

DR. DARTS' NEWSLETTER

Issue 92

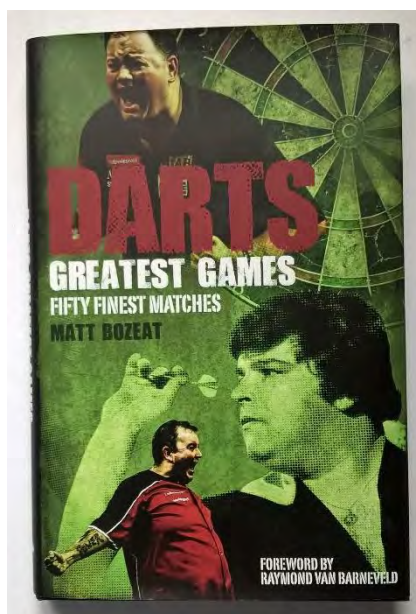
November 2017



ARE THESE THE BEST-EVER DARTS MATCHES?

A DDN BOOK REVIEW

Some of you may recall Matt Bozeat's first book about darts – *Darts Miscellany* – an intriguing volume of darts anecdotes, stories and information drawn mainly from the 'modern era' of darts published in 2010.



Following on from that work Matt, a freelance journalist who specialises in darts and also boxing, has written *Darts Greatest Games – Fifty Finest Matches*, a sublime collection of memorable darts games which not only provides detailed throw-by-throw information but also features interviews with the players themselves who relive the back-and-forth drama of their greatest-ever moments on the oche. That makes this book so much more than just a list of great gladiatorial darts conflicts of the past.

Whether *all* of the greatest matches are included here is debateable. Everyone has their favourites but Matt has done his utmost to cover all bases and all the best-ever games. I didn't need to look for Keith Deller v Eric Bristow in the 1983 Embassy (which Matt calls the 'BDO') World Championship Final in 1983. I knew it would be there. (It's No. 3 on the list.) But would he include Shaun Greatbatch v

Steve Coote in the 2002 Dutch Open final when Greatbatch threw the first ever nine-darter on live TV? It's there (at a rather lowly No. 38). Greatbatch was the first, not Phil Taylor. I always knew that but so many people believe otherwise. Job done Matt.

The women's game, so often totally ignored by darts writers, is included on the list with Trina Gulliver v Francis Hoenselaar's tense final in the BDO's Women's World Championship final in 2007 (No. 44) and Gulliver v Anastasia Dobromyslova (No. 36) in which the latter broke the Gulliver run and wrested the Women's World title away from Trina for the first time.

This kind of book will always court controversy in as much as it is only 50 games in a sport that came of age in the 1970s with many thousands of great matches being played over the decades; many played off-screen and therefore never recorded for posterity. Therein lies the limitations of this book.

Matt's selection will, I am sure, result in many a bar argument over what should have been included and what should not be there. It's a pity that Matt did not include an Introduction which revealed his methodology: why he chose what he chose.

That Introduction could also have clarified my question, as a Darts Historian, as to why some of the greatest games of previous decades (by which I mean pre-BDO and therefore pre-PDC) such as Tom Barrett winning the *News of the World* Individual darts championship in two successive years (1963-64 and 1964-65) or the two-match 'World Championship' games played in the 1940s by the most famous darters of that era, the legendary Jim Pike and Joe Hitchcock. I think those stars of the past deserved at least a mention, if only in passing.

But having said that, Matt's compilation will be a compelling read for everyone who takes an interest in darts and, particularly, in the sports' more recent history in terms of great matches. In addition to recording his Top 50 Matt also reveals such information as why Michael van Gerwen throws so fast, what made Phil Taylor invincible for so long and, on the lighter side, the escapades of what he calls 'the darts world's first nutters.' I will leave it to you to think about who those 'nutters' are. I will also let you discover for yourselves what match Matt ranks as No. 1.

That all being said, this is an excellent book which I recommend to darts players and darts enthusiasts everywhere. (It'll make a fine festive gift too.)

Darts Greatest Games – Fifty Finest Matches, featuring a Foreword by Raymond van Barneveld, is published by Pitch Publishing in hardback (208 pages) (ISBN 978-1-78531-300-4) and is priced at £16.99.

'UNCHARACTERISTIC ERRORS'

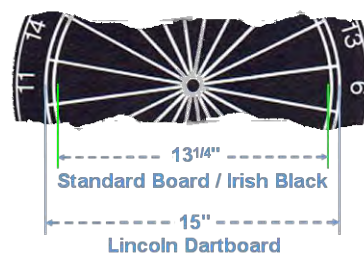
It seems that I made more than one 'uncharacteristic error' in last month's *DDN*: in fact *three*.

No. 1. The Lincoln Dartboard

I am grateful to David King of Darts501.com fame, for pointing out what he described as an 'uncharacteristic error' in *DDN* #91 in relation to the article concerning the Lincoln dartboard. David wrote:

Hi, Patrick, Just read DDN 91 and I notice an uncharacteristic error.

The 'Lincoln Dartboard' although dyed black like the Manchester log-end board has a larger scoring area than the Yorkshire dartboard...The difference is made clear in The Guinness Book of Darts however for those that cannot refer to this I have placed a graphic and supporting text on the darst501.com website:



http://www.darts501.com/Dartboards_Other.html

The basic difference is that a standard 'Clock', 'Yorkshire' or 'Irish Black' dartboard has a scoring area diameter of 13 1/4" a Lincoln dartboard has a scoring area diameter of 15".

The only true 'Lincoln Dartboard' I have seen was sold by Perrigo (Manchester). At the time they sold the Irish Black, Lincoln and made the Manchester log-end.

However, if you want a further task to tax your darting knowledge you might wish to establish the throwing distance for the dartboard set-up for 'Lincoln dartboard'. After some enquires via John Lowe I finally managed to find the Yorkshire board's height and throwing distance. But like all of these things they change, basically, a regional board is sometimes hung incorrectly on a standard dartboard height and the uneducated believe this is correct. Hence how history can get changed or lost over time.

Regional Dartboard setup details that I have had confirmed can I also be seen on the Darts501.com website at <http://www.darts501.com/Setup.html>.

In addition subscriber Alf Caink contacted me to say

It was good to see the Lincoln board mentioned. NODOR still makes the Lincoln Board. You can see it on page 42 of the company's online catalogue at www.nodor-darts.com. As far as I am aware, NODOR are the only manufacturer to continue the fine traditions of the Lincoln board, along with the Yorkshire, London 5's and Ipswich 5's.

No. 2. How to play darts

The second error was made under the article 'Here's How to Play Darts' (page 9). Chris M. has kindly pointed out that I referred to there being 'only two darts' in the illustration accompanying the piece but in fact the third is there, *stuck in the board!* ('Must do better next time.')



No. 3. The typo(s).

Thanks to Mick S. for pointing out a typo on page 5, 'hius' instead of 'his'. Fact is that I simply cut and pasted the reply from News UK without checking for typographical errors. Presumably I missed it in my eagerness to bring News UK's excellent response to readers' attention. Having now checked back I notice that in the penultimate paragraph of that reply another typo in the line above - 'id' should be 'if'. So that makes four errors in total!

As Chris M. remarked "More haste, less speed..." or as one of my teachers used to say, "More care needed."

NEWS OF THE WORLD - LIONEL SMITH

The popularity of my *News of the World* snippets seems to grow and grow. This month it's so much more than a mere snippet. DDN subscriber Mike Bailey wrote to me last month...

I was hoping you could gather some information for me regarding a darts player I once played.

It was 1977, I think, certainly around that time. I was 17 years old and a pretty good player then... I was practising with my brother at a Golf Club in Burton-on-Trent, Staffordshire, when this chap asked me for a game. It was a close match but I just edged it 2-1. The chap thanked me for the game and told me I had played well. I didn't think any more about it.

I was approached afterwards by a spectator who asked me if I knew who I'd just beaten. I said I had no idea. The spectator told me it was a man called Lionel Smith, who was a very good player indeed.

Even now, if my kids ask me if I was any good at darts, I always say, "Hey, I once beat Lionel Smith you know."

I just wanted to ask you if you had any information on Lionel, and did I really beat a very good player that day? Thanks Patrick, reading your DDNs are always the highlight of my week.

To be absolutely honest, I had never heard of Lionel Smith but it wasn't long before I discovered some information about Lionel in Derek Brown's *The Guinness Book of Darts* (Enfield: Guinness Superlatives Ltd., 1981). Brown reveals that Lionel Smith was born on 17th July 1928 and took up darts '30 years ago' (that is, circa 1950) and finally reached one of his ambitions when he was named in the England team for 1981. Lionel was a floor-layer from Lichfield who, at the time Brown was writing, had won more than thirty titles locally and who plays for the West Midlands. Brown also stated

In [the World Masters in] 1980, there were 189 players with a chance of winning the Masters with its £4001 first prize and its keys to many doors. Eighty of them were the English county qualifiers... They whittled one another down to twelve and then joined the 109 World qualifiers. Four of those Englishmen who had come through the hard way [one of which was] Lionel Smith (West Midlands)...

The *Darts World* report on the match published in January 1981 (issue No. 98, page 34) shows that Smith made it to the last 32 but does not state who beat him.

More importantly though was the discovery that Lionel Smith was a *News of the World*



Divisional Champion, winning the Midland Counties title at the Standard-Triumph Recreation Club, Tile Hill, Coventry on Monday 20th March 1978. This success led to Smith featuring in the Grand Final of the *News of the World Darts Championship* held at the Empire Pool, Wembley on 29th April 1978. The programme notes stated as follows:

Lionel Smith, a married man and a very young grandfather, is today representing the Midland Counties. He is a concrete factory foreman and plays for the Royal British Legion Club, Lichfield, Staffordshire. Lionel scored 18 tons on the way to the final game, and we hope he plays as well today – obviously a player worth watching. Lionel received his [Divisional] trophy from Superintendent J. B. Glynn, Coventry Police.

According to a photocopied results sheet inside my copy of that programme, Lionel drew a bye in the first round and thus went through automatically to the quarter-finals where he met Tony Clark (the Wales Divisional Champion who played out of the *Kings Head*, Moss,

Clwyd) who had also had a bye in the first round. Smith beat Clark 2-0 to progress to the semi-finals. There he met the North of England Divisional champion John Coward (someone else who had a bye in the first round) who played out of the *White Hart* British Legion, Sedburgh, Cumbria. Smith lost to Coward 2-0. Coward then progressed to the grand final where he met and was defeated by Stefan Lord, the Swedish representative.

So, I was very pleased to confirm that, all those years ago, Mike Bailey had indeed beaten a very good darts player.

DOES ANYONE RECOGNISE THESE DARTS?

Subscriber Brian H. from Sunderland, UK has posed a very difficult problem. He writes

Hi Patrick. October DDN brilliant as always: loads of N of W info & I'm sure Brenda Simpson's family appreciate the effort you put in to research her playing career.

I'm prompted to contact you again after buying another old set of darts off eBay complete with original home-made folded cardboard flights. (Gave them a go, flights and all & threw them as well as any set I've got so it just goes to show how they've stood the test of time!)

These darts are threaded but I've got a similar set in which the canes are just pushed in. I was wondering if you knew when threading of barrels was introduced? I would date both sets around 1940s or 1950s. I can imagine an innovative company like Unicorn possibly introducing threads ahead of the competition but neither set look like Unicorn patterns. As always any information would be appreciated.



I thanked Brian for his positive feedback and replied as follows:

As regards threading, I have a set of Unicorn Silver Comet darts dating back to the 1940s which appear to have threaded shafts. That was Unicorn's first product so I guess they would never have made darts with canes.

Brass darts with push-in canes were available from the 1920s, a time when most working-class darts players were using wooden French darts with turkey flights. These could be purchased as single darts. The Jim Pike company, set up just after WW2 continued to sell JP darts with canes until the 1970s/80s when they eventually turned to threaded barrels, I believe because the source of canes dried up or became too expensive.

Brian then replied saying

Thanks for that Patrick. I'd love to think I had a set of darts dating back to the 20s or 30s! I have about 30 old sets of darts but these two look the oldest: they have a deep, almost

copperish patina. I love the thought of darts like these playing the boards so many years ago (if they could only talk!) & feel they deserve still to be used.... I get a much bigger kick when I hit a big score with my 'dinosaur' darts than with super-slim tungstens.

The ones on the left [see image on page 5] with the white flights are the ones without a thread & weigh 25g. The heavier ones with the original card flights have a thread but canes are screwed directly into the barrel. They weigh 36g.

I don't expect miracles or that you waste too much of your precious time digging any deeper but if you do find any more information about these two sets I would be very grateful. It is impossible to tell exactly how old these darts are, given similar patterns will have been produced for decades. But looking at the deep set tarnish & original set up, at least of the heavier set, I'm sure they are a good age.

*Thanks again for all your efforts: greatly appreciated by many of us followers of the game –
Regards, Brian*

I then told Brian that, unlike Jim Pike darts, very few darts companies in the early years embossed their barrels with a logo, well not until the introduction of tungsten in the 1970s/early 1980s and the rise of stars such as Eric Bristow. Most sets of brass darts were sold in cardboard boxes which, whilst bearing all the information one would have needed, tended to eventually fall apart. But whatever the box or case, clearly those belonging to Brian's darts did not survive. Thus, for the moment, his darts are indistinguishable from so many hundreds of thousands of others and certainly cannot be accurately dated by me.

However, *DDN* has a number of subscribers within the darts business and I would appeal to them to send me their comments about these two examples. Please e-mail me at patrick.chaplin@btinternet.com.

'THE SPLIT' – FEEDBACK

In response to comments previously published in *DDN* relating to this historic darts event, subscriber Steve Doyle writes

Good day Patrick!! Another fine newsletter! ...I hope this is a book you write. I think it would be fascinating reading. So much went on we probably have never heard about. And what are the ramifications even today!? I know I'd be ordering my copy!!

It was good to at last 'sign up' Scottish darts enthusiast James Hope to *DDN*. James and I go back a long way, having exchanged letters and e-mails for years relating to darts and particularly darts north o' the border. James contacted me after reading my *The Last Word* column in *Darts World* magazine which referred to 'The Split.' James wrote:

Hi Patrick. I've just been reading your Last Word column in this month's DW magazine. I think it's a great idea, a book about the split in darts between the BDO and the 16 players who formed the WDC (now PDC), perhaps [including] comments as well from the players themselves as well as officials from both sides involved. It definitely warrants a book.

However, I have to disappoint both Steve and James with the news that I have no plans to write such a book. I know the book would make fascinating reading but with so much legal stuff involved it would make it a very, very difficult book to write. It would have to be

carefully examined by legal teams on both sides (PDC and BDO) and would probably end up as a dilution of the facts 'for legal reasons'.

So, taking a leaf out of Matt Bozeat's book by including comments from those who were there sounds a great idea. Perhaps Matt fancies the challenge for his next book. For me, I would repeat that I think there are too many potential legal pitfalls inherent in the production of such a work.

We all know what the ramifications of 'The Split' are today. A strong PDC pushing darts forward (but not necessarily in a direction traditionalists want it to go) and the BDO existing only as a shadow of its former self. However, I am certain that issues around 'The Split' will be raised again in the future.

TERMINOLOGY – A CANADIAN ENQUIRY

Kevin Francis Richardson recently sent an enquiry to David King at Darts501.com relating to darts terminology (or 'darts lingo' as Bobby George would call it). Kevin wrote simply, *'I've heard of 'Dibs' or 'Nibs' for Double One! Is this true?'*

David didn't know the answer and finding no reference to the words in Bobby's and my book *Scoring for Show. Doubles for Dough* forwarded the query on to me. I couldn't help either but wrote to Kevin as follows:

David is right that neither 'dibs' nor 'nibs' appears in my book (with Bobby George)...as a term for Double One. Indeed, I have been researching darts for over 30 years and collecting terminology for all those years and have never come across them. However, I could never collect all of the terms used in darts. This is because many words and phrases, such as 'Lord Sherborne' for the number 33 or 'Granny', meaning a whitewash are only found in certain areas; Lord Sherborne in 1930s Gloucestershire and 'Granny' in one part of Scotland. So I think that 'dibs or nibs' is a localised expression. I cannot see any link with these words that would relate to double one, unlike, say, 'madhouse'.

I then asked Kevin for more information about *where* exactly he had heard the word(s). His reply was enlightening. He told me

I played in a Fun League for 12 years at a pub called The Pigs Ear Tavern! It was owned and run by a fellow named John Punter! That's where I heard the term! Not sure whether it's 'Dibs', 'Nibs', or both! The pub is in Peterborough, Ontario, Canada! It might have been a term one of my fellow Darters made up! LOL I don't really know! Thus the question!

So it's *Canadian* darts terminology. No wonder David King and I had never heard of it. So I now turn Kevin's question over to my Canadian subscribers some of whom I know are based in Ontario. Please contact me at my usual address patrick.chaplin@btinternet.com.

COLLECTING DARTBOARDS AND MORE FEEDBACK

Mark Brindza, one of my many subscribers in the USA writes

Still collecting darts boards but slowing down finding them. It is hard to find new (vintage) ones when you have most of them.



I enjoyed reading issue #90 of DDN. The story of the French Darts reminds me of seeing vintage wood darts for sale on eBay, many made by an American company APEX. They still make the wood darts with the lead tips and the turkey feathers. Mostly with three feathers. I know the owner well and we have discussed this many times. You cannot tell the difference between a new dart and one that was made 50 years ago. They are made the exact same way. Apex doesn't have a website. The standard now is three feathers. They

will make a four feather dart by request.

One thing that people don't know is that are left handed and right handed darts. Depending on the side of the feather used. It will have a left twist or a right twist, causing the rotation of the dart in flight to go clockwise or counter clockwise. I learned a lot about how the darts are made from them.

There are many English boards that I would love to collect but the cost of having them shipped is very expensive. One board I would like to own is an old wooden one that they used to soak in the water.

I also like the story [in the September issue] about the cribbage board. I grew up playing cribbage with my brother. I never put the connection together between the 301 point value. Fascinating.

Last but not least - "Freddy's flights". As you are aware my collection of dart boards is well over 200. I wish there was a Dart Museum. All of the history needs to be displayed. Freddy's flights and my dartboards would make a good start for one.

You are so right Mark. And if we added your dartboards to Freddy's flights, my darts history archive and Patrick Dee's massive collection of darts memorabilia, I reckon it wouldn't all fit into the Alexandra Palace! It's such a shame that no one is interested in setting up and/or funding a national darts museum. That's why I'm beginning to break up my collection of darts memorabilia that I have accumulated over the past 30 years. Sad times...

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).