

DR. DARTS' NEWSLETTER

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WINMAU WORLD MASTERS RETURNING TO BRIDLINGTON

After an eight year absence, the WINMAU World Masters (the world's oldest major darts tournament) will return to Bridlington, from Monday 25th September to Thursday 28th September, with some of the world's top darts players competing at the Bridlington Spa.



The packed programme includes:

- Monday 25th September - WINMAU World Masters Play-offs
- Tuesday 26th and Wednesday 27th September - WINMAU World Masters (stage matches)
- Thursday 28th September – Lakeside World Championships Play-offs

The WINMAU World Masters is a unique tournament as it provides a global platform for the best men, women, boys, girls and disability players to showcase their skills on one of the biggest stages of all.

Ian Flack, WINMAU's Sales and Marketing Director, said:

"We couldn't be happier with our return to Bridlington! The Spa is a truly iconic venue and the atmosphere is always very special. This year is the 44th staging of the oldest major darts tournament on the planet, and we've no doubt it will provide some scintillating darts from the best in the BDO, WDF and WDDA/BDDA system."

The tournament follows on from the BDO WINMAU British Classic and BDO British Open, supported by EY Events, which takes place from Friday 22nd to Sunday 24th September at the Bridlington Spa.

Sue Williams, Chair of the British Darts Organisation, said:

“The Board are pleased to be returning to the Bridlington Spa for the 44th Winmau World Masters. We appreciate the support that we receive from EY Events along with the staff of the Spa and are hoping for a record entry from around the globe, as many players will already be attending the WINMAU British Classic and British Open.”

Ticket information will be available on the Bridlington Spa website www.bridspa.com.

RICK NEY – 1961-2017

It was with sadness that I recently learned of the death of the legendary US darter Rick Ney who was tragically killed on 9th April in a road accident on Interstate 81 in Lebanon County, Pennsylvania. Another great loss to the world of darts.



Considered by many as one of the all-time greats of American darts, Ney (pictured, left) is probably best known in the UK for his appearances in the Embassy World Championships during the 1980s and for making the final of the *News of the World* in 1986.

He played in the Embassy in 1984, 1987, 1988 and 1989, his best performances being in 1988 where he beat Sweden's Magnus Caris 3-1 in the first round, Wales' Chris Johns in the second round (again 3-1) and England's Denis Hickling

in the quarter-final (4-1). In the semi-final Ney came up against an on-form Bob Anderson and was beaten 5-0 by the Englishman who would become the eventual champion. At the time, Ney was only the third player from outside the UK to have made it to an Embassy semi-final.

In 1980 Ney made his first appearance in the *News of the World* finals aged only nineteen, married and a 'fueller for an oil distributor by trade.' At that time, Ney, from Pine Grove, Pennsylvania, had been playing 'English darts' for less than two years yet he had defeated a field of the strongest players in America in the US Open which qualified him to represent his country at the *News of the World* at Wembley Arena. On that occasion Ney made it through to the quarter-final where he was beaten 2-0 by England's Dave Whitcombe.

In two subsequent appearances in 1982 and 1984 Ney failed to make it through the first round but was back at the Wembley Arena in 1986, having won the US Open for the fourth time. On this occasion Ney beat England's Mike Gregory 2-1 in the first round, Mark Pope, the Lancashire and Cheshire Divisional champion, 2-1 in the quarter-final and then Sweden's Lars-Erik Karlsson by a similar score in the semi-finals. During his first game against Karlsson, Ney hit the tournament's best finish: 12 darts (140, 137, 180, 44 game shot). That victory set up a dream final against England's Bobby George who had already won the title back in 1979.

George took the first game, which had been very close, but, according to *Darts World* Ney's accuracy 'faltered' in the second game 'allowing George to make up ground'. Ney then missed double 16 to level the match and with 20 left, George struck the winning double 10 with his first dart to take the title.

Back in 1985, although the England team was victorious overall in World Cup V, held in Brisbane, Australia, Ney was a member of the American team that imposed the heaviest-ever defeat on England's four-man squad (John Lowe, Dave Lee, Eric Bristow and Cliff Lazarenko) in the semi-finals – a **9-0** whitewash! The American team (also comprising Tony Payne, John Kramer and Dan Valetto) then met Australia in the team final and in front of a partisan crowd eventually won gold and the team title 8-6.

Winner of numerous titles in his home country, Rick Ney became a legend on the circuit until deciding to retire from the sport. He will be greatly missed by darts' global community.

(Image of Rick Ney © Steve Daszko. Used with permission.)

WHATEVER HAPPENED TO THE NEWS OF THE WORLD TROPHY?

Craig McVay e-mailed me recently enquiring about the whereabouts of the famous *News of the World* trophy, last competed for in 1997. Craig wrote:

Prior to competitive darts what was the norm? Was it just friendlies in pubs and when and how did darts become/get its current structure? When did the first league come about? I think it's probably before the News of The World in '27 and on that subject whatever happened to that trophy as it's a looker and could be used in today's game?

I replied:

That's an interesting point you make about darts pre-News of the World.

The first proper leagues were started by the brewers some pre-the Great War but most started after 1918. There were still many friendly matches as indeed there are today.



*Everything you need to know about the history of darts up until the Second World War (including the history of the News of the World) can be found in my book *Darts in England 1900-39 - A social history* published by Manchester University Press in 2009 and paperback in 2012.*

As regards the News of the World trophy, there is no mystery as to where it is or indeed the women's trophy. They are both secured away in the archive of News International. I attach a photo [see left] taken a few years ago of me in that archive actually holding the NoW trophy. That was a very special moment.

However, I cannot ever see those trophies coming out of retirement as the News of the World newspaper, as you probably know, does not exist anymore. Plus, of course, it is very comforting to know that both trophies are safe and secure even though they are not on public display. (Photo: © Chippix. Used with permission.)

Talking of ‘safe and secure’ here’s a heart-warming piece of news about some *very* important *News of the World* darts championship medals.

TOMMY GIBBONS’ MEDALS SAVED

DDN subscriber Chris Lovell wrote to me recently with the news that he had saved *News of the World* double winner Tommy Gibbons’ medals from being melted down. Chris told me:

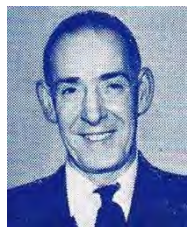
Hi Patrick. I recently purchased, with luck, three gold News of the World medals that were destined for the melting pot. I had to save them.

The medals (pictured right) were Tommy Gibbons’ 1952 *News of the World* winner’s medal, his 1958 winner’s medal and his 1952 Divisional winner’s medal. Chris added:

Sadly the whereabouts of the trophies is unknown but they may have been melted down. I thought you would like to hear about this. It’s not often anyone gets to handle a NOTW winner’s medal let alone two from probably one of the best players of the 1950s. It’s sad that if I hadn’t have bought these they would have been melted down for their gold content.



Tommy Gibbons, then 44, pictured below left, lived in the south Yorkshire village of Denaby, was married with one daughter. He worked as a collier at the nearby Cadeby mine.



When he entered the *News of the World* tournament in the 1951/52 season he played out of the Ivanhoe Workingman’s Club in nearby Conisbrough.

Having won the Doncaster Area *News of the World* title (beating J. Niblett of the *Market Tavern*, Doncaster in the Area final) Gibbons then progressed to the Divisional finals at the Corn Exchange, Doncaster on 26th March 1952 and was victorious there too. Exactly one month later, as Yorkshire Divisional Champion, he travelled to the Grand Final at the Empress Hall, Earl’s Court, London on 26th April 1952.

There, in the final two, Tommy met the North of England Divisional champion Jack Wallace, who played out of the British Legion club, Low Seaton, Workington, Cumberland, and beat him 2-0 to become *News of the World* individual darts champion for 1952.

In 1958 Gibbons returned to Earl’s Court having once again won the Yorkshire Divisional title. As before he played out of the Ivanhoe Workingman’s Club. On Saturday 26th April 1958 players were at the hockey (as it was called then) at 7.30 p.m. On this occasion Tommy defeated the Eastern Counties Divisional Champion Eric Moss (representing the *Railway Tavern*, Harleston, Norfolk) 2-0 in the Final thus becoming the first darts player to win the *News of the World* individual title for a second time.

Chris Lovell paid £850 for the three medals but thinks his investment was worth it. He said, “To me and darts history they must be priceless.” I agree and it’s thanks to Chris that I am able to tell *DDN* readers of how these priceless items were saved from the melting pot.

Cheers Chris. You are a star.

I DIDN’T FOOL ANYONE DID I?

Absolutely no one was fooled by my April Fool article in last month’s issue. I had expected as much. However, whatever you thought of it, I cannot claim responsibility for coming up with the ingenious idea of ‘Dartobike’ (pictured, right).

The deadline for the April issue of *DDN* was fast approaching and I had no April Fool piece to publish or rather, more accurately, I wasn’t happy with the item I had drafted (see later in this issue).

Then I found ‘Dartobike’ in a back issue of *Darts World* dated November **1993**: that’s nearly *twenty-five* years ago!



I then sought permission from Harrows Sales and Marketing Director, Robert Pringle to re-write and re-publish it. Robert replied, “All great stuff. Go ahead,” adding

“...we had loads of fun publicity from that stunt...I borrowed the bike from a local shop. The only cost was sacrificing two boards to drill out the bullseyes to fit the bolt. These were the days before Photoshop.”

Although published in November, the original article confirmed that ‘Dartobike’ would be launched on April 1st 1994.

Thanks Robert.

MORE TACTICS. SORRY I MEAN ‘CRICKET’ OR DO I?

For the last few issues I have been highlighting the US darts game of ‘Cricket’ which is similar to the UK game of ‘Tactics’ (sometimes, for whatever reason, called ‘Mickey Mouse’) and how Cricket *might* be holding back the further development of 501 in the States. Recently subscriber Bill Bell contacted me about those issues and the changes in the culture of the English public house. He wrote:

My brother Dan, who you met at my 40th birthday, can't stand 501. He loves Tactics. Whenever he's in the country (He spends half his life in Goa) and we meet up, he'll only wants to play Tactics. I like the game; a lot different to 501. (The photo, below left, shows Bill and me at his 40th birthday celebrations back in 2014. © Moppix International. Used with permission.)



We used to play 20, 19, 18, 17, 16, doubles and trebles and bullseye. Then I heard that doubles and trebles were a Northern rule and the Southern rule didn't have that separate category, although you could still hit a double or treble from any of your open numbers and get that score. When I told him this, we changed and the games were a lot better. A fluky treble 12 didn't count anymore.

It does sound like Cricket may be holding darts back in America though. Like the man said about Leighton Rees considering moving there to play just in their tournaments and 1,700 dwindling down to just 43. Not sure what the numbers are here [in the UK] though. Might be almost as bad? I think it's mainly down to people not going to the pub anymore, or not like they used to anyway.

I replied

As regards Tactics, when I've played it in the past where I live in the middle of Essex, we always played down to 12 plus double, trebles and bullseye (the 25 counting as one 'hit' and the bull as two). Some nights that length of game could take an eternity to finish!

It would be an interesting experiment for teams of the top eight PDC players to play the top eight USA players at one game of Cricket. The skills needed are the same but the, for want of a better word, 'tactics' are totally different. You are dependent on your team mates to play well too. One slip and that's the game potentially lost.

I take your point about the change in the culture of the British pub and its contribution to less darts being played. In the space that a darts oche (or court) takes up you can place at least a couple of tables for four; that is more space for serving food.

I also liked Bill's phrase about folks not going to the pub 'or not like they used to anyway'. He's absolutely right. In the main these days pub-going seems to be more of a family affair but, thankfully, there are still pubs around with dartboards. However, as both Bill and I know, nowhere near the number of, say, 20 years ago and only a fraction of the pubs of 50 years ago when I first started playing.

SOUTH AFRICA DISABILITY DARTS COMPETITION

In last month's issue Warren Ackary, Social Media Manager for the World Disability Darts Association (WDDA) announced that Stephen Maphike (pictured) had been appointed WDDA South Africa Co-ordinator. Stephen has now contacted Warren with some great news. He wrote:

I am pleased to announce that the South African Corporate Darts Committee as approved our request to include a Disable Section at this year's competition. The completion will be held from the 11th – 16th September 2017, at Dinwiddie Sports Complex in Germiston, Gauteng, South Africa.

The SA Corporates is an annual national event where players from the same corporate companies form a team and compete against each other. At this event they also select a National Corporate Team. For the first time in history a disabled section will be included in this event.

Stephen has sent a communication to all provinces in South Africa to invite disabled players to come and participate in this 'historical event'. Stephen added:

I am hoping that this event will make people of South Africa aware that we do cater for people with disabilities to play darts and encourage corporates to become more involved.



I trust the event will be a success for Stephen and for WDDA members and supporters in South Africa.

(The image shows members of the Gauteng team in action. © WDDA. Used with permission.)

‘A ROYAL PLAYER WITH THREE DARTS’

Now *that's* an intriguing title.

Readers who have purchased my books in the past will remember that I sometimes refer to members of the UK Royal family playing the occasional game of darts; the most famous event being HM Queen Elizabeth the Queen Mother throwing darts at a community centre at Slough in 1937 and, of course, Prince Harry's occasional visits to the PDC World Championships.

But the 'Royal player' who is subject of this article comes from Norway... a long, long time ago. Joseph Strutt, author of *The Sports and Pastimes of the People of England* and originally published in 1801 wrote

The sleight of casting up a certain number of sharp instruments into the air, and catching them alternately in their fall, although part of the gleeman's profession, was not entirely confined to this practice. It is said of Olaf Fryggesson, one of the ancient kings of Norway, that he could play with three darts at once, tossing them in the air, and always kept two up while the third was down in his hand. Our Saxon jocular, however, has the advantage of the monarch by adding the three balls, which of course must have made the trick more difficult to be performed.

What we have here is *not* an early game of darts but, I would suggest a popular demonstration of strength and dexterity by the Norwegian king; an ability to juggle three darts (most probably long, hand-held missile weapons used in hunting). This popularity is borne out by the then 'jocular' (a professional jester or minstrel) juggling three darts *and* three balls at one and the same time.

But it is this type of hunting dart (or ‘darte’) being given to King Henry VIII by Anne Boleyn as a New Year’s present in 1532 that was misinterpreted by early writers of darts history and taken to mean that King Hal had actually been given a set of darts as we know them today for use down at his local inn.

Such tosh was debunked in an early chapter of my book *Darts in England 1900-39 – A social history*. However, I have still to find any link between the hunting dart and the modern game.

PUERTO-RICAN DARTS STAR ARRIVES IN THE UK

As many of you may recall, a few months ago, in the global darts press, the Puerto Rican darts champion Faril Lopo, was due to travel to the UK at the end of last year to play in the initial stages of the UK Open. However, lengthy delays in obtaining a visa plus contracting something extremely nasty which his doctor could not identify, meant that Faril did not arrive at Heathrow airport until Monday 6th March, the day after the tournament had ended and way, way after the qualifying rounds had been completed. In addition, his luggage, which included his darts, did not turn up until mid-March.

Undeterred by these delays and disappointments, Faril’s manager, Loofa Lirp, who is still waiting for his luggage, immediately phoned round the agents of various well-known darts players in a bid to set up a number of challenge matches, thus ensuring that Faril’s trip to the UK had not been completely in vain.

When interviewed at his hotel in London yesterday Faril said

“It is a pleasure to come to this Britain and I am much looking very forward to playing your top darters, especially your Dave Chirizo, Phil T. Power and the Number One man, Mickey van Gherkin.”

That’s it. That’s the piece I had drafted as the actual *DDN* April Fool for this year but it resembled too closely a piece of foolishness I wrote for the PDC website back in 2008.

NEXT MONTH: THE MISSING LINK? - A discovery that will amaze *DDN* readers and which might possibly mean a rewrite of the origins of our sport!

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