

DR. DARTS' NEWSLETTER

Issue 93

December 2017



GOODBYE FREDDIE

It's that time of year when, as the old year ends and the new one approaches our thoughts are turned to the festive season and, of course, to the two world darts championships.

Indeed I was going to write about them but then my thoughts turned to the loss of the world-renowned MC and Referee, Freddie Williams who died suddenly last month



Freddie was 81 and spent over 35 years working as an MC/Referee for no less than three darts organisations, initially the National Darts Association of Great Britain (NDAGB), then the British Darts Organisation (BDO) and finally for the Professional Darts Corporation (from its very start when it was called the World Darts Council (WDC)) right up to the time he retired from the sport in 2006.

Throughout a good deal of this time Freddie was involved with Essex County darts. Indeed at the recent home game between Essex and County Durham a one minute silence was observed in

tribute to Freddie. He would have appreciated that.

One of Freddie's many claims to fame was that he called the first-ever televised nine-dart finish by John Lowe in the MFI World Matchplay Championship at Slough, Buckinghamshire on 13th October 1984. John Lowe later recalled that when the ninth dart went in "I heard caller Freddie Williams announce, as if from the next room, 'Game!', then 'Ladies and gentlemen, history has been made here in Slough today.'" It certainly had.

After so many years devoted service to darts Freddie was inducted into the PDC Hall of Fame upon his retirement. When I visited Freddie and his wife Pat (who had worked for many years as a BDO and PDC statistician) the Hall of Fame award sat proud on a sideboard for all visitors to see.

On hearing of Freddie's death Barry Hearn, the PDC Chairman said, "Freddie made an invaluable contribution to both the sport of darts and the PDC and was a popular and respected figure in the sport. He remained a keen follower of the sport after his retirement and has been a welcome visitor to PDC events ever since with his wife Pat."



Indeed, Freddie and his wife Pat were good friends of my wife Maureen and me and we will miss our occasional meals out at our local with them to discuss all things darts and to catch up. (The photo on Page 1 shows Freddie and Pat in 2004 on one of the occasions they visited us.)

The main photo, at the top of Page 1 is from my archive and shows Freddie in action at an early Embassy World Championships. I think this is the way he would have wished to be remembered.

RIP Freddie. Sincere condolences to Pat.

‘THE POWER’ RETIRES

As the New Year approaches many in darts will be looking back at the amazing career of Phil ‘The Power’ Taylor who officially leaves competition darts with the PDC World Championship.

I also recall some time ago that ‘The Power’ said that he and his manager, Barry Hearn, would retire at one and the same time. No sign of Barry giving up just yet, not while there remains so many other corners of the world to be conquered in his quest for PDC darts’ total global domination.

Back in 1988 *Darts World* reported on a ‘rank outsider’ known as ‘The Crafty Potter’, a Staffordshire County ‘A’ player who, following his unexpected victory in the Canadian Open, was ‘hoping to collect more world ranking points’ so he could compete in the forthcoming WINMAU World Masters. He told *Darts World* at the time, “Darts is a great game. It’s got to be better than working.”



That surely was the beginning of The Power’s career in darts, a mere *thirty years* ago...and what a career! (Photo: PCDW Archive. Used with permission.)

Like me, and if you’re old enough, you will doubtless remember those days during the 1990s and the Noughties when Taylor was winning *everything*.

Back then some in darts felt diminished returns were setting in and that soon fans would become fed up with the same old same old and turn away in their droves from darts for that very reason. Taylor was *everywhere* or as the late lamented sports journalist Mel Webb once wrote, Taylor was ‘at the epicentre of darts.’

Well, fans *didn’t* turn away and now we have MVG doing the same thing, winning everything (perhaps, if it’s possible, *more* of everything than Taylor did (OK. Well except 16 world championships.) and in a shorter time. So again the question is being asked, “Will darts become boring thanks to MVG’s frightening consistency?”

I very much doubt it.

Fans didn't turn away from darts because of Taylor's consistency (in fact quite the opposite) and I don't see them turning away from MVG. Plus there are so many new challengers coming forward and many already in the mix.

The future for darts, in my view, is very bright indeed so, although it's still winter, I suggest you reach for those shades!

It doesn't take a clairvoyant to predict an MVG win in the PDC World Championships but let's hope that one or two players make him work even harder for that title and not present him with, what some might term, another stroll in the park. Perhaps it'll be Taylor.

One last great Hurrah!

Thanks Phil for all you have brought to darts in three decades of devotion to the sport. (Image of MVG © Tip Top Pics. Used with permission.)



MISSING DOUBLE TOPS – A NEW PHENOMENA?

Subscriber Dave Render recently wrote to me saying

As a dart player and fan, I watch as much darts as time allows me. I have noticed how often the top players miss double tops. Do you have a statistic that shows the phenomena? This will help me decide if I am right or wrong. I am watching the Grand Slam of Darts at the moment. I did see Simon Whitlock and Michael v Gerwen check out D20, D20. Fantastic. Thanks for the great website and your dedication to darts. Much appreciated.

What a fascinating question.

I told Dave that I am not aware of any darts statistician who collects information about how many top players miss double tops, statisticians being more concerned with averages per dart, per three darts, per leg, per set, per match, etc., etc. (But I could be wrong. If I am please contact me at patrick.chaplin@btinternet.com and set the record straight.)

As all TV darts viewers are aware, stats are prepared and shown on screen which include the percentage of doubles hit (or missed) during a game. The trouble is that to be specific about double top wouldn't mean much as players are often failing to hit whatever the final double is that they are shooting at. Not all professional darts players plan to finish on double top.

A player like MVG when left with 80 will often go for D20, D20, because if they hit a double 20 with their first dart that means they have *two darts* at the second D20 to win the game. Single 20, single 20 double top only leaves you one dart at the double.

However, if they tried for a T20, double 10 and missed the treble and hit a single 20 that would mean they would have *two darts* left but that, provided they hit another 20 with their second dart, they would have only *one dart* at double 10.

And, of course, there are all manner of reasons why players miss the winning double they are going for, whatever double that may be. It could be stress. It could be pressure from the opponent who may be one shot away from winning the game themselves if the player misses their potentially winning double. It may be the distractions of a noisy audience or, if they are new to the TV stage, their inexperience at playing in front of the TV cameras and under the TV lights. It might also be because the player is simply having an off day.

LIONEL SMITH – FOLLOW-UP

In last month's *DDN* I featured darts player Lionel Smith following an enquiry by Mike Bailey who, it turned out, had played Lionel way back when.

In reply *DDN* reader Brian H. contacted me to say

Further to the Lionel Smith article, it was a nice story from Mike Bailey. I never beat anyone as recognised as Lionel but I remember similar feelings of pride when a local hero praised my game against him!

Mike may be interested to note that Lionel also won the prestigious 'Bronze Bully' back in the 80s. I caught it recently on one of the Bullseye [a well-known UK TV darts game show] re-runs on Challenge TV but Lionel can be seen on YouTube scoring 365 in 9 darts. Jim Bowen introduces him as 'Eric Bristow's grandad'! (Search: Lionel Smith Bullseye).



I forwarded the information on to Mike Bailey who told

Thanks to Brian. I immediately went to YouTube and watched the Bullseye re-run featuring Lionel Smith. It was fantastic to see him winning the Bronze Bully with a score of 365.

I did indeed beat a legend of the game that night, and feel very proud.

The photo, above right, shows Lionel Smith (on the left) in 1978 receiving his Midlands Counties Divisional trophy from Superintendent J. B. Glynne of Coventry Police. (Image extracted from the 1978 *News of the World* programme. From the author's collection.)

RENEWAL OF SPONSORSHIP

I am thrilled to announce the continuation of the WINMAU Dartboard Company's sponsorship of my research. Here is WINMAU's press release which I make no apologies for printing here in full.

WINMAU, the world's leading darts brand, is to continue supporting the work of Dr. Patrick Chaplin, the world's leading darts historian, after renewing a sponsorship agreement.

Dr. Chaplin was awarded his PhD by Anglia Ruskin University, Cambridge following 10 years of self-funded research into the sport. His dedication to unearthing darts history and

culture has not only resulted in him being regarded as the world's leading darts historian, but has earned him the affectionate nickname of 'Dr. Darts' as well.

In the course of his research, Dr. Chaplin has authored and co-authored a number of books on darts, including 180! - Fascinating Darts Facts (The History Press, 2012).



Created in 2000, his website, www.patrickchaplin.com, covers every aspect of the game; in addition to the history of darts, there are sections on pub history, the development of many other pub games and much more.

Launched in February, 2010 his Dr. Darts' Newsletter (DDN) has become one of the most broadly read and distributed darts publications in the world. Initially sent only to friends interested in darts history, the free monthly newsletter now has subscribers in more than 120 countries.

"My aim has only ever been to encourage those with an interest in the global game of darts to share and exchange information," says Dr. Chaplin. "WINMAU is one of the oldest names in the sport and is a part of its history. Their support is invaluable in enabling me to continue my research and publish DDN to a global audience."

Ian Flack, WINMAU's Sales and Marketing Director, adds: "Patrick is a darts legend in his own right. He works so hard to bring the global darting community together and to ensure that those who play the game now and in the future will properly appreciate its heritage. I am delighted we are able to continue to support his vital research."

There's nothing like ending the old year on a high note. (Or blowing your own trumpet!)

Thanks WINMAU.

(The photo above shows 'Dr. Darts' on the day of his graduation ceremony in Cambridge in December 2007. Image © Moppix International. Used with permission.)

NEWS OF THE WORLD – BOB LUDKIN

It is with regret that I learned of the death of Bob Ludkin a former *News of the World* Grand finalist and North of England Divisional Champion.

Former England international Doug McCarthy informed me that Bob, a close friend, died on Saturday 21st October.

Bob, the Durham Area champion (pictured right) (representing the *Travellers Rest*, Spennymoor) lifted the North of England title in 1973. On his way to victory Bob beat the Kendal Area champion R. Gibson (playing out of the *Wheatsheaf Hotel*,



Beetham, nr. Milnthorpe, Westmorland) 2-1 in the first round. He then met S. Little the Workington Area winner (representing the *Swan Inn*, Ellenborough, Maryport, Cumbria) in the semi-final and beat him 2-0.

Bob then moved on into the final where he beat the Carlisle Area champion, E. Sowerby (playing out of the *Sun Hotel*, Crosby, Ravensworth, Penrith, Cumbria) 2-0 to take the Divisional title. This victory earned Bob a place, alongside ten other champions, at the Grand Finals at the Alexandra Palace, London which took place on Saturday 28th April 1973.

In the first round at the Ally Pally Bob was drawn against another Bob, Bob Whyte, the Scotland Divisional Champion who played out of the *Imperial Bar*, Cupar, Fife.

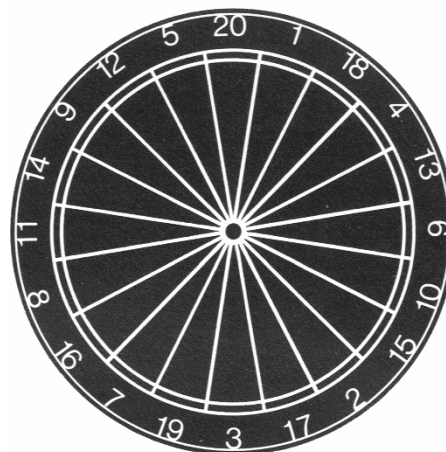
Sadly the *News of the World* report of the event was extremely short with no mention of the early rounds. However, *Darts World* in its coverage of the finals reported that Bob Ludkin, in the first game of the day, started confidently with a 90 out-shot but then surrendered his lead to Whyte ‘who was in good form’, Ludkin finally losing the match 2-1.

Another great darts player is lost to us.

LINCOLN DARTBOARD – THE FACTS

In issue #92 we discussed the Lincoln dartboard and, thanks to David King of Darts501.com we gained much useful information.

Subsequently I discovered that that regional dartboard still thrives in Lincoln. I contacted Steve Taylor, Secretary of the Lincoln and District Darts League and he confirmed that the dartboard is jet black, has a playing surface diameter of 15 inches” with the width of the doubles being one-eighth of an inch (3.2mm).



Steve was also good enough to send me a copy of the League rules. Rule 8 clearly states

A securely fixed wooden or metal oche must be used and situated 7 feet, floor level distance from the face of the dart board. The oche must be a minimum of 1 ½ [inches] in height and 18” in length. Chalk marks or plastic strips will not be acceptable. The centre of the bull’s-eye to be 5’ 8” high from the floor. The board must be a proper Lincoln black double board in good playing condition. Adequate lighting and electronic or chalkboard scoring systems must be in use. Failure to supply above playing conditions could jeopardise the licensed house’s involvement in the league

Steve added,

“We have four leagues of twelve teams each and all games are straight start. Matches in all four leagues comprise two pair games of 701-up, best of three legs, four individual games 501-up, best of three legs, and one four-man team leg of 1,501-up.”

At the end of season there are knockout competitions with the finals being held on Presentation Night on stage. In the summer season singles and doubles knockouts are held with entry to all participants registered to the league. Steve also told me

“After the winter season we hold a different tournament each year. This season we intend to hold a winners and runners up competition where the winners and runners up from each league will play against each other with the final being played on stage. At the end of the winter season last year we held a Lincoln invitational tournament in which anybody registered to any league in Lincolnshire was eligible to enter. This tournament has been run for over 20 years so it’s nice to incorporate it into our format.”

Thanks to Steve for clarifying the rules for games played on the Lincoln dartboard which, thankfully, is thriving in that city.

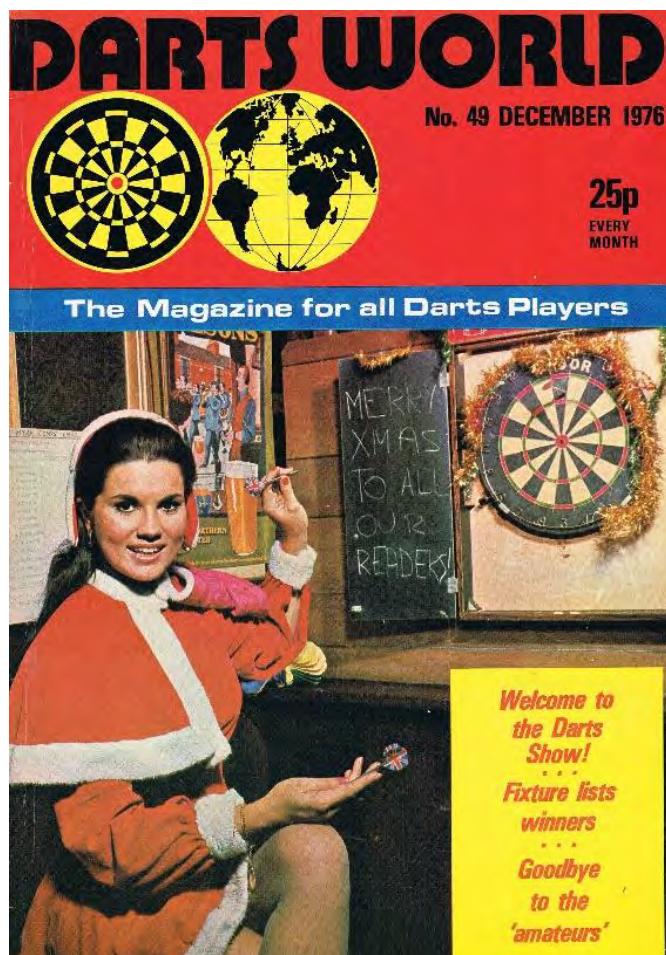
For more information about the Lincoln and District Darts League go to www.lincoln-darts.co.uk.

THE FESTIVE SEASON APPROACHES...

As we approach the festive season, I thought I would look into my archive to see when *Darts World* (the longest running darts magazine in the world) first celebrated Christmas on its front page.

Surprisingly, although the magazine was first published in November/December 1972 (No. 1. was the only issue to cover two months) it was not until issue No. 49 (December 1976) that the season was celebrated on the cover (see image, right). Inside on page 3, the magazine editor Tony Wood wrote

We don’t suggest all darts players adopt Festive gear for their pre-Christmas darts matches, but this version of Father Christmas’ outfit certainly scores a point or two when worn by Wendy Ann George, last year’s Miss Great Britain and currently Miss Watney Mann (North). The home venue is the Crown and Kettle, a popular darts pub with Manchester journalists.



Would we regard such a cover as ‘sexist’ or ‘politically incorrect’ today?

Probably, but that was then...



Delving inside the December 1976 issue of *Darts World* surely the prize (if there had been one) for Best Festive Darts Advertisement would have gone to DURRO Flights Ltd., of Leyton, London with the offering shown here.

DURRO was one of the early sponsors of 'The Crafty Cockney', Eric Bristow) and were well known for their original flights featuring the faces of famous (and some infamous) personalities including Winston Churchill, Muhammad Ali,

comedian Tommy Cooper and Uganda's Idi Amin.

Sadly, like so many darts companies that thrived during the 1970s/1980s darts boom DURRO (as far as I know) no longer exists. However, I note that DURRO darts and flights seem highly collectable when searched for on eBay and other internet auction sites.

So that's it for another year.

Another twelve *DDNs* delivered which I trust you have enjoyed as much as I have enjoyed producing them for my thousands of readers in over 120 countries.

Whether or not you celebrate the festive season I send to you all my very best wishes for a very happy and productive New Year.

MY DARTS RESEARCH IS SPONSORED BY



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