

DR. DARTS' NEWSLETTER

Issue 90

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NEWS OF THE WORLD THE AMERICAN CHAMPIONS

Whenever I write about the *News of the World* I always receive positive feedback despite the fact that the tournament was 'suspended' in 1990 and then only competed for one further occasion in 1997. It seems that darts people are still fascinated by that tournament.

Up until now I have tended to concentrate on British competitors but then I received an e-mail from Mark Veatch of San Diego, California who wrote:

Hello Patrick, I've been enjoying your newsletter for quite some time now. I also like watching the old News of the World footage from the 70's and 80's. One thing made me curious, and I was hoping that you might be able to shed some light.



I've seen or read about a few Americans who had the chance to compete in the old News of the World tournaments. Al Lippman, [pictured] Len Heard and Rick Ney come to mind. How did they qualify to play? And what was their starting point in the brackets? I know that the UK competitors had to fight their way through starting at the local level. I suppose this same question applies to other foreign competitors such as Stefan Lord.

Thank you for any insight that you can provide!

Mark's question made me realise that I have paid very little attention to international players participating in the *News of the World* so what better place to start than players from 'across the pond.' I undertook some research and passed my findings on to Mark and now publish them here with some amendments to my original response.

1973 was the first year that the *News of the World* went 'International' with players from both the USA (Al Lippman) and Sweden (Orvar Svensson) competing at the Alexandra Palace on Saturday 28th April that year.

Whilst most players were shown as playing out of a particular pub or club, Al was shown as representing the 'United States Darting Association, New York' so I assume that he was granted a place in the *NoW* as the USDA national or open champion. Al was described in the programme as 'a 38 year old pub owner who has played darts for nearly 20 years. He is up against fearsome opposition but in true American style he is not unduly daunted.'

Sadly Al did not make it past the first round in 1973. He was beaten 2-0 by the Wales champion Tony Ridler. (As for Svensson he went one better than Al but only because he was awarded a 'bye' in the first round.)

But Al was back in 1974, this time just registered as being from 'Philadelphia PA'. However, the programme states that he was the 'U.S. Open Darts Champion' (which I assume was run by the USDA) and was no stranger to the Alexandra Palace although in the previous year 'he had no idea of the immensity of the hall, or the size of the crowd!' (The 'crowd' at Alexandra Palace were said to have been in excess of 12,000 fans.) The programme continued, 'This year he has brought a trainer with him - and no doubt is better prepared for the occasion.'

That preparation seems to have worked as Al made darts history in front of a partisan crowd by beating one of the match favourites, Wales' Leighton Rees, 2-0 in the first round. *Darts World* (June 1974) reported that

Strongly fancied Welshman Leighton Rees came up against U.S.A. champion Al Lippman in the preliminary round and few gave anything for Al's chances of survival. The result stunned the large body of Welsh supporters. Al took the first two games before Leighton had a chance to get into his stride. It was yet another reminder of the strength of U.S. darts today.

However, Al lost his second round match against the Lancashire and Cheshire Divisional Champion Joe Givnan by the same scoreline, *Darts World* (June 1973) reporting that Al 'seemed to lose concentration'.

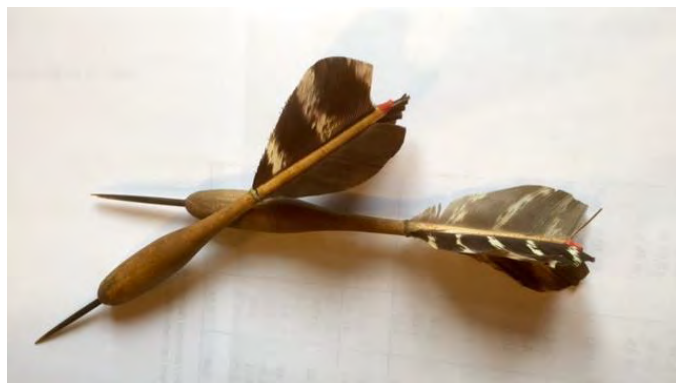
Whatever went wrong in that second round in 1974, Al must have felt a degree of 'revenge' in beating Rees so convincingly in the preliminary round, as he had been dumped out of the tournament the previous year by another Welshman, 19-year-old Tony Ridler.

For the next four years US representatives were Conrad Daniels, Tony Money, Rick Wobensmith and John Zimnawoda, all shown as representing the USDA. (More in #91.)

‘FRENCH DARTS’

Last month I received an interesting e-mail via my website www.patrickchaplin.com from Magnar Hjøllo from Stavanger, Norway simply asking

Sir, Can you from these photos give an indication on how old these two arrows are? Thanks.



Whenever I see what became known in the UK as 'French darts' it reminds me of the origins of our sport, linking back to Victorian times and English fairgrounds importing these wooden darts in great numbers. (See my book *Darts in England 1900-39 – A social history* for the full story.)

I replied to Magnar as follows:

The origins of these darts is France and they have been made there for over a century and were first imported into the UK by showmen for use in fairgrounds. The French game was called flechettes and these darts were thrown at a small version of an archery target.

The example you have sent me are merely turned from wood, a pin/point inserted into one end and the leading feathers of a turkey's wing stuck to the stem at the other end. Later, as players became more discerning, lead weights were added, either around the centre of the body of the dart or a hole was made and lead poured inside the barrel.

The amount of lead used determined the weight which was initially in three categories, Light, Medium or Heavy. It was only much later that specific weights in grams were introduced. I continued

Your darts show only three feathers which indicates that they are an early example as those made later featured four feathers, as indeed do the majority of modern non-feather flights today.

Known over here in the UK, not surprisingly, as 'French darts', these were imported into this country in vast numbers by the turn of the last century and sold either individually or as a set of three. (As you are aware modern darts is always played with three darts.)

Having said all that, it is very difficult indeed to assess the actual age of the examples you have. As I would expect, there is no manufacturer's name or mark on the darts so I have to make an educated guess. Given that turkey feathers slowly disintegrate over any number of decades (and the ones you have seem to be in good condition) I would say that these are possibly 1930s/1940s. However, I have to add the rider that such darts were used in UK fairgrounds up until the 1960s, when they were replaced by more durable and longer-lasting brass darts with plastic integral stems and flights were introduced.

Magnar had not asked me about the value of his darts but I added

In this respect I would say that, although the condition appears good, such darts are still fairly common and thus of little monetary value. The fact that you have only two darts where three would be expected, sadly, devalues them significantly.

WHY DOES THE SCORE OF 501 DECREASE TO ZERO?

That was the question raised with me a few months ago by Алексей Карнаухов (aka Aleksey), one of DDN's Russian subscribers. Aleksey said

Hi Patrick! I have a question. Usually, almost in all games the score begins from zero. But in darts game (501 etc.) the score decreases to zero. I mean...a player who gathers the most quantity of points is a winner but in the game of darts a player who reaches zero the first is a winner. Why?

Actually the answer lies not in 501 but in the original, earlier game of 301. I replied to Aleksey (pictured on the next page) as follows:



In most major darts competitions players play straight in-double out 501. One of the most popular questions received via www.patrickchaplin.com is “Why is 501 the standard game of darts?” Some even ask “Why not 300 or 500?”

The very first games of darts consisted of throwing three darts at either a miniature concentric archery target or a random number board, the highest score with those three darts winning the game. But as skills developed things became a little more sophisticated.

The original '01' game of darts was 301 and was scored on a cribbage board. Cribbage (or more commonly 'crib') is an old English pub card game where scores derived from the value of cards were recorded by pegging holes on a wooden 'crib board.' The cribbage board was (and is) also 'borrowed' for scoring the popular pub game of dominoes. (Illustration of a cribbage board, right, by Chris Barrell. Used with permission.)

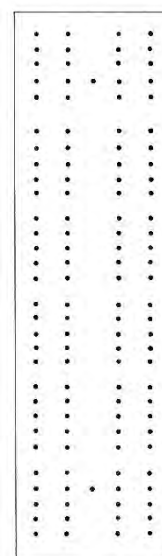
Back then the landlord of your average hostelry would not have had a blackboard and chalk handy; a slate perhaps for writing up credit, but not for use as a scoreboard. The blackboard and chalk would appear later but the crib board came first.

Each side of the crib board has two rows of thirty and one extra hole at each end. To win the game players have to achieve a given number of circuits of the board (60 holes) plus the one extra hole representing 'home', making 61. Any game played on the crib board has to be a multiple of 60 - plus 1. For example 'twice round' would be 120 (plus 1), 'three times round' 180 (plus 1).

In the early days of modern darts the score, to enable scores to be fairly recorded, was defined as 'five times round' the crib board, that is a total of 300 (60 x 5) plus 1 - 301. At every stage of the game the players could see where they were in terms of score by looking at the crib board. Weight is applied for this theory when the Norfolk Board (an early form of miniature archery target) was played '31-up' and the East End 'Fives' board played '61-up', although the starting score in the latter would have been 305. The connection with dominoes is also evidenced by the fact that during the early twentieth century 'DOMINO!' was often shouted at the completion of a darts game rather than the 'GAME SHOT!' we tend to hear today.

When chalking was introduced as darts became increasingly popular, the versions of the game were extended to anything -01, (501, 601, 701, 1001, 1,000,001 etc).

Also, if the -01 wasn't there it would make darts terribly boring as good players would just keep hitting 20s. With the -01 it means that players have to move away from the 20 bed – at least for a short while – in order to win the game.



Cribbage boards were used for many years but, when the game left that scoring mechanism behind, it transferred to the chalk board and manual subtraction, later, in some cases, to be superseded by a mechanical and, even later still, an electronic scorer.

FREDDY FEEDBACK

In last month's *DDN* the main story featured Belgium's Freddy Olievier (pictured) who, after decades of collecting, is selling his world record-breaking darts flights collection. A good



number of readers contacted me wishing Freddy well, some regretting that there is no darts museum that could have purchased the collection intact and preserved it for posterity. However, I do understand that there have been a number of enquiries or there are some who indicated that they may well be in touch with Freddy.

On a more personal note, Dr. Eddie Norman wrote

As always I loved this month's edition of DDN...Loved your article on Freddy and his darts flights. For many years he used to drop us a line and we used to send him new odd flights that we had made, so this was a voice (article) from the past for me. We [at the House of Darts] used to have a darts flight box marked 'Freddy'. I hope someone somewhere buys his collection. Like you, I wish there was a darts museum out there....

Don't forget that if you are interest in purchasing Freddy's collection (or part of it) please contact him via e-mail at brucescarlet@gmail.com.

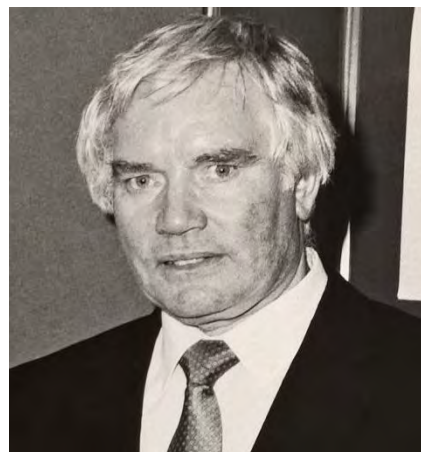
RETRIEVER SPORTS

Referring to last month's issue Eddie Norman also wrote:

Goodwards was another blast from the past for me. Robert Pringle has filled you in so I have nothing extra to add.

*However, back in the 1970's and 80's the main firm making darts flights and darts accessories for practically every other company in the industry in the UK was **Retriever Sports** of Petersfield Avenue, Slough and their legendary Managing Director the late, great Tom Pope.*

Tom [pictured right] was the darting genius of the sport. If he did not know it, no one did. Tom could have answered many, if not all, your questions on any old darts companies or old darts players, even the News of the World.



He was the darts industry 'memory man'. The firm is now run by his daughter and son-in-law, Ian. Tom knew more about darts than all of the

companies in darts, including myself, added together. What an interview and life story that would have been for you.

I have some news for Eddie...

In June 2004 I *did* interview Tom Pope. I visited him at his factory in Slough where we discussed at length the setting up of the Elkadart company in 1968 (with business partner Ben Drake) and, after parting company in 1978, the establishment of Retriever Sports which is still very much in business today. Tom died in 2006, aged 77.

My interview with Tom Pope more than thirteen years ago has never been published. Prompted by Eddie Norman's e-mail I am proposing to publish extracts in a future *DDN* so that all readers will fully appreciate the role that Tom, described as 'a great innovator' and 'a great friend to darts', played in establishing darts as a worldwide sport from the late 1960s through to the 21st century.

FLIGHT OF FLIGHTS



In the last issue, when referring to Freddy Olievier, I mentioned that Freddy first made contact with me back in 1989 when he saw my specially prepared 'Flight of Flights' and accompanying article in *Darts Player 89* magazine, the then sister publication of *Darts World*.

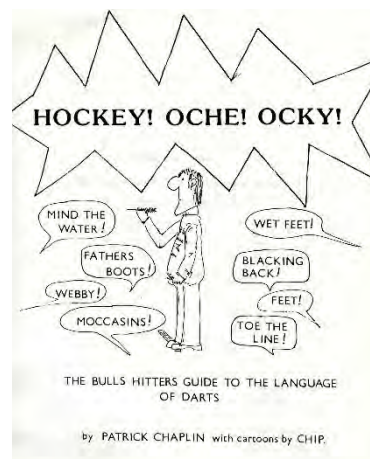
This pastiche of brewery-related flights was especially prepared for me by my drinking and darts playing friend Ian Hughes in 1988 especially for the *Darts Player 89* piece. One reader has now asked "What exactly did the 'Flight of Flights' look like?" So here it is.

As you can see it features twenty-one flights within the shape of a flight. (Photo © Ian Hughes/PC Archive)

DARTS TERMINOLOGY

As you all probably know, amongst other things, I collect words and phrases used in the game of darts. Many years ago, circa 1986, I brought them all together in a draft of a book tentatively titled *Hockey! Oche! Ocky! – The Bulls Hitters Guide to the Language of Darts* (see cover).

Despite spending a seemingly enormous amount of money on postage (there was no e-mail back then) the book was turned down by more publishers than I could count on the fingers of several hands so it was filed away, eventually emerging in 2011, following much re-writing and with the assistance of Bobby George, as *Scoring for Show, Doubles for Dough – Bobby George's Darts Lingo*.



One of the first phrases I ever collected was ‘Bed and Breakfast’ meaning the score of 26. This was derived from the cost of bed and breakfast at pubs and guest houses at the turn of the twentieth century; it being two shillings and sixpence (2s 6d), thus two (2) and six (6): 26.

For years my only source of this cost of bed and breakfast was the *Cyclists’ Touring Club British Handbook and Guide* for 1913. I had nothing else; not even any reference to a pub charging that sum. But now all of that has changed.

Recently, I purchased this photograph of the *East Suffolk Tavern*, Great Yarmouth. (Despite being in Great Yarmouth which is in the county of *Norfolk* this pub is named after the neighbouring county of Suffolk!) The photograph is not dated but the name of the licensee is shown above the pub door as Louisa Gray who is known to have been at the pub from 1900 to September 1910. More importantly is the board standing on the right-hand side of the premises advertising ‘BED and BREAKFAST 2s/6d.’



The *East Suffolk Tavern* clearly doubled up as a confectionery shop and, it seems from the goods shown in the window, a grocer’s shop too. (Licensees back then seemed to have to multi-task to make a living.)

It is not known if darts was actually played there but I am happy enough that I have at last traced a pub-related reference to ‘Bed and Breakfast’ at ‘two and six’.

Sadly the *East Suffolk Tavern* is currently closed, boarded up and on the market. It is unlikely to return to life as a pub.

DR. DARTS AND THE MEDIA

It’s been an interesting few weeks as regards being contacted by the media. In mid-August I was interviewed by Georgey Spanswick on the BBC Local Radio programme *Georgey Tonight* about pub games in general but specifically darts. Richard Murie, the producer, told me that Georgey’s show is broadcast every weeknight (7-10p.m.) on all 40 BBC Local Radio stations in England and the Channel Islands to an estimated 1.1 million listeners! No pressure then!

Earlier I had been contacted by Dave Gilyeat, a journalist writing for BBC Online, and interviewed at length about pub games. The result I thought was a wide-ranging piece which will be enjoyed by anyone interested in these, at times, obscure but fascinating pub activities. Dave article can be found at

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-40422372#>

If you want to learn more about pub games from the popular to the obscure then look no further than Arthur R. Taylor's *Played at the Pub – The pub games of Britain* published by English Heritage in 2009. You will also find some of my articles about pub games, including 'Four Corners' and 'Bumblepuppy' on my website www.patrickchaplin.com and on the Pub History Society's website www.pubhistorysociety.co.uk.

ANOTHER BOOK FOR DR. DARTS? – AN IDEA

I am grateful to Steve Doyle, another of my many subscribers from the USA for his 'idea'. He wrote a while back

Patrick, I've had an idea...Has anyone written an in-depth book about the great split in darts between the BDO and the PDC? I'm sure it'll be fascinating to get all the details of the build-up, the player's personal views and sacrifice, the court battles, etc. all in one book! And being the great author and darts historian that you are, I thought you could do a great job on such a book!

There have been no books entirely devoted to 'the split' although the late, great Sid Waddell discussed it at length in his book *Bellies and Bullseyes* (2007). John Lowe was the first professional to write about it in his autobiography *Old Stoneface* (2005) whilst both Bobby George (2006) and Eric Bristow (2008) mention it in their books.

A few years ago I did suggest to Olly Croft of the British Darts Organisation (BDO) that he write his autobiography (I offered to help) and in it publish his view of the split but, sadly, no publisher was interested ('Too niche') and Olly was not prepared to self-publish. An opportunity lost in my view.

REMINDER

Over recent months a number of *DDN*'s have been returned as 'undeliverable'. I know that this might well be due to changes in settings on individual's computers but, please, if you do change your e-mail address, and you still want to receive *DDN*, please notify me of the by writing to me at patrick.chaplin@btinternet.com.

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