

DR. DARTS' NEWSLETTER

Issue 91

October 2017



STILL AT THE CUTTING EDGE: THE BLADE DARTBOARD CELEBRATES 20th ANNIVERSARY

It always a pleasure to help raise the profile of the WINMAU Dartboard Co. Ltd., who have sponsored my research for a decade. What better opportunity than to congratulate WINMAU on the 20th anniversary of the production of the BLADE dartboard. (The image below, left, shows the original BLADE packaging.)



Like most things in the modern era, technical innovation has been the driving force behind the incredible pace at which darts equipment has evolved. Wood and feather gave way to tungsten and more advanced flight and shaft materials, and elm was eventually replaced by sisal (aka 'bristle'). Such innovations in the darts we throw and the board we aim at has seen players of unparalleled ability hitting ever higher averages.

WINMAU (formerly Kick Bros.) celebrated its 70th anniversary last year and so it is no surprise that the company has played an extremely important role in the dartsing success story since the 1940s. Nothing illustrates this more clearly than the Blade dartboard.

Since 1997, each iteration of the Blade dartboard has been recognised as *the* finest and most durable in the world – a fact acknowledged by the British Darts Organisation (BDO), which not only endorses Blade dartboards, but has been using them in all its competitions since the original Blade was launched two decades ago.

WINMAU's Sales and Marketing Director, Ian Flack told *DDN*,

"Each evolution of the Blade dartboard builds on the innovations that have gone before it. Every time we sit down and say to ourselves 'The current Blade is great, but what can we do to make it even better.'"

20 years ago, that approach resulted in innovations that we all, as darts players, now take for granted such as the introduction of angled (or bladed) wire that minimised bounce-outs, and a completely staple-free web (aka 'spider' in the USA). In addition the original BLADE included a 'Free Oche Strip' (pictured on the next page). You will note that the 'strip' shows the oche line for both steel-tip and soft-tip darts as the board was marketed as 'ideal' for both formats of play. I would suggest that the 'strip' would be a very collectable piece today.



Ian Flack added

“One word that is synonymous with the Blade is durability. From the original Blade to the Blade 5 of today, only the highest quality Kenyan sisal has been used. Coupling only the finest materials and WINMAU’s unique and exclusive manufacturing processes results in what is simply the pinnacle of dartboard technology and the world’s most advanced dartboards.

In its current incarnation, the Blade 5 raises the bar higher still with a new wiring system that allows for additional scoring area in the trebles and doubles, a reduction in the overall surface area of the web by 14%, and 20% thinner Dynamic Sector Wires (DSW) and 10% thinner Radial Wires for greater scoring potential. The angle of the wire – which gives the board its name – has been reduced to 60 degrees inclusive and the Ultimate Tensile Strength of the DSW has been increased by 20% to further increase the likelihood of darts deflecting into the board. A new bullseye and 25 ring feature carbon diffusion technology for improved performance and durability. Ian added

“At WINMAU we believe we also have an important role in the advancement of the sport by constantly seeking the next innovation, the next technology to enable players to push themselves and the extent of their abilities further. The Blade dartboard is a great example of that. We are proud of the fact that we have never for a second sat back and accepted the current model as being as good as a dartboard will ever get. We’ll keep innovating to make sure the Blade dartboard continues to be the best there is.”

So “HAPPY ANNIVERSARY!” to the BLADE dartboard and here’s looking forward to even further developments with Blade 6!

Talking of celebrations...

‘THE CALCULATOR’ IS 70!

I first met Keith 'The Calculator' Callister when I was invited by *DDN* subscriber, Bill Bell, to help celebrate Bill’s 40th birthday in the *Dew Drop Inn*, Peacehaven on the east Sussex coast. My wife Maureen and I had a great time and a report of those celebrations was featured in the June 2014 issue of *DDN*, #49. What a great bunch they are who take their darts *very* seriously (well, sometimes).

A short while ago Bill wrote

I was just writing to ask a favour. It was Keith 'The Calculator' Callister's 70th birthday on 14th September and I just wondered whether you could maybe put a 'Happy Birthday' in your next DDN for him. He'd like that. We had a few pints last night with him, playing Cricket (not tactics), Shanghai, Killer, Halve-it and Football. Made a nice change. Keith actually won Killer.

The image (right) shows Keith celebrating after he had won the recent house championship doubtless the beer in his hand is a pint of Harvey's best bitter.

As Bill commented, "There's life in the old dog yet!!" I'm sure all DDN readers will join me in celebrating The Calculator's milestone. "Happy 70th Keith!"



WOMEN'S DARTS - BRENDA SIMPSON

I receive many darts-related questions via my website www.patrickchaplin.com but rarely are they about women's darts. So I was very pleased when a lady named Linda Wardell contacted me. She wrote

Hi Patrick. I recently sent the below email to Darts World magazine. They came back to tell me they could not help but passed your info on to me. I wonder if you could help me.

My mum Brenda Simpson used to play darts for Derbyshire and also played for England. We recently got footage of her from ITV from the programme The Indoor League. We know mum played in a final on tele against a lady called Ann Marie Davis, I think it was either 1978 or 1979. I think it was the News of the World darts championship.

We are looking to see if we can find any reference to this match... Was it the News of the World. Who was the referee, etc., so we can gain video footage? Would you be able to check your archives to see if this match was referenced in any of your publications so we can take this up further with either the BBC or ITV as we lost mum over 10 years ago now and this footage would mean a lot to me and my sisters. Any help on this would be much appreciated.

My immediate response to Linda was that the tournament would not have been the *News of the World* as no woman, post-war, ever made it to the Grand Finals in London. Further research revealed much more.

According to my records Brenda Simpson played in England's first International in 1977 (organised under the auspices of the British Darts Organisation (BDO) and later discovered that she had been throwing with a broken ankle!

From then on she held a regular place in the England ladies' team either in the team or as a reserve.

In 1972 Brenda reached the final of the National Darts Association of Great Britain's Women's Individual Championship, representing the Contact Club, Dronfield, but was beaten by Jean Smith (Montpelier Hotel, Bristol). Jean Smith was also, like Brenda, to play in *The*

Indoor League. In 1974 Brenda reached the NDAGB Women's final again but this time lost to Jean Dickinson of the *Dog and Partridge*, Heaton Mersey, near Stockport. Like Jean Smith and Brenda, Jean Dickinson was a top lady player at that time. (I could find no record of where this tournament was held but it is unlikely to have been televised.)

In 1979 Brenda won the British Darts Organisation's British Women's Open Pairs competition held over three days (19-21 January) at the New Horticultural Hall,



London. Her partner in that final was Sandy Wadsworth (a Derbyshire player who first made the England team in 1981). Together they beat the strong pairing of Babs Evans and Gwen Sutton. The only photographs I have in my archive of Brenda are of that pairs triumph. The expression on Brenda's face when turning to her partner Sandy after throwing the winning dart is priceless. (Image © PC/DW Archive)

Refereeing the match (with microphone in hand) is the legendary Jack Price, while the scorer (seated) is England International

Ken Brown. The other man in view is, I believe, Mike Palmer who, at the time, was Jack Price's 'understudy'.

I then moved on to Linda's main query re. Brenda playing Wales' Anne Marie Davies in the British Open. The match actually took place in 1981. The British Open tournament was played over three days (2-4 January) at the Rainbow Suite, Kensington, London. Of the women's match *Darts World* (February 1981) reported simply that the '*Ladies Singles winner was Welsh International Anne Marie Davies who collected the second highest prize of the three-day event (£1,000) after defeating Branda Simpson 3-2 in the final.*' (The image, right, shows a jubilant Anne Marie Davies with her winners' cheque. Image © PC/DW Archive.)

Unfortunately *Darts World* spelt Brenda's first name incorrectly in that short report but she was in good company as the report missed the 'e' off of John Lowe's name! However, in the listing of placings and prizes that accompanied the article Brenda's name was spelt correctly and shows that she picked up a cheque for **£300**. The full title of the competition was the Watney/MY Darts British Open Championships.



Since first e-mailing Linda I checked Sid Waddell's book *The Indoor League* (co-authored by John Meade) (London: Pan Books, 1975, page 59) and discovered that Sid actually mentioned Brenda as one player to watch. Sid wrote:

Probably the best stylist in Ladies' darts is Brenda Simpson of Dronfield, Derbyshire. Brenda's ambition is to win the National Ladies' Title and also to be the first woman to win the News of the World Competition. On top form she's certainly good enough to beat most men. In 1972 she was the runner-up to Jean Smith in the England and Wales Championship, and she's won almost everything going in Derbyshire including the Mixed Pairs and Individual competitions in 1973. She plays once a week at the Dronfield Contact Club.

Praise indeed from the late great 'Geordie Lip' who started his darts career in TV as co-producer of *The Indoor League*. This quote also links nicely to Linda's comment re. her mum and the *News of the World*.

NEWS OF THE WORLD - SNIPPET

After answering a question from Mark Veatch from San Deigo, California, USA in the September DDN Mark has raised another interesting point. He wrote:

Here's a question for you. I have read your NoW and dartboard articles, but I'm wondering if you know when the News of the World switched from elm to sisal for the dartboards? I was watching the Leighton Rees vs Bill Lennard final from 1976, and couldn't quite tell what type of board it was. There were very loud "thunks", and fairly dark white segments, but not sure if that proves anything. Also, did the News of the World ever deviate from the 8 foot oche, even in 1997?

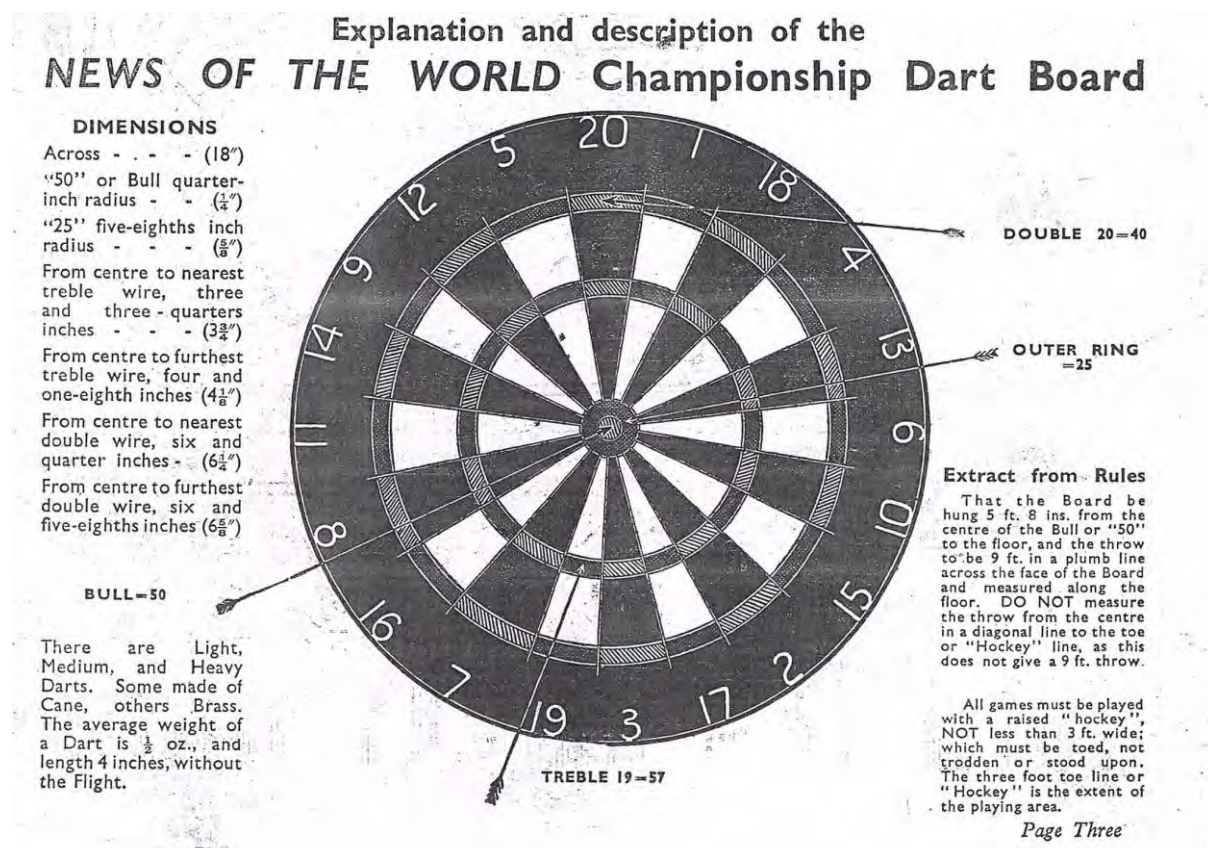
In that 1976 it would have definitely been an elm or poplar dartboard. However, being unable to answer the main query from my own records, I approached my contact at the News UK Archive and he replied

The 1936 London and Home Counties programme, which is the earliest we have, states "that all matches must be played on a Standard Darts Board made of Elm and approved of by the National Darts Association, numbered 1 to 20, with 25 and 50, also doubles and trebles; that the Board be hung 5ft 8 in from the centre of the Bull, or 50, to the floor, and the throw to be 9ft in a plumb line across the face of the Board measured along the floor. Do not measure the throw from the centre in a diagonal line to the toe or hockey line, as this does not give a 9ft throw." The design and height of the board and the hockey distance remained the same in London through to 1939 and were used for the 1939 Midland Counties and 1938 and 1939 Wales championships.

However, the northern areas all played their championships differently. Lancashire (1938 and 1939) had the board [a Manchester board - no treble ring] hung at 5ft 3in with the hockey at 7ft; Yorkshire (1939) had the board [a Yorkshire board - no treble ring or 25 Bull] hung at 5ft 6in with the hockey at 9ft; North of England (1939) had the board [a standard board] hung at 5ft 5in with the hockey at 7ft 3in. The North of England championship also had the "Northern Bursting Rule" described as "for instance, id 16 is required and a player gets 11 with huis first dart, 5 is required, if the next dart is 20, it is "burst" and 5 still left to be got - not 16".

By the time we get to the first national competition in 1948 the layout of the board remains the same (though the description does not include what it is made of), but the hockey line is now "8ft measured along the floor". The 1990 programme describes the same layout as the 1948 one, again without mentioning what the board is made of.

Interestingly, in those pre-war regional championships both the North of England and Midland Counties legs were 301 up. All other championship legs were 501 up and this, of course, was the case from 1948 onwards.



Interestingly, the 'Explanation and description' of the *News of the World* championship dartboard (see above) does not mention them being made of wood. But then I suggest that, as elm or poplar were used in most if not all darts matches throughout England at that time, there would be no need to include this in the description.

All fascinating stuff but still no answer on the 'When (if ever) did the dartboard change to sisal?'

I personally don't think they ever did change to sisal as at least one hobbyist was producing elm or poplar dartboards for the *News of the World* during the late 1980s so I think we can assume those dartboards were used right up until the 1990 final after which time the tournament was 'suspended'.

However, as regards the very last *News of the World* tournament held in 1997, the dartboards were supplied by Unicorn so they would have been bristle dartboards as that company did not produce elm dartboards.

BRITISH OPEN

Ian Foxton of Dubai Darts writes

Sir, Please solve a darts query for us. Where and when did the very first British Open Individual Open Darts Championship take place and did a Mr Charlie Ellix of London beat Alan Glazier in the final? We understood that Mr Ellix won the event two years consecutively? This possibly before the 1975 event won by Mr Alan Evans? Thank you for any information.

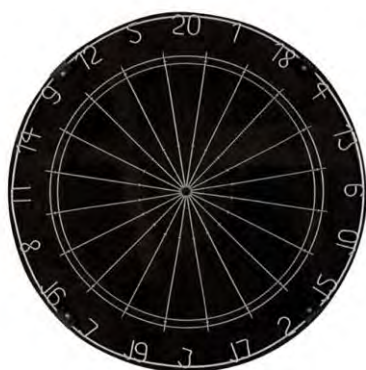
As I informed Ian, the trouble is that there were two 'British Open' tournaments back then; the NODOR British Open that ran from 1974 to 1977 and the BDO British Open that started in 1975.

London's Charlie Ellix (pictured right) won the first two NODOR British Open tournaments held in Bristol beating Brian James from Maidenhead in 1974 and Dave Whitcombe in 1975.



Ellix never reached the finals of the BDO British Open but Alan Glazier did in the inaugural event held at the Mount Royal and Europa Hotels, London on 28 and 29 December 1974. Records show that, despite being played in late 1974, it was regarded as the 1975 title. In that tournament Alan Glazier was runner-up to Wales' Alan Evans.

DARTBOARDS - FEEDBACK



In DDN #85 (April) I referred to both the Yorkshire Board and the smaller Manchester dartboards. My thanks to US subscriber James Johnson for reminding me (back in April in fact) that Lincolnshire here in the UK had its own distinctive dartboard simply known as the 'Lincoln Board' and to send me the image (left). Black, like the Manchester board, but having the same size and numbering as the Yorkshire and London (or Standard) dartboards, this board has also been traced to parts of the County of Kent and, not surprisingly, called there the Kent Board.

ASK THE DOCTOR

Also back in April subscriber Ashley B. wrote

Hi Patrick, Your monthly newsletters are always an entertaining easy read. However, I can't remember you ever covering the problems we ageing players have with the onset of Arthritis.

I may be wrong of course as my memory is failing too! Anyway, I'm finding it increasingly difficult to hold my dart, in my throwing hand. Several darts recently have been released by accident. I wondered if I should revert to some old brass darts (with a thicker barrel), which may help me with my failing grip. Any thoughts or advice would be appreciated. Someone out there must have had a similar problem to mine.

As I am a Doctor of Philosophy and not a medical doctor, it is very difficult for me to comment or advise but I did tell Ashley that as us old 'uns approach and try to deal with the problems of ageing, arthritis often strikes. (Although, of course, arthritis is not just restricted to older folk.) Whereas darditis can be overcome, arthritis is, I believe, impossible to combat entirely.

I told Ashley that I too suffer with the condition in my fingers and take turmeric capsules which help **but that may not work for everyone**. For me it takes the pain away but does not defeat the condition. I'm just grateful that the pain has eased. (I still throw rubbish darts though. I always have.) Turmeric works for me but I told Ashley that it is **not** my recommendation that he try it as it may not help him at all. I'm just saying what works for me. Best to seek medical advice on any matter such as this.

AL LIPMAN – FEEDBACK

My mention of USA participants in the *News of the World* tournament last issue generated this reaction from the famous (or should that be 'infamous' Dartoid (aka Paul Seigel):

Al Lipman! You know, years ago I was on a team in Virginia Beach with a guy named Fred Walker. Fred was Al Lipman's nephew.

Before Fred even had his driver's license he would drive Al around Philly late at night to money matches. He'd stay outside and keep the car running in case Al needed to make a quick getaway. At these matches Al would only drink ice water - this is from where his nickname, The Iceman, came. Al Lipman was the original Iceman. Al gave Fred his scrapbook. In it were Al's darts from his News of the World appearances.

It is great that you write sometimes about those who paved the way. Particularly in America, many of the new players are unfamiliar with these great players. They write them off as "dinosaurs" - it is disrespectful. And, by the way, Fred Walker was also quite a player.

SPORTS ARGUS CHARITY DARTS SQUAD

Last year (DDN #77, September 2016) I reported that the *Sports Argus* Charity Darts Squad, which has over the years raised thousands of pounds for charity, were embarking on their 70th consecutive year of fundraising.



In this issue Life President, Ken Herbert, tells DDN readers how the team fared during the 2016/17 season.

The curtain finally came down on the Sports Argus Darts 70th season as they celebrated at the Del Forno Italian Restaurant, Shirley. (The photograph shows Ken at the event with 'The Boss', his wife Audrey.)

Completing our series of events, over £10,000 has been forwarded to our charity account which will be distributed between several charities.

We have had some top results. Leading the way this year was the Moseley All Services Club who collected £2,000, followed by Rugby Workers Club with £1,248. Both the York & Worcester Super League raised over £500 each. Forest of Arden, Bromsgrove, West Heath Snooker Club & Tamworth Select all with donations of over £400.

On to the playing side which finished with 22 challenge games played resulting in 20 victories and just two defeats – North Birmingham were successful at 6-3 and Shirley Darts won 7-2, well done both. It is a big thank you not only to those above but to all teams who have supported us this season helping to reach the magic of £10,000 it is really appreciated by us all.

All members of the squad are to be congratulated on their efforts throughout the season. Top honours must go to Phil Whitlock who won the title of Sports Argus Individual Champion together with topping the averages 31.77. Phil also recorded 93 tons and a 12-dart game. But it is all players pulling together that made for some top evenings.

Our stage crew did a first class job. Not forgetting our sponsor Eddie Scullion (E.J.S. Roofing) for his support. We have also received a lot of help from others. Thank you all.

On completion of the 70th season the Sports Argus Charity Darts Squad have raised over £10,000 for charity. The full donations for the season will be Royal National Lifeboat Institution (£2,250), County Air Ambulance (£2,750), Birmingham Children's Hospital (£3,176.52), Macmillan Cancer Support (£1,500) together with £100 each to St Marys Hospice and Acorns. In addition a ramp has been purchased for Dylan & Alex (£250).

*A grand total of **£10,126.52**.*

Looking ahead, we are hoping to arrange 23 competitive evenings together with our Christmas Charity evening plus our Annual Sports Argus Individual Championship.

What a great example of fund raising through darts! Ken also told me that the team have raised nearly a quarter of a million pounds for charity since 1979. Ken, long may it continue. Congratulations to all concerned.

HERE'S HOW TO PLAY DARTS (in 1965)

Thanks to DDN subscriber Chris Murray for sending me an extract from a book titled *Here's*



How, subtitled *Centenary Edition 1865 – 1965*, published by Victoria Wine (1965, 2 shillings (that's ten 'new' pence), 80 pages. Page 49 tells readers how to play darts'. With the accompanying drawing showing a 'set' of only two darts and a dartboard comprising of *eighteen* segments and no outer bull, I wasn't expecting to learn much but let's see:

DARTS is one of the finest games of skill ever invented. It demands a keen eye, a steady hand, mental judgment and a head for figures...and for beer.

The dartboard is circular, two inches thick and eighteen inches in diameter: its face is divided by wires into twenty segments valued 1 to 20 in irregular sequence. The bull's eye, a half-inch circle, counts 50 and the "outer" 25. In addition there are two circular rings: one round the outside edge of the scoring area, the other midway between this and the bull. The former counts double the number of the segment concerned, and the latter treble.

The board stands five feet eight inches from the bull's eye to the ground, the thrower stands at nine feet away from the board, and the loser stands everyone a drink.

Three darts are used, each player throwing all of them in turn. Before a player can score, a dart must be lodged in the narrow double ring. After this, each dart scores according to the values shown and the sum obtained with each turn is subtracted from the starting total, which is usually 301, 501 or, for team games, 1001. It is essential to end exactly at 0 with a dart scoring in the double ring.

If a player scores more at a turn than the balance, or reduces it to 0 without the last dart being a double, the turn is disqualified. If the score is reduced to 1, the turn is also disqualified, since it becomes impossible to complete the game with a double.

The winner is the player or side first to reach 0 with a double.

Start with a double, a nine feet throw *and* the loser buys the beer. Those were the days!

Chris added a bit of background:

Victoria Wines was a chain of off-licences (about 650 in 1965) and owned by Ind Coope [a British brewer]. The book has other sections such as "Here's how to throw a party" and "Here's how to choose and store cigars", obviously aimed at the aspiring social climbers of the day!

Thanks Chris.

MY DARTS RESEARCH IS SPONSORED BY



Winmau.com

NOTE: Text © 2017 Patrick Chaplin or as shown. Images © Patrick Chaplin or as stated or sourced. Neither text nor images can be reproduced without prior permission of the copyright holder(s).