLINS gave probably the greatest display of throwing ever seen in the Grand Finals when he won the News of the World Individual Darts Championship of England and Wales at the Empress Hall, Earls Court, London, last night [Saturday, 27th April 1957].

Proudly wearing the white rose of Yorkshire, he started his final against Len Baker, champion of Wales with scores of 140, 174 and 136. He was throwing for a double with his 11th dart and he finished the leg of 501 up with his 14th.

He hit three consecutive three-figure scores again in the second leg – 122, 122 and 125 – and Baker was overwhelmed for the title in two straight games.

An amazing performance and one that, I suggest, would not be out of place in major tournaments today.

WINMAU – NEW PRODUCT LAUNCH

Hopefully a good number of you will already know that my sponsors WINMAU recently launched their new product range which includes the BLADE 5 dartboard. If not then check out the link http://www.winmau.com/sec/2585/New_Products_2017/.

The folks at WINMAU have also announced that there will be global TV coverage of the 2016 World Masters which takes place at Lakeside from 2nd to 4th December. Friday to Sunday's action will be aired live and for free by Premier Sports HD in the UK (via the Sky, Virgin and TalkTalk platforms) and eir Sports in Ireland. Viewers

across the rest of the world will receive live and free coverage via WINMAU'S industry-leading streaming channel WINMAU TV.

Sales and Marketing Director Ian Flack said, "We are delighted to be partnering with Premier Sports. Their passion for the sport means they (and WINMAU TV) are broadcasting over 20 hours of live darts, which will be of the highest standard. We are at Lakeside, the home of darts, once again and the competition is going to be white hot. If you can't make it in person, watching the action live on WINMAU TV, Premier Sports or eir Sports is the next best thing."

Both reigning World Masters Glen Durrant and Aileen De Graaf will be there to defend their titles and old 'Dr. Darts' will be there too watching the action on Saturday 3rd and Sunday 4th. I hope to see you there.

OBITUARY - JULIE VICKERS (1961-2016)

My local County, Essex, recently lost a very valued and hardworking member of their team. Here John Weller, General Secretary of the Essex County Darts Organisation, pays tribute to Julie Vickers:



The Essex County Darts Organisation are deeply saddened by the recent passing of Julie Vickers following her battle with illness in recent years.

Julie has with her association within the Essex County Darts Organisation undertaken many roles within the Super Leagues and County Organisation as a Super League and County Player, Team Captain, Official and Ladies' Treasurer.

Julie has been an Official for the England Darts Organisation at events as recent as last month [September] and is awarded the British Darts Organisation Lady Officials

Award for 2016 but will sadly not be presented with this in person.

Our sympathies go to Don, Craig, Jason and all family members at this sad time, on behalf of all Essex County darts members, colleagues and friends.

(Thanks to John for permission to reproduce this obituary and to Kevin Stammers for the image.)

I originally met Julie some years ago when we worked together for the Essex County Council. We immediately bonded through our love of the sport of darts. Although since then I have only met her briefly at occasional County darts matches, I realise and appreciate what a great loss she will be to the ECDO. My sincere condolences to her family, friends and Essex team colleagues at this saddest of times.

ANSWER TO THE 'HOARY OLD DARTS QUIZ QUESTION (from issue #79)

It was, of course, a trick question. The question posed last month was “When did the King of Denmark win the *News of the World* darts championship?”

The answer is **1977** the year Mick Norris won the *News of the World* title. He played out of the *King of Denmark* pub in Ramsgate, Kent so, strictly speaking, *The King of Denmark* did win the trophy. Congratulations to subscriber Bill Bell who e-mailed me the correct answer even though he knew he wouldn't win anything!

COLLECTING DARTS BADGES

Readers may recall that in the September *DDN* Daryl H. (Daryl Hallam) raised a question about the *News of the World* Treble 20 Guild badges which led to feedback in the October issue from both Mick Simpson and Brian H. In that same issue (#78) I included information about the early World Masters patches following an enquiry from Tom McBride in the USA.

Daryl has contacted me again writing:

Thanks Patrick. Another great read. I am so glad my badge has created so much interest and feedback. I would love to make contact with any badge collectors with the view of swapping some badges.

I have started a Facebook group called Darts Badge Collecting. This is the link to the Facebook page



<https://www.facebook.com/groups/1791028924471817> but people can simply type into a Facebook search 'Darts Badge Collecting' and find the group or they can just email me on hallams3@bigpond.com to hook up and swap some badges or sell me some even.

So, there you go. A chance to contact Daryl direct and hopefully swap (or sell) some badges.

(The badge shown above, right, is one of the more unusual items I have in my own small collection of darts badges.)

ELECTRONIC SCOREBOARDS – FEEDBACK

It was reader Keith 'The Calculator' Callister who, in the October *DDN* (issue #78), raised a number of issues relating to the introduction and use of electronic scorers, especially that he felt some younger players are now totally reliant on such machines.

For one subscriber, Scotland's Jim MacNeil, Keith's questions brought back memories of when electronic 'push-button' darts scorers were introduced in Inverness back in late 1970s. Jim wrote:

Hi Patrick, Hope you are well and it's a while since I mailed you but I read with interest your feature on electronic scorers and remembered a story from a way back

I attach a copy of an article that appeared in 1978 in an issue of the Peoples Journal. It shows that Highland or Northern, as we were known then, were quite up to date with their darts but as you can see the Associations were not happy with this type of scoring. I think the problem was twofold; (1) inability to use the scorer and (2) the fact that scores were not displayed and it was difficult to sort errors in the early models.

The article, from the *Peoples Journal* dated 30th September 1978, reads as follows:

Proficiency at mental arithmetic is no longer a standard requirement for darts players at one hotel, at least, in Inverness. At the Gellions Hotel, a pocket-calculator type scoreboard has been installed. It has 12 buttons for each player.

Before starting their game, the players just have to press a button marked 'C' twice, to select the game they want, 301 or 501, then press the 'S' button to set the game. Thereafter each score is pressed out on the numeral buttons and is automatically deducted from the total on pushing the 'S' button. The total is illuminated and shows up well, even from a distance.

The electronic scoreboard, costing about £50, has been specially designed for the game of darts and hotel proprietor Mr. David Irvine said it was on a trial run. If successful, a similar scoreboard may well be provided for the pub's other dartboard.



The Gellions 'A' darts team captain, Jim MacNeil, is in favour of the new system, although it was banned by the Inverness Darts Association even before it made its appearance in the town. He reckons that it could save arguments over bad figures, when a five is perhaps mistaken for a three, and it's much cleaner.

Some darts players do not like to play after having had chalk on their fingers and the new system disposes of this problem. It also helps the players who can perhaps play darts well but who have problems with subtraction.

(The photograph, above left, shows Jim with barmaid Betty Nicol back in 1978 as they 'check out the new electronic scoreboard'. Behind Betty is the traditional way of marking, 'with chalk and blackboard.')

Thanks Jim. Do any other readers recall their reaction back then when electronic scorers were introduced for the first time in *their* pub? If so, then please write to me at patrick.chaplin@btinternet.com.

Where I play my darts, at the *Carpenters Arms* in my home town of Maldon, nearly 40 years on since Jim road-tested the then new equipment, there is still no sign of an electronic scoreboard. Thank goodness.

(By the way, congratulations are due to Jim MacNeil who has recently been elected to the Board of Directors of the Scottish Darts Association (SDA) and been made a National Selector.)

AND FINALLY...

I am indebted (I think) to Julian H. who e-mailed me a while back concerning the derivation of the word 'oche'.

Now you all know how interested I am in darts terminology and, indeed, wrote a book about it with Bobby George (*Scoring for Show, Doubles for Dough: Bobby George's Darts Lingo*) back in 2011 so I was keen to learn what Julian had to say. He wrote:

Regarding the origin of the name oche in darts - my Google search also presented multiple images of geese. It seems oche is Italian for 'geese' or 'goose'.

Is it possible that there was a connection through Italian or one of the European languages and the common sporting idea of a duck or goose (egg) meaning 'no score'; for a foul such as a throw in darts with ones foot over the foul(fowl) line?



My knowledge of darts history is about nil so do forgive me if this idea seems completely silly for some well-known reason.

Julian, with respect, I don't think so.

(Image, above right, of a family of 'oches' ©2016 Chippix. Used with permission.)

Until next time...

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