

# DR. DARTS' NEWSLETTER

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## AMAZING NEWS – DARTOBIKE IS LAUNCHED

Amazing news from Harrows.

Always looking for innovative ways of utilising dartboards, Harrows' Research and Development Department's New Uses for Dartboards (NUD) team have come up with an idea that they hope will completely change perceptions of darts players and fitness and demonstrates how they can travel to matches taking two dartboards with them.



Introducing **DARTOBIKE**. Harrows announced today that the Dartobike (pictured left) is 'the darts players' dream machine' and is the latest advance in Triathlon Training Techniques (TTT) combining, as it does, the three key elements of cycling (which has become extremely popular since the UK's success in the Olympics), darts and drinking.

A spokesman told me, "Dartobike is the ideal transport to your local hostelry and allows the rider to release the 'wheels' on arrival, play numerous games of 501, re-bolt the boards and proceed homewards in an orderly direction." The on-board drinks dispenser allows for necessary "top ups" along the way but only soft-drinks of course. The Harrows spokesman added that the ride on the solid wood/steel/sisal-constructed 'wheels' was "Firm but fair."

## DARTS IS BECOMING ONLY A SPECTATOR SPORT?

UK subscriber Chris Kelly has raised a point that I have been making for a while.

*Hi Patrick. It was good to see that a lot of others have commented on the dartitis subject. Some very interesting comments made.*

*On a completely different subject, while at work with Bill Bell [another DDN subscriber], we have many a discussion with regards to the game of darts. One of the subjects that came up last week was my belief that the popularity of the PDC is killing participation in the game, and turning it into a spectator sport.*

*The high averages and standard of play is making it unobtainable for an average dart player, and so they don't bother playing anymore but instead they spectate. In my ten years of being involved in the sport I've noticed a substantial decline in teams, participation, and general interest from everyone. Even more frightening is that, when I go to local cash tournaments and Opens, the interest in the youth competition is next to nothing; more often than not*

*having to be cancelled due to lack of interest. Bill puts this down to lack of dartboards in pubs and people not frequenting pubs like they used to. I agree with him but can't help thinking this standard that we are now seeing on TV week in week out is damaging it.*

*For me, I would rather watch BDO [British Darts Organisation] events where players are fallible and hitting averages more obtainable by your average pub player. We just wondered what your opinion was on this subject. Maybe some others might have some other ideas on the decline. In participation. Cheers, once again, Patrick.*



I replied to Chris and said that I'd often raised the same issue with friends and I *may* have mentioned my view that the Professional Darts Corporation (PDC) has turned darts into simply a spectator sport in one of my past articles (in the series 'The Last Word') in *Darts World* magazine. Essentially the PDC has done to darts what the FA (Football Association) did to football here in the UK in the interwar years: massively increasing the number of

spectators but reducing the numbers of actual participants.

Clearly there's nothing wrong with that. It's called progress. Over the past 25 years or more the PDC has marketed and promoted darts in a way that had never been done before; concentrating on the professional game but adding the razzamatazz more often found in some American sports.

For people attending PDC events the tournaments constitute a great social occasion where you can have a great evening out with your friends, drink buckets of lager, get yourself on TV *and*, if it suits, watch the darts on huge overhead screens and go home having had a superb day or evening out. (See above). (Image © Tip Top Pics. Used with permission.)



Compare the photograph (above, right) of the rather sedate but attentive crowd at the *News of the World* Wales Divisional finals at Cardiff in 1948. (Image: PC Archive.)

On a related subject...

Darts fans at the televised PDC and BDO events are very keen to appear on the TV and to achieve this they write funny phrases on the reverse of the '180' cards. Why then, once they know that the cameras are on them as there's a break in the match and Planet Funk's *Chase the Sun* is playing, do they thrust their cards in the air and then insist, almost to a man (or woman), on moving the thing backwards and forwards so no one can read what they've written? (Discuss.)

## WEBSITE

A couple of issues ago I mentioned that I was thinking of ‘refreshing’ my website [www.patrickchaplin.com](http://www.patrickchaplin.com). In response subscriber Warren Ackary told me

*“It’s great as it is but if you feel that is in the best interests for YOU to work on it then please upgrade it otherwise leave it as it is...everything is easy to find :)”*

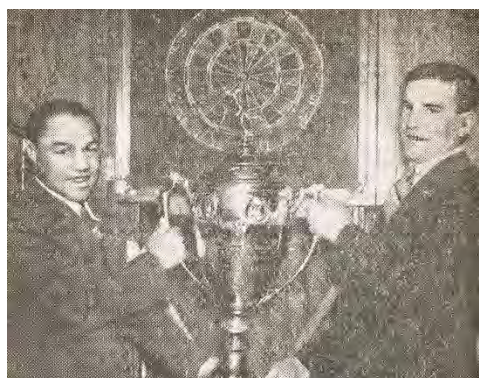
Thanks Warren.

## NEWS OF THE WORLD SNIPPETS

As there was no room for the regular *News of the World* snippet in last month’s *DDN* so I’m publishing *two* in this issue and trust you will enjoy them.

### (i) Hank sorts the seating

At the London and Home Counties Divisional finals of the *NoW* in 1939, 14,534 crammed into the Agricultural Hall in the capital to watch Marmaduke ‘Dukey’ Brecon beat the legendary Jim Pike and thus end Pike’s ambitions of ever becoming a *NoW* champion.



Guest of honour that night was America’s multi-titled world boxing champion ‘Homicide’ Henry Armstrong. Reporter John Morris recalled in 1988 that

*[O]ne inoffensive fan...was ordered out of his seat near the front by a stroppy intruder. Homicide Hank leaned across, wearing the look that spelled danger for his challengers. “That’s HIS seat,” he told the newcomer quietly, indicating its occupant. End of argument.*

‘Homicide’ (above left) is shown above handing Brecon (right) with the prestigious *News of the World* trophy.

### (ii) First National Champion

The first National champion in the *NoW* was Harry Leadbetter of the Windle Labour Club, St. Helens in 1948 when he beat Tommy Small (of the South Durham Steel and iron Social Club, West Hartlepool) 2-1 in the final.

Before then the *NoW* had been a divisional tournament, the competition being suspended for the duration of the Second World War, being re-established in 1948. Even so this was only ‘national’ for England and Wales. Scotland and Northern Ireland joined much later.

## ‘TUNGSTEN THERESA’

A few weeks ago my attention was drawn to this headline in a UK national newspaper, the *Daily Mail*.

Now the *Mail* is renowned for a total lack of interest in darts that is unless a member of the Royal family attends, usually, a Professional Darts Corporation event. So, I was eager to learn why the British Prime Minister had turned away from the rigours of negotiating the country's exit from the European Union and seemed to be playing our favourite sport, presumably to help her relax before another meeting with her Euro colleagues.



However, having read the article, I could find no reference to who 'Tungsten Theresa was playing for (local or super league) or what her plans were to take on the best in the ladies game. Search as I might I found no evidence of the Prime Minister signing up for her County side. Indeed within the article I could find no clue whatsoever of her involvement, as the headline suggested, with darts.

Pity.

## DARTS TODAY IN THE USA

From Dr. Eddie Norman...

*Hi Patrick. Thank you so much for the really, really great DDN issue on the USA Darts scene. It really was a special pleasure for me to read as I seem to spend so much time in the USA.*

*I have always said that the PDC are pushing darts in the wrong place for it to expand in the US. I think a few people now agree with me. Las Vegas is not where it will expand. The East Coast is where steel tip darts is played and followed, Philadelphia, Boston, New York and the Eastern States. The West Coast is soft-tip darts.*

*It is too far and too expensive for East Coast players to get to Las Vegas, they are amateur players working a five day week.*

And, having seen his research published on 'Cricket' in the USA in recent DDNs, Jason Carter e-mailed me to say

*Wow. It is really neat to see my research/our conversations published in this fashion. So thank you again for everything!*

*I'm sure this is going to ruffle a few feathers. Americans love their Cricket and anything on the contrary may come with some backlash.*

*I'm really interested in seeing what kind of responses you get. Of course some of what has been written is just my opinion, but there are also a few things which some of your readers will surely say, "This Jason guy has no idea what he's talking about!"*

*Specifically, one of those things is averages. I was quoted as saying the top Americans average high 70s/low 80s. I just know you're going to get at least one person that is going to contest this. They're going to say "Larry Butler just averaged a 92 this weekend!" or "(insert name here) averaged a 97 in the last CDC final!" or present to you some other similar argument. The fact of the matter is that these guys don't "average" those numbers over the long term, and have certainly not showed that on the big stage in the world championships. Larry Butler may be the lone exception that averages mid-to-high 80s on a regular basis.*

*Americans have played 208 matches in the history of both BDO and PDC world championships (the actual number may vary slightly as this list includes Paul Lim who also played for Singapore and Gary Mawson and David Fatum who also played for Canada). Out of those 208, only EIGHT have averaged over 90. Think about that for a second. Only eight out of 208! So it's pretty safe to say when an American shoots a 90+ average, it's the exception, and not the norm. (By the way, Larry Butler is not one of those eight)!*

*You're welcome to provide those individuals with this link*

[https://www.reddit.com/r/DartsTalk/comments/5oeqnk/every\\_world\\_championship\\_match\\_a\\_n\\_american\\_has/?st=izx23rpi&sh=025fb0e7](https://www.reddit.com/r/DartsTalk/comments/5oeqnk/every_world_championship_match_a_n_american_has/?st=izx23rpi&sh=025fb0e7)

*That is a list of every match an American has played in a world championship. You will see that most of these are, again "high 70s/low 80s", with a respectable amount of mid-to-high 80s to be fair.*

*I'm hoping your article may spark some change in the way darts is played over here in the U.S.: longer format 501, as opposed to best of three Chicago style.*

*I would love to hear some of those that agree with my sentiments, although I'm already prepared for those that don't. It is those same individuals that have never even played long format 501 and watch their average improve, that are willingly to try anything new and different.*

*But who knows? Maybe your readers are more well-informed and will agree with the premise! Either way, please keep in touch and let me know.*

*Thanks again, Patrick. It has been a pleasure working with you on this.*

Jason, I'm certain that readers, especially those living in the USA will have more to say about both issues we've raised. Subscribers can contact me at [patrick.chaplin@btinternet.com](mailto:patrick.chaplin@btinternet.com) with regard to this or any other matters raised in DDN.

## **WDDA – SOUTH AFRICA CO-ORDINATOR**

Warren Ackary, mentioned earlier, is Social Media Manager for the World Disability Darts Association, and has issued the following press announcement on that Association's behalf:



*The World Disability Darts Association are pleased to announce the appointment of Stephen Maphike (pictured left) (Image: Warren Ackary. Used with permission) as our WDDA South Africa Co-ordinator.*

*Stephen brings to the WDDA a wealth of experience and ability and currently works as Deputy Director within the Office of Public Service Commission (OPSC).*

*As Development Officer for the Gauteng Darts Association, Vice President of Tshwane Darts Association (Pretoria) and Vice President of Tshwane District Darts, Stephen is also working amongst youth and disadvantaged*

*communities to involve them in sport. Recently Stephen has worked to assist those living with disability to enjoy the sport of darts.*

*Stephen will be working towards creating a unified disability darts infrastructure within South Africa that spans all Provinces in an effort to integrate disability darts into mainstream opportunities.*

*We at the World Disability Darts Association see Stephen's efforts as a milestone for the expansion of sports participation, bringing together those who can benefit from darts as a means of therapy, rehabilitation and community. We look forward to following Stephen's progress in South Africa and ask that as a worldwide darting family you encourage Stephen in his efforts. (Stephen's e-mail address is [sdmaphike@tsamail.co.za](mailto:sdmaphike@tsamail.co.za).)*

## **A DARTBOARD OUT OF PLACE**

Steve Coulter, from the UK, recently e-mailed the Pub History Society (of which I am currently Chairman) ([www.pubhistorysociety.co.uk](http://www.pubhistorysociety.co.uk)) on a darts-related matter; the e-mail being forwarded to me by the PHS Secretary for my attention. Steve wrote

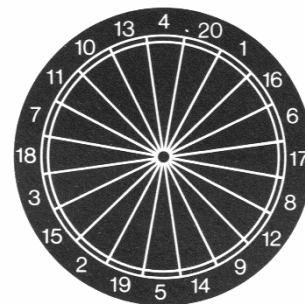
*I was watching an old episode of All Creatures Great and Small [a 1970s TV series here in the UK about Yorkshire vet James Herriot] last week and noticed that a dartboard in The Drovers local pub looked like an old Yorkshire board, but the number layout was different from the Yorkshire dartboard I remembered using. It is from Series 3, Episode 2 and can be seen on YouTube - [All Creatures Great & Small S03E02 = Charity Begins at Home](#). The relevant part is at 35 minutes 40 seconds, showing the dartboard filling the screen.*

*I learnt to play darts in the late 1960s while working at the Alexandra Hotel in Prospect Place, Harrogate, [Yorkshire] and remember having to soak the wooden board in an old dustbin lid filled with warm water before it could be used. Although the dartboard differed from the standard one, with no trebles or outer, the number layout was the same, so I was wondering if the one shown in the TV program was a different version or just a BBC error.*

After viewing the scene I replied:

I refer to your very interesting e-mail...to the Pub History Society relating to the *All Creatures Great and Small* episode which features a dartboard.

It is unusual in as much as it is not a Yorkshire Board at all but a *Manchester* board, which is much smaller than a standard dartboard, constructed of elm (or poplar) wood and stained black. As you said, it has no trebles. The Manchester Board (pictured, right) (also called the 'log-end' board) is 10" in diameter and has 20 numbered segments with only the number 19 being in the same place as on a standard dartboard. The number 4 is at the top where you would normally expect to find the 20.



As far as I am aware, the Manchester Board was never played on in Yorkshire. A Lancashire dartboard played on in Yorkshire? I think not! So, yes, the programme designers had it wrong.

Steve replied:

*Thanks very much for the information, I thought something was amiss. Still, looking into this has brought back many memories.*

*The dartboards we used in Harrogate in the late 1960s were made of wood and all (faded) black, rather like the Lincoln board. All references I've found of the Yorkshire board show it having coloured segments. Perhaps ours had faded over the years.*

*The better players used Schofield darts but I could never get them to stick in the board, so another player let me try his Jim Pike brass darts. These stuck in the board OK, but I found them unwieldy so it was suggested I try a set of Leo Newstead brass darts as they were a little lighter. I bought a set and found these to be just right, and kept altering the length of the wooden canes and position of the flights until I could get a consistent throw. I kept these darts for about 10 years until I lost them moving around the country with my work. They were then replaced with a 29g set of darts with plastic flight shafts, although not sure if they are tungsten (matt grey on the outside but brass coloured in the thread hole).*

*I remember being on holiday in Ventnor, Isle of Wight in early 1969 and popped into a small pub and decided to have a game of darts. The landlord handed over a set of wooden darts, the barrel and shaft all one piece, with feathers permanently fixed and small lead weights embedded in the barrel section. We couldn't get used to these wooden darts and didn't win a game but had a great night with the locals.*

*I was only an average pub player but really enjoyed the company and the fun, sometimes with most of the bar customers involved in a game of some description. In Harrogate we always played 301 with double to start and finish but when I worked in the Midlands, they used standard treble boards and the game was always 501 straight start. I haven't played since 1986 but still have this last set of darts - probably have trouble hitting the board these days.*

*Thanks again for the excellent information and I shall carry on reading your really interesting website... [[www.patrickchaplin.com](http://www.patrickchaplin.com)]*

In addition, I was able to tell Steve that there are still active Manchester Board/Log End leagues in and around Manchester. The Salford area is particularly strong. A man named

David Henry, who lives in Denton, Manchester, still makes the boards by hand and supplies the leagues.

There is also a Manchester Log End Dart Board Federation founded in 2003. The darts commentator, John Gwynne, is its Secretary and its President used to be (and *possibly* still is) the boxer Ricky Hatton.

## DARTS IN WORLD WAR TWO

When I first constructed the final text of my PhD back in the early 2000s, I had planned to take the history of our sport up to the end of the Second World War. Indeed I still have on file a 12,000-word chapter on that period which has never been published. The chapter proved beyond doubt that playing darts helped maintain morale during those dark days.

Due to the total word count dictated by my university I had to make a decision to bring that word count of my dissertation down to what the authorities saw as ‘approved’. Thus the



WW2 chapter was jettisoned and the final title of my PhD became *Darts in England 1900-39 – A Social History*. It was subsequently published by Manchester University Press in 2009, with a paperback version in 2012. The final word count for my book was **104,000** words (including nearly 1,000 footnotes).

If I ever publish that ‘missing’ chapter, I will surely include the photograph (above) which was sent to me by subscriber Bob Foster for my archive. It shows a group of, presumably,

British soldiers (possibly an Ack-Ack unit) relaxing in a dug-out with a dartboard! What a super image!

It wasn't until 1943 that darts were included in the sports packs supplied to UK soldiers so one can only *guess* that this photograph is from that period.

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