

# DR. DARTS' NEWSLETTER

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## STACY BROMBERG (1956-2017)

The world of darts was saddened to hear of the death last month of top US ladies' darts player Stacy Bromberg. She was 60.



Stacy (pictured), was born in Los Angeles but lived in Las Vegas, was a popular member of the global darting community and had been Number One in the American Darts Organization (ADO) rankings a record sixteen times: thirteen of those in a row. She was US Ladies National Champion (501) on eleven occasions and Ladies National Champion (Cricket) four times. Stacy was also a member of the US darts team (eight times) which competed in the World Darts Federation (WDF) World Cup.

In the UK Stacy reached the quarter-finals of the British Darts Organisation's Ladies World Darts Championships in 2002 and competed on many occasions in the WINMAU World Masters. In 2010 Stacy made darts news headlines when she became the PDC/Unicorn Women's World Champion defeating England's Tricia Wright in the final on stage at the Winter Gardens, Blackpool.

Tributes to Stacy have saturated social media: such was her popularity within the sport. Professional Darts Corporation Chairman Barry Hearn said,

*This is very sad news for all of us at the PDC and we send our condolences to Stacy's family and friends at this difficult time. Stacy was a wonderful ambassador for darts and a lovely person whose dignity whilst battling cancer and selflessness in raising huge sums of money for the Make-A-Wish Foundation was boundless. She was a larger than life character and will be missed by so many people.*

Dave Allen, Head of media at the PDC told me:

*She was a wonderful lady and an inspiration with how she led her life despite her health issues. It was a joy to know her and I loved how positive she always was.*

Jay Tomlinson, the former publisher of *Bull's Eye News* said,

*Stacy will always be in my heart. She was a beautiful person, always giving, but also a fierce competitor. We were truly friends.*

Paul Seigel (aka 'Dartoid'), a close friend of Stacy's, and well aware of her condition, was still devastated at the news when it came. He told me:

*We were friends from the day we met. She loved to argue and was good at it. That was probably what attracted us to each other. I am not sure I ever won an argument with Stacy (probably no one did!) but in disagreement we "solved" many of the world's problems, or liked to think so.*

Paul also revealed to me that, for the eighteen months or so up to the time of her death, Stacy was working, with Paul's wife Marylou, on a book about her life, career, and battle against cancer. Paul added, "The cover is even complete. She has designated a charity to receive the proceeds. It will be a little while, but the book will still be published."



It is only right and fitting that Stacy's life story be recorded for posterity and I look forward to eventually learning much more about 'The Wishgranter'. She was truly one of the greatest ladies to ever throw a dart.

(Images of Stacy © PDC/Lawrence Lustig. Used with permission.)

## **DARTITIS FEEDBACK**

I've received some great feedback from subscribers about the special issue of *DDN* (#83) which focussed on darditis. Kevin H. from Dallas, Texas wrote

*Patrick. Thanks so much for this special edition. As someone that has suffered from darditis for over 15 years, it has been extremely frustrating to give up playing a game that I love so much. I haven't thrown a dart in over two years but reading this gave me the itch to dig out my darts and give it a shot with some of these techniques. I am definitely going to reach out to Bob as well. Thanks for all your efforts covering this sport.*

Daz e-mailed me to say

*Thanks for the extra issue, which has come at just the right time for me. I am having problems with my throw exactly the same as Bob describes, it's been an on-going problem for years now ever since I lost my natural throw through injury but I was amazed reading that article that it sounds just like me.*

*I have had to re-build a new throw and while it's a lot better than it was five years ago I have problems which seem to be worse at present. When I put myself under pressure or try to be too accurate, my arm sticks and jerks and fingers tense and the*

*dart flies off in weird angles and even misses the board at times so I know it's certainly in the mind. Other times when my throw is working smooth and I am not really caring too much about the target I throw great and grouping is good so I know somewhere I have the ability to at least play half decent but once I have to do it for real or just in a specific practice challenge it falls apart! Think I will give Bob's tips a go and see how I get on. I may send him an e-mail too although I have a feeling he may get overrun with e-mails now! Many thanks!*

Chris K. contacted me too to say

*Hi Patrick. Thanks so much, once again, for the Newsletter. Dartitis is a subject close to my heart as I've suffered from it for a couple of years. However, after listening to advice and reading up on various strategies to combat it I seem to be through the worst now. Although my standard of play is not what it used to be, I'm throwing more smoothly and don't seem to have the urge to stop letting go at that vital moment that I used to have.*

*I'm a born worrier, worrying and panicking about things that really aren't worth worrying about. I put my dartitis down to this and it just being yet another thing that is linked to that. I'm not sure whether other dartitis sufferers would describe themselves as worriers. All I know is that I dread it coming back. A game that I love so much, and relatively good at, I suddenly find myself by far the worst player in the area. However, as I said, using similar techniques described in your Newsletter I seem to be over the worst.*

Finally, on this issue, for the moment, Chris M. wrote

*Thanks for the bonus edition. I must say I am disappointed with OED's definition of dartitis, i.e. 'a state of nervousness which prevents a player from releasing a dart at the right moment when throwing.'*

*When I first had this problem (there was no word for it back then in the dark ages) it was not a case of nervousness at all. I simply "forgot" how to throw the dart as I used to. There was no sensation of anxiety. Perhaps I was "suffering" from a different condition. In fact I completely rebuilt my throw.*

## **CRICKET – FEEDBACK FROM PART 1**

In Issue 82 mention was made of an alternative name for 'Cricket' being 'Chase'. Here's what the infamous 'Dartoid' (Paul Seigel) had to say

*Hi Patrick...Great issue, as always. You know, Chase is still around. There is even an annual Chase (doubles) tournament held (in the winter) in Fargo, North Dakota. I have attended twice and partnered with a friend there (Jeff Doppler). Of all things, it's called the Freddie Prinze Memorial. It was started in 1977 by Robert Stein, I believe on the day Freddie Prinze died. The 2017 tournament was on February 27. I was unable to go as I was in Asia - plus it's freezing up there!*

*'Chase' is a sort of long form of Cricket. I think they play down to the 11 or 12, and include doubles, triples and three in a bed. I can't recall for sure. I found it more*

*similar to the way Mickey Mouse is played in some bars in Asia. It is fun and the tournament is supremely well organized.*

*Oh, am just remembering, and did a quick search of my columns. I even wrote about it once in 2009: <http://dartoidsworld.net/2009/06/column-361-the-freddie-prinze-memorial-darts-tournament/#more-1663>.*

On the general issue of where Cricket was played, Jerry Feather wrote:

*We (in Colorado & surrounding States) were playing cricket in 1973. This was before most of the top leagues & players in the Eastern & Western States but they came to Colorado early & were quick to learn the strategy which continues to change.*

And from the south coast of England, Keith Callister e-mailed to say

*Thanks for the February edition of DDN which, as usual, was very interesting. An article I was particularly interested in was the game "Cricket" that seems to be increasing in popularity in the USA. In 1991 I was working for a short time in the UAE; this was at the time of the first Gulf war, and there was a lot of American military around.*

*While in Dubai I stayed at the Ramada Hotel which happened to have a dartboard and the bar was frequented by the American military. I played against quite a few of them and a number of them mentioned that they preferred to play "Cricket". I was intrigued because, like you, my idea of Cricket was different to the game they described. I said the game they were describing was not Cricket but was called "Tactics" or "Mickey Mouse" in the UK and that the darts version of Cricket was based on the actual game of cricket whereas there are two sides, basically batters and bowlers, the bowlers aim for the bull (25 = 1 wicket, Bull = 2 wickets) and the batters score the most points they can. In the version I played any score above 40 in any individual throw counted as runs scored. Bowlers threw first followed by the batters and generally it was up to 11 wickets at which point the batters became the bowlers and vice versa. The player (or team) with the highest score would then be declared the winner. Like others, I had some difficulties explaining the actual game of cricket and gave up when I saw their eyes glazing over!!*

And Robert Ventor e-mailed from San Diego:

*With regards to the impact of Cricket on steel -01 games. If anything I think Cricket has brought more players to steel tip leagues. Soft tip players play a lot of Cricket, so when they come to a steel tip tournament or league they are comfortable with Cricket and learn to appreciate -01 games once they master to math.*

## **501 BEING OUTPLAYED BY CRICKET IN THE STATES? – PART 2**

In DDN #82 I outlined discussions I had been having with Jason Carter, a darts player and researcher based in the USA, who is on a mission to discover the true history of the dart game of Cricket (like 'Tactics' in the UK) and to find out why Cricket is now

more popular in the States than the traditional 501. Now, in Part 2 we continue our dialogue with a fine intervention from a very well-known US darts publisher.



*Bulls Eye News (DDN) magazine has been pushing and promoting Cricket for many years. Top US darter Tony Payne wrote the 'Thermo-nuclear cricket' series which was updated and republished in BEN in 2010. Jason:*

*I have been a loyal subscriber the BEN for many years, and yes, they do like to push Cricket. I have looked for Tony Payne but could not find any contact info for him. I think he started to play Cricket after its rise here in the states. He may also have been part of the rise and moving it into the mainstream, so we will see if I ever get the chance to have any sort of dialog with him.*

*As far as the 501/Cricket debate here in the states, cricket is definitely more popular. Whether that's for "ease of play", counting, or whatever reason. I have not researched each state individually. However, I have played in many States, and that seems to be the consensus.*

*My whole reason for this research is, I believe (and of course there are probably other factors), but the game of Cricket may very well be the downfall of darts in America as well as continues to be a hindrance today.*

As many DDN readers will recall, shortly after the establishment of the British Darts Organisation (BDO) here in the UK in the early-to-mid 1970s, darts also became huge in major parts of the USA. As Jason commented:

*We had world class players that could compete with the likes of Jocky Wilson and Leighton Rees. The Brits even came over here to play and many of them stayed. Leighton Rees was even quoted in his book that he was considering the move as well. Imagine a world champion darts player moving to the U.S. to play darts? That would be unheard of today. At that juncture in American darts history, 501 was still THE main game.*



Leighton (pictured right) never did move permanently to the US although Debra, his wife who he married in 1980 in Las Vegas, was Californian. (Image from DW/PC Archive. Used with permission.) Indeed there was never any permanent mass emigration of British darts players to America although many spent weeks, if not months, over there competing in key tournaments which included the North American Open Darts Tournament (NAODT) and the Santa Monica Open. Jason continued:

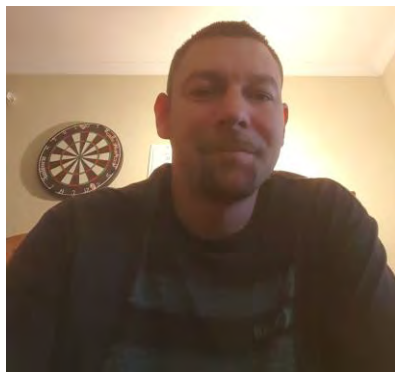
*Now fast forward to the early 2000s (when I first started playing) and up until today, every single tournament and league involves Cricket. Although long format 501 leagues are gaining in popularity, Cricket is still a primary focus in the American darts culture.*

*Every year around world championship time we have one lowly American that gets to play and usually loses in the first round. Our top players average high 70s/low 80s, while the rest of the top players in the world are averaging 90s and 100s. We have some very capable players, but yet just can't seem to play at that higher level. Why is that?*

*Well, as many others would agree, that reason is simply Cricket. How can one expect to compete at the highest level of one game (501) when you spend half your time playing a completely different one? Certainly seems plausible, right?*

*So it is my theory that when darts started its decline in the U.S., is around the same time Cricket started becoming mainstream. Or did Cricket start becoming popular after the decline as a way of revitalizing the game? I can't help but think the two somehow coincide with each other.*

Unfortunately, as Jason (pictured below, left) pointed out, many of those that might have held the answer such as Tom Fleetwood, Glenn Remick and Barry Twomlow are no longer with us. Jason added:



*I think this period is an important part of darts (at least in America), and is not documented anywhere that I know of. So thus begins my mission to try and find out what happened to darts in America and I think finding the answers to my Cricket questions may give us a great deal of insight.*

Shortly after writing that e-mail Jason received a message from Jay Tomlinson. It read:

*I can answer that question. The popularity of Cricket as a major tournament event occurred when the ADO passed a ruling that awarded ADO ranking points for Cricket singles. I pushed for that ruling and was a party in getting that accepted. I'm not sure of the exact year but it was between 1979 and 1981. Probably 1980.*

*There was a reason for this. At that time (1979-1980), there were only three or at most four ADO sanctioned tournaments East of the Mississippi (Windy City Open, Cleveland Extravaganza, Witch City Open, and maybe the Washington Area Open) and 12-14 ADO sanctioned tournaments in California alone, let alone West of the Mississippi. The result was that all the top ranked US players (except for Danny Pucillo who had the money and time to travel regularly to California) were from California.*

*Great players east of the Mississippi such as Tony Payne, Danny Valletto, Rick Ney, Jerry Umberger, Frank Ennis, Tony Money, KC Mullaney, Rick Wobensmith, Conrad Daniels, Andy Brestowski, Pete Polinski, George Silberzahn, [pictured, below, right in*

1975. Image PC/DW Archive] and Billy Nicoll Jr could not get ranked high enough playing in just these three or four tournaments East of the Mississippi to be selected for US International Teams even though they were more skilled.

Once I helped get that ruling passed as an ADO Director then Area Manager, we formed Bull's-Eye Marketing Inc. and launched the five bi-monthly \$10,000 tournaments in Columbus, Ohio and had two ranked singles events in each tournament, a 501 singles and a Cricket singles. That's ten ADO ranked events in Columbus Ohio in one year. All of a sudden there were now fourteen ADO ranked events East of the Mississippi and in one short year the great players east of the Mississippi shot right to the top of the ADO rankings. The other tournaments East of the Mississippi saw how popular the bi-monthly tournaments were in Columbus with two singles, and the next year, they added the Cricket singles.



Then Bull's-Eye Marketing landed the Lucky Strike [an American brand of cigarettes] contract and we were running up to twenty-six Lucky Strike tournaments throughout the US a year each with two ADO ranked singles.

That's it in a nut shell, but there was a lot of effort getting it all done. Most of this can be documented but it would take a lot of effort. Glenn Remick [pictured below, left]



was a big supporter and Gary Jones was instrumental in recording everything about darts in Bull's-Eye News. All the partners of Bull's-Eye Marketing in 1980 also worked to make this happen.

So, after speaking with a few more people and reading some other responses, Jason Carter is of the view that there seems to be many factors causing the downfall of darts in the U.S. He wrote:

*First happening in the early 90's and the most significant, the major tobacco companies pulling their sponsorship and thus taking the major tournament prize money with it. Also, it's worth mentioning that soft-tip came into play by the mid-80s and was rapidly growing by 1990. I wouldn't necessarily say that it was a part of the downfall of darts but it definitely had an effect by taking players away from the steel-tip game.*

*Since darts was so big at one point, more and more leagues were popping up, thus the geographical areas in which people played kept getting smaller and smaller. This led to more of these smaller leagues failing and in turn more people stopped playing.*

*Lastly, not only did more strict DUI [Driving Under the Influence] laws come into effect, which meant more people stopped going out to the bars to play darts, but also the liabilities involved with drunken patrons throwing sharp objects. I've heard in California it's very rare to see a steel-tip board. I'm assuming this is due to insurance reasons although, being an insurance agent myself, I've never come across having a dartboard on the premises as an underwriting question.*

The league Jason currently plays in once had over 1,700 players in the 80s. It now has a mere 43. Jason continued

*That's a pretty big fall from grace. So while Cricket itself cannot be blamed for the downfall of darts in America, I believe it still has a lasting hindrance on our top players. Players here like Cricket. There's less counting. It's easier to play in the sense you don't have to hit a double to win, and one could argue its more engaging and more of a "battle between two players" as opposed to "a race down from 501." It's also easier to learn than all the outshots, which is great for many a beginner player.*

Although Jason, who describes himself as 'a purist' and prefers the way the English play with their best of 9, 11, 13 or numerous sets of 501, he is also fine with Cricket having a place in the American darts culture. Jason's biggest problem, he admits, is 'the urge to resist change'. Jason quoted a friend of his who 'so eloquently puts it'...

*""Steel-tip leagues are going under. There's no money to be made by the top players. Tournament participation is tanking year after year. Nobody can seem to figure out the "why" part. Then along comes me for the last 10 years pointing my finger to the east saying "they have a formula that seems to be working REALLY well". (That's me pointing to the PDC in the UK.) But nobody wants to even begin to listen to any sort of suggestions. The tournaments with 12 different events will keep happening. Best of 3's will remain the bread and butter, and steel-tip leagues will all but disappear."*

Jason told me that the only people still running these leagues are the same people that played in them 30 years ago. Cricket, "Chicago style", best of three, is all they've ever known. In summary, Jason said

*It's this mentality that is holding the game back here in the States. So with all this being said, if you enjoy a sport or game, it's in most people's human nature to want to be as good as they can at it. If the best players in the world play darts a certain way, and the PDC is successful as it is, wouldn't it make sense to follow in their footsteps?*

I trust that the two articles I have published on this subject will encourage even more US darts fans to pitch in. Send your comments to [patrick.chaplin@btinternet.com](mailto:patrick.chaplin@btinternet.com).

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