



DARTS
FOR EVERYONE

BY ALAN J HARTLEY

About The Author

Alan Hartley stayed on at school until he was 18 and when he joined the 6th form he found that the common room possessed a dart board. He soon realised that he had a natural aptitude for the game and spent much study time and even the occasional skipped lesson playing darts.

By the time he left school he had already become quite good as pub standards went. He signed up for a local team and started playing 5 or 6 nights a week playing in several different leagues.

After a year or two he started making a bit of a name for himself locally and got invited to local exhibitions to be one of the underdogs playing the professionals. He played several of the big names of the day including John Lowe. Some games he won and some he lost. He had a try out for the local Super League team when it was one team per town but decided not to follow it up because of the expense.



At the age of 25 he had a nervous breakdown and his game collapsed. 20 years later he still plays pub darts having never made the grade to County but he has played in a couple of national competitions, coming runner up in one sponsored by the bank where he worked

for a while.

He still has moments of glory with occasional high finishes and 180s but contents he himself with playing pub darts and has run his local team for a number of years. More recently he has been appointed league secretary for one of his local leagues which enables him to satisfy his urge to put something back into the local game that he has enjoyed for so long.

Foreword

Darts For Everyone covers the many facets of a popular and growing indoor sport tracing its origins from hundreds of years ago when the game first started, up to the modern day.

A section of anecdotes is included for light entertainment and there is a serious section on other games that can be played on a dart board.

For those who want to run their own leagues there are several league tables listed which have been drawn up for easy use and for those who want to improve their game the book also includes most of the recommended ways to finish a game of darts.

Tips are given on how to play the game along with the basic rules and towards the end of the book are included several brief biographies of some of the games superstars of all time.

Contents

Chapter	Page No
About The Author	2
Foreword	3
Contents	4
A Brief History Of Darts	6
The Creation Of The B.D.O.....	8
Troubled Times For Darts.....	9
Technological Developments	10
Technological Developments	11
Setting Up The Board And Oche	12
Selecting Darts, Shafts And Fights.....	15
Natural Obstacles And Hazards.	17
Match Etiquette.....	21
Running Your Own Team.....	25
Buying Accessories.....	27
Problems Affecting Players.	28
<i>The Game Of 301.....</i>	<i>31</i>
<i>Stance.....</i>	<i>32</i>
<i>The Throw.</i>	<i>33</i>
<i>Practice Makes Perfect.</i>	<i>33</i>
Progressing Up The Ladder.....	37
Trophies Versus Money.....	39

League Tables.....	39
<i>Organising A K.O.</i>	<i>42</i>
Popular Games On A Dartboard.....	45
<i>Halve It.....</i>	<i>45</i>
<i>Mickey Mouse.....</i>	<i>47</i>
<i>Killer and Blind Killer.....</i>	<i>48</i>
<i>Cricket.....</i>	<i>50</i>
<i>Big Un's And Little Un's.....</i>	<i>51</i>
<i>Round The Clock.....</i>	<i>51</i>
Darting Anecdotes.	53
Darts Phrases.	59
Darts Phrases.	60
Brief Biographies Of The Superstars	64
<i>Jim Pike.</i>	<i>64</i>
<i>John Lowe.....</i>	<i>64</i>
<i>Eric Bristow.....</i>	<i>67</i>
<i>Phil Taylor</i>	<i>69</i>
<i>Cliff Lazarenko.....</i>	<i>71</i>
<i>Keith Deller.....</i>	<i>72</i>
<i>Rod Harrington</i>	<i>73</i>
<i>Bob Anderson</i>	<i>74</i>

A Brief History Of Darts

The game of darts can be traced back many hundreds of years and stories take its history back even further. What credence can be given to tales that ancient Greek warriors used to throw short spears at the upturned ends of wine barrels during the intervals between battles is not certain. It is a fact however that during the middle ages the sport of darts gained some recognition and popularity with men from all walks of life taking an interest, playing the game in the drinking houses that sprang up. In 1530 it has been recorded that Anne Boleyn gave King Henry The Eighth a set of richly ornamented darts.

The early darts were much longer than those of today being some 25 cm long. Slices off tree trunks were commonly used as targets as they provided natural sections to aim at with their rings and as they dried out, radial cracks, that developed.

It is well documented that the game was popular with sailors who would use a section off an old mast as a target.

Indeed it is recorded that the game was taken over to America by the Pilgrim Fathers on the Mayflower. As the rules became laid down the game developed solely as an indoor past-time with smaller darts. The barrels were made from wood with a metal point stuck in one end and feathers in the other.

It was not until in 1898 when an American patented a folded paper flight and 1906 when an Englishman patented the metal barrel, that the game really started to resemble that of today. It was at about this time that a standardised dartboard with numbers on was also developed. The distance adopted for the throw was measured by placing three beer crates from a firm called Hockey and Sons who were a big brewer in the southwest of England. The crates measured 3 feet giving the early distance for the toe line at 9 feet.

Eventually the crates were reduced in size down to 2 feet and then 4 crates were used to measure the distance which changed to 8 feet. As ladies tried their hands at the sport shorter distances were also used.

This explains why if you look at a standard pub darts mat you will see several different lines clearly marked.

It is believed that the name for the throw line called the Oche comes from the name of the brewery that supplied the crates.

In the early 1900s games of chance were illegal in public houses and it was considered that darts came into this category. However a landlord called Foot Anakin challenged this ruling in court. He set up a board in court and threw three darts into the 20 segment. Then he challenged the court officials to do the same. None of them could match his accuracy so the court ruled that it was not a game of chance. This led to the game becoming even more popular in public houses and led to regular teams and competitions.

By the end of world war two the game was firmly established with a large proportion of pubs having teams throughout the country. Competitions with substantial prizes started to be run with the News Of The World competition in 1927 being the first really big one. This was only open to London residents at first but rapidly opened up to the whole country drawing large numbers of competitors.

In 1954 the National Darts Association was formed to oversee the game and establish more widely recognised rules of play. In 1957 the foundations for county darts were laid .

The Creation Of The B.D.O.

It was not until 1973 when Ollie Croft formed the British Darts Organisation that the next stage of development occurred.

The B.D.O. grew rapidly and in 1975 the Embassy competition was first promoted on T.V. In the mid 1980s the B.D.O. organised over 800 tournaments held every year all over the country. These included competitions held at all the major holiday centres such as Pontins, Haven and Butlins. At this time the B.D.O. had some 30,000 members in all.

Ollie Croft drew up a comprehensive set of rules for the game and this included a new Metric regulation throwing distance of 7ft 9 ¼ inch which was used for competitions as a standard worldwide. It was adopted by most leagues throughout the world but even to this day some still throw at 8 feet and some at 7 ft 6, and although the board has specifications laid down for its structure there is still in use a Yorkshire board with no trebles on it.

The 1970s and 80s were to be the %Golden Years+of darts because in 1988 the TV programme called %Not The 9o Clock News+did a particularly vitriolic sketch on darts which put the players in a very bad light. The newspapers were quick to pick up on the aspect of heavy drinking portrayed and the press destroyed the image of the game. Attempts were made to clean up the image with players being told to drink water on stage on TV. Some players such as Jockey Wilson even started fitness campaigns but it was to no avail and in 1988 all ITV coverage of the game was scrapped and the BBC only screened the Embassy competition.

Ollie Croft continued running the BDO like a benevolent patriarch with his wife Lorna from his address in Muswell Hill, but the top players suffered from a lack of TV coverage for some 5 years and darts went into a decline.

Troubled Times For Darts.

Five years later in 1993 the top 32 players wanted to appoint a PR consultant to get them back on TV and improve the image of the game as their incomes were suffering and they wanted to get the game back to its previous golden years. The men they wanted to do this were Tom Cox and Marcus Robertson but Ollie was having none of it. He would not relinquish his hold on the organisation.

The players decided to hold their own tournament sponsored by Lada cars and Ollie again objected. Tom Cox and Marcus Robertson ran the new competition and formed an organisation called the World Darts Council. When the players played in the Embassy they all wore badges showing the new WDC insignia instead of the BDO. They were forced to remove them and the players decided unanimously that if Ollie Croft would not recognise the WDC they were not going to play in the Embassy again.

Cox and Robertson tried to build fences and acted as mediators arranging a meeting with 100 BDO delegates to try and sort out the mess. However the meeting degenerated and voted to ban all 32 players from any BDO competitions in Britain. This meant that they could only play overseas and curtailed their earning potentials considerably. Mike Gregory was the only player to turn against his fellows and wormed his way back in with the BDO. Eric Bristow was disgusted with him and still shuns him to this day.

Soon after this the Las Vegas competition was to be held and the World Darts Federation decided to hold a meeting there to discuss the situation. Tom Cox could see the ban would be made worldwide and lobbied the delegates but such was the influence of Croft that that the ban went ahead.

The only thing that the players could do was to start lengthy legal proceedings that were to go on for some three years. Eventually a settlement was made out of court and the players were reinstated but on the grounds that the WDC changed its name.

It was a hollow victory for the players because the legal actions had cost the sport hundreds of thousands of pounds that it could ill afford.

Even now most of the original top 32 players went to play in the Embassy, which is still running some 25 years later, but play in their own competitions which are televised on Sky sport.



Technological Developments

Elm boards were used for many years and attempts were made to replace them with paper boards which were totally unsuitable as they soon broke up. Gradually bristle boards were developed and when Dutch Elm disease overtook the country this prompted the change over. Bristle boards are far superior and have now been adopted universally. Elm boards had to be soaked to close up the dart holes in them in between matches and did not last very long as they dried out and cracked under the heat of the spot lights.

A continental board has been developed recently which has a mesh surface and the scores are registered automatically. But this has not found favour with the English players. Not only has the dartboard undergone a series of changes but so have the darts. In the 1940s Jim Pike became a big star of the darts world and as with all stars he had equipment named after him.

Jim Pike darts were all the rage for many years with their brass barrels, split cane shafts and paper flights. They were the first modern darts and brass continued to be favoured for the barrels until the 1970s when tungsten started to become popular. This gave the weight without the need for a very thick barrel.

Tungsten obviously had enormous advantages as thinner barrels meant it was easier to get three darts in one treble. Stems have undergone some changes from split wooden canes to plastic or threaded aluminium shafts which do not drop out during a throw. As the barrels got thinner the thread size was reduced from $\frac{1}{4}$ Whitworth to 2BA. Flights have also changed beyond recognition from paper tassels to elaborate feathers and on to modern plastic. (These will be discussed later in the book.)

Darts is a major sport but perhaps it does not get the television coverage that it deserves. It has never received the acclaim that snooker, tennis or golf have. Perhaps if it makes it into the Olympics as some people have suggested it will gain more esteem.

Setting Up The Board And Oche

When you buy a board for your team or pub you must make sure that the board is acceptable to the league that you are going to play in. Some boards for instance are the wrong colour. The board should have black and white segments with green and red trebles and doubles with the treble 20 being red. The board should have metal wires dividing the numbers as the plastic type you sometimes see are not acceptable.

Most boards nowadays are bristle although very rarely you may come across an elm board. If you find a Yorkshire board which has no trebles on it do not try and use this outside Yorkshire!

The new board should come with a metal fixing bracket and a screw to go in the back of the board in the centre. The bracket is secured to the wall by screws and the screw in the back of the board slots into its V shaped notch. Then the board is usually made firm with 3 wedges. Clamps can be used instead of a bracket but when moving the board make sure that only one clamp is undone to release it

because otherwise you will alter the position of the board. The board should either be surrounded by a half tyre or else mounted in a box to prevent stray darts from hitting the wall.

A spot light should be fixed above the board so as to shine on to the whole board with the centre of its spot on the bull. Ideally 2 lights should be employed to reduce the effect of shadows from the darts. They should of course be mounted so as not to obstruct the darts flight path. The board should be perpendicular and not leaning at all with the centre of the bull exactly 5ft 8 or 1m 73cm from the floor. This should be measured with a plumb line and the spot on the floor below the bull marked. From this point a line should be made on the floor to mark out the oche exactly 7FT 6 Inches away. A mark should also be made at 7FT 9 1/4 inches or 2m 37cm and 8FT. These are the various throwing distances of most leagues. The 7FT 9 1/4 may sound a funny distance but this

is the official measurement for the B.D.O. or British Darts Organisation. The board and distance can be checked by measuring the diagonal from the bull to the 7ft 9 1/4 line which is an exact metric distance of 2m 93cm.

When making these measurements dont forget to take into account the skirting board if there is one and the fact that the board projects outwards from the wall. It is possible to buy rubber mats with the distances marked on them and these are a good idea if the floor is tiled because it will protect the points of the darts that bounce out of the board and land on it. However the mats do tend to creep along the floor and curl up as people constantly walk up and down them. They can be secured by a metal carpet fitting but if you are going to do this you may as well have a proper raised oche.

Sometimes you see strips of white tape down on the floor but these are not really acceptable as they tear and come loose. A proper raised oche consists of a 3ft long block of wood about 2 inches thick and any width you like secured to the floor by bolts. It need not be a permanent fixture if the bolts are put in loose but can be taken up for safety after the matches.

A word of caution, when drilling holes for the bolts do not try to drill through carpet unless you know what type of carpet it is.

I know of one pub where it had just been refurbished with new fixtures and fittings including carpets throughout. The darts team tried to drill holes through the carpet and the thread caught round the drill and pulled, running for yards before they could do anything about it. It ruined a large piece of carpet and they were not popular so be warned!

A marking board should be provided which according to most league rules should be a black board and chalk but the new white plastic boards and felt pens can be used instead although they can be very messy with ink getting all over your hands. The new electronic score boards are becoming more popular but a lot of

leagues frown upon their use as it is not easy to check on past scores and view the whole of the game at one glance.

Where competitions are held in clubs and the larger pubs it will very often be found that several boards will be used and they will be mounted on moveable stands with temporary oches marked out. Unless the stand is well made they tend to shake a little when the darts hit them or when darts are pulled out which

can be off putting to some players. Well made stands are quite acceptable in all leagues and useful when a landlord does not want a board as a permanent fixture.



Selecting Darts, Shafts And Fights.

Most people get into darts either as children who have played at home with cheap darts or else as teenagers who decide to have a muck about in the pub on the board with the pub darts. They gradually gain a little accuracy and find themselves a suitable set of darts by trying every one else's. If you try and find a set of darts when you have never played before you will probably buy several sets before you find one that you feel comfortable with.

Generally speaking light darts need a firmer throw than heavy darts even though most people think you need strong arms to throw a heavy dart. The difference comes because a light dart has not got so much weight to keep it in balance whereas a heavy dart can be lobbed gently and if balanced will always find its way to the board.

Brass darts are not used much because they need to be very thick to have any real weight to them. Nickel steel are quite popular as a cheap dart but of course the favoured metal is tungsten or should I say nickel tungsten alloy. This gives the weight without the bulk, so giving much more room for three darts to be thrown into the treble 20. For this reason long thin barrels are popular.

Some people on the other hand like the feel of a short stubby barrel that they can balance and hold more easily in their fingers. Gnurling on the barrel is very important to some throwers as well as this affects their grip.

Whatever sort of dart you use constant playing will wear out the points, specially when they hit the floor so it is a good idea to carry a small sharpening stone with you at all times. A blunt dart soon damages the board as do fish hooks on them. After much use the point will become shortened and should be replaced. New sets can be easily bought and fitted if you have a vice at home or work.

Some darts have points fitted into a small piece at the tip of the dart which simply unscrews and can be replaced with a new part holding a new point. Darts with spring loaded points can

sometimes be seen advertised but they are not really popular. Shafts come in two main colours of black and white plastic and aluminium. Fancy coloured ones can also be bought but have no advantage and are just for show. Shafts also come in two different thread sizes, 2BA and ¼ Whitworth. The latter is less popular and was first used on the old brass darts.

Aluminium shafts are obviously much stronger than plastic and wont break off in your barrel as plastic can but when they are hit they bend and are difficult to straighten. Plastic are cheaper but frequently the pegs which hold the flights in will snap off and they have to be replaced. Small metal spring rings can be fitted which are supposed to help prevent this problem but they are fiddly to fit.

Shafts come in many sizes and I'm afraid you will have to try several before you find the correct one that balances your darts in flight. Generally heavier darts need a longer shaft than light weight darts.

Flights are nearly always plastic these days and can be bought for just a few pence from some sources. They come in a variety of shapes and a multitude of colours but in my opinion there is no real difference between any of them although you will often see players changing their flights from one set to another convinced that that is going to make a difference.

Flights are easily damaged when another dart hits them and constantly have to be replaced when they split so always carry a few spare flights with you. It is possible to fit small metal tips on the flights which act as a deflector when a dart strikes them, but they are extremely difficult to fit and only partially effective.

Natural Obstacles And Hazards.

When Public Houses are built or gutted, redecorated and refurbished a dart board is often the very last consideration for the lay out of the bar. Admittedly some of the larger, more modern pubs have purpose built alleyways where the board is screened off from the rest of the pub, but these are few and far between. Even when these are included in the pub lay out they are not always ideal. Sometimes the alleyways are too narrow, which can be off putting for the darters or quite simply there is not enough room for the marker to stand at the side of the board.

Where the dart board has been included as an after thought it is very often situated with the lay down the side of the bar or near to a door where people have to cross the lay to get to and from the toilets. This is completely intolerable for matches but such sites are all too often found. Sometimes the board is fixed near to an end wall that can also cause problems.

Windows in such walls are a nuisance, not because the darts are blown by the wind from them, although darters might joke about this but because of curtains blowing and distracting the players.

Also such walls might have vending machines for cigarettes or gaming machines on them. Chairs and tables are often placed down the side of the lay and placed too close for comfort. Not only are these a distraction for the players if used but they can be dangerous for spectators if darts bounce out of the board as often happens.

Perhaps one of the worst types of lay for darts is one that has a low ceiling. Some players can cope with this if they are the type that throws their darts very hard but if they are like me and lob their darts, the darts follow a curved flight path and invariably hit the ceiling. In fact I remember one local pub where this was such a problem that the darts were making holes in the ceiling because it was hit that much. So the landlord fixed some tiles on the ceiling that prevented the darts from sticking in.

I always used to throw for double 20 to start then and on one occasion I remember throwing my first dart which hit the ceiling tiles, bounced off and landed in the board in the bull which gave me a very acceptable start as the game was any double start. The landlord still remembers it to this day but thankfully the board has been moved to another room now.

Projecting beams over the lay can cause the same hazard. In a local league we have another pub with such a beam and I have seen a player throw all 3 darts only to see them stuck in neat row in the beam with none of them even reaching the board. Ceilings can still be a hazard when they are not low enough for the darts to actually hit them. Spot lights have to be fixed somewhere close to the board to be effective and on a low ceiling sometimes become an unintentional target for the darts.

I remember playing one night on such an oche and again I was the culprit with my lobbing lazy style of throw. During the match I succeeded in breaking 3 light bulbs with my darts.

The captain pleaded with me to be careful and not to break any more because they had no more bulbs and the match would have to be abandoned.

Some really weird oches exist with walls at different angles. Here the board is fixed to a wooden frame projecting out from the wall it is secured on. This results in the oche being square on to the board but at an angle to the wall behind it. In theory everything is correct but it is very strange to throw on such a board.

Quite often on some of the darts lays that have been down for many years a small hole is worn in the floor on the oche where the players stand. If your feet don't fit naturally into such an indentation it can be an awkward sensation on your feet which can be off putting when throwing and trying to find a comfortable spot to stand.

Other hazards that darts players have to overcome include loud music and sudden noises such as shouting. If you watch any matches on the television you will hear the adjudicator call for order or in other words silence when players are throwing.

It is customary to turn the jukebox off when there is a darts match on and it is common courtesy not to talk too loudly but in some pubs it is impossible to get proper order. However when a player is concentrating properly on his game all background noise should fade into oblivion and he should only be aware of the maker and the board.

The temperature of a pub or club can be a problem for players as well. If it is too hot the players hands will become sweaty and they will very often put chalk dust on them to increase their grip on their darts. If on the other hand the room is cold players wont be happy as they will complain of a lack of sensation in their fingers.

Power cuts have been known to occur in the middle of matches and there is not much you can do about it if the pub hasn't got its own generator and few have. I remember one match in a small village nearby when the game was just about to start. The first dart was thrown by our player for a double when the power went off. Fortunately the landlord could keep the bar open as some of the pumps were not electric and he had plenty of candles.

However the match had to be delayed until the power returned. The opposition then duly tried to get our team drunk in the interval but this did not work because some of us were virtually tea total and on soft drinks and the others were built like rugby players and were quite happy to drink all night. When the power came back on some 1 1/2 hours later we were quite ready and fit for the game that we then proceeded to win.

Perhaps one of the most unusual hazards that we have had to face was when a match was nearly rained off inside in the middle of a 6 week drought. The pub was an old fashioned place that was basically a farm house that had been partially converted. The toilet block was across a farmyard with no lights and sheep were free to

room around inside as well as out. There were only two pumps in the bar, one for mild and one for bitter. Everything else came out of a bottle if they had it. Having said all this you got a good welcome and the landlady was the salt of the earth.

The darts lay was in a room that had a flat roof and unknown to anybody an old cistern had been pouring water through its overflow

onto the said roof for some time. The roof was old and in some disrepair and leaked a little. The water built up in the plaster of the ceiling until it could hold no more and just as one of our players took his place on the oche the ceiling gave way cascading about 20 gallons of water down in front of him. Fortunately he did not get wet, only his feet ,but we had to wait for the water to stop and be mopped up before the game could continue.



Match Etiquette.

All league formats are different but most have a singles and doubles game. At the lower levels the games will be one straight leg each but in the super league they are five legs each. Matches can have any number of players but in most leagues there are usually 7,8 or 9 games. This is down to the time factor as much as anything because the matches have to fit in with the pub opening hours. In some leagues the doubles games are played as a separate league. Some teams take the doubles games seriously but most treat them as a practice game for the lesser players who may not be good enough for the singles.

Before any league match it is customary for the home team to open up the board, that is to say stop all practice games, at least 1/4 of an hour before the match is due to start.

It is better still for the home team to stop practising as soon as the away side arrive.

In most leagues it is usual for the away side to throw for the bull first but different leagues have different rules on this. Sometimes the home side bull up first and sometimes the players take it in turns throughout the team.

When each game is about to commence it is customary for the players to shake hands before throwing for the bull. Also when the game is over it is normal to shake hands again and offer congratulations or commiseration's to ones opponent. Occasionally you will find a bad sportsman who refuses to shake hands with his victor, specially if he feels cheated over some part of the game.

The audience should be quiet during all games and only offer encouragement between throws. Players should also stand still and quiet, not rattling their darts, whilst waiting to throw.

During the game the participating players should only talk to the marker to check their scores and ask what is left. Sometimes a checker is provided as well to keep an eye on the scores and adjudicate. It is usual for the home team to provide a marker and the away team provides a checker.

A good marker will write the players scores up on the board and be standing still before the next player is ready to throw.

Providing a good marker goes a long way to ensuring a friendly match but if a mistake is made and goes unnoticed for one rotation of throws then it must stand. This often leads to upsets and can be the cause of real trouble between the two teams so should be avoided at all costs by the captain keeping a wary eye on the scores.

If during a game your opponents dart bounces out of the board or flight comes out and lands near your feet, it is not recommended to tread on it and hide it as this can lead to trouble but instead it is common courtesy to pick it up and hand it back to your opponent.

When throwing in a game it is better to wait until the other player has cleared the board before taking up your position to throw. Some players are very keen to get up to the oche and let fly. This type of player can therefore be easily barracked quite legitimately and put off his stride by taking your darts slowly out of the board and pausing to adjust your flights.

It is normal practice for the home team to provide sandwiches that are eaten either at half time or at the end of the match. They can be paid for by running a lottery card around the players or can be paid for out club funds.

Most pubs do pub meals nowadays and can often be persuaded to provide the sandwiches for free. Also they can provide chips. Indeed with some pubs the darts players almost get a meal with chicken legs, sausages, soup, chips and an assortment of food offered free of charge.

Always try to be gracious in victory and magnanimous in defeat. It is bad practice to get over excited at the result of a game. You often see players punch the air when they achieve victory but this is to be frowned upon as it only goads the other players into playing that little bit better.

Most pub teams are very friendly and it is better not to make it too serious as you will soon get a reputation.

There is very little in darts rules about dress code, the only thing that I am aware of is a rule that says hats must not be worn. It is normal for players to wear something loose fitting, usually a T shirt. Professionals have their names emblazoned across theirs but unless you are a very good player this is not a good idea. Sometimes if the pub or brewery are keen to have a dart team they will provide T shirts with a logo on them free of charge.

Always beware of the little old man who comes in to play his match and does not take his jacket off to play. This sort of player often looks harmless but has been known to take out the best of players.

When the team is formed the team should decide how serious they want to be about winning or if they want to treat the game as just a bit of fun. The captain should be left to pick the side and offered no advice by the team. Players should not whinge at being dropped or not picked. If possible a non playing captain is often the best sort to have because they can observe the players impartiality and make a fairer assessment of the team.

The match sheet should be filled in and signed by the captain but he should also keep a copy of the results in a little book so that he has an instant reference to go back to see who has won past games. This will avoid any arguments over who has got the best record etc.

Match boards should be kept clean, free of chalk dust and rotated regularly so that no part gets worn out too quickly. Furthermore the

board should be taken down after matches and only used for them, not for normal pub games. If this is done a board can be expected to last at least one season in good condition. Usually the pubs will provide new boards but sometimes they have to be bought out of club funds.



Running Your Own Team

As well as keeping match records the captain or treasurer will have to keep financial records of all subs collected and any monies paid out. Subs should be decided by common agreement to avoid arguments later. They should be great enough to cover all eventualities, such as buying new boards, extra trophies, extra match shirts etc. but not to great that a profit is made. Some teams treat their darts fund as a saving club but in my opinion this is not a good idea.

It will be the captains job to hold the team together. That means making sure that there are always enough players to play the match, even when people are away for whatever reason. It will be his job to make sure that the team has always got transport to the matches and this is not always as easy as it sounds.

I remember one match some years ago when there were 8 of us in the side waiting to go to the match. Suddenly we realised that nobody had got a car with them. One bright spark pointed out that I had got my Mini Countryman. This was basically a Mini Estate car with a back door but still a Mini. It was only an 850 cc engine but we all piled in on top of each other. The poor little car made it to the match but was never the same again afterwards.

It is the captain's job to see that the league rules are adhered to and all players are properly registered. It is his job to make the draw on time and pick the team. When matches have to be cancelled due to unforeseen circumstances it is his job to report it to the league and rearrange a new time.

The captain and or treasurer should attend league meetings and pay any fees promptly as well as ensuring result sheets are handed in. It may seem a minor point but it is the captain's job to make sure everyone knows where the pub, at which the match is

to be played, can be found. We have had instances in the past where players have not turned up simply because they did not know where to go.



Buying Accessories

You can buy darting bits and pieces from any sports shop or flights and shafts can generally be found on sale in most of the pubs that encourage darts.

However the prices may be a bit steep and if you are going to run your own team you may decide to buy dart flights, shafts and other odds and ends in bulk to get them at a better price for team mates. There are many firms now supplying these items mail order to the public and names and addresses can be found in any darts magazine. All of these firms will be happy to send out one of their comprehensive catalogues upon request. Don't order small items separately but bulk up the order by offering the catalogue around to every one, this way you will avoid expensive carriage costs and may even get a discount for a larger order.

Often flights can be bought for a few pence each set instead of nearly a pound each in the shops. The same is true of shafts. Indeed it may be possible to provide the same flights for the whole team and have the pubs logo on them such as a red lion or fox.

Most firms also offer the option of having the players name printed onto their flights. This saves a lot of confusion over who's darts are who's when their are 20 or so sets of darts lying around during a match.

One word of warning, collect the money for anything ordered before you send for it because some people will take advantage. Also keep a careful record of what has been ordered and for who. You may wish to buy some popular items out of club funds and sell them later, perhaps for a profit to raise money for the club.

More expensive items such as darts can be bought but of course it is impossible to try them out first. Although as experience comes most people gain a feel for what type of darts they like to throw. Dart boards can be bought from these sources but generally are just as cheap from one of the catalogue shops.

Problems Affecting Players.

Some minor problems such as temperature have been mentioned in the section dealing with hazards facing players but there are some more serious ones that I will discuss here.

Nerves are a big problem that everybody has to some extent, even professionals. For a year or two some of the big names in darts admitted to taking Beta blockers before competitions. There was talk of introducing drug testing in competitions, the same as for athletes, but the idea was never instigated. However they did stop players from drinking alcohol on stage, but this was probably to improve the image of the sport rather than for any other reason.

The main thing to remember when playing in any match is to arrive at the venue early so as to allow plenty of time for a warm up and possibly a drink or two if this helps, but don't get drunk before the game! Competitions can be specially nerve racking but with experience and match practice nerves will lessen and be replaced with confidence.

When a player is relaxed and concentrating on his game properly he should not be easily distracted by what is going on around him in terms of noise and people moving about.

You will very often hear players complain about various things when their darts are not going well and they are losing whilst the other player who is doing well will not complain at all.

A lot of players have difficulty at some time in their careers of letting go of their darts properly. The timing of the dart leaving their grasp is wrong and the dart often flies at strange angles instead of following a smooth trajectory. Also the darts fail to reach their target accurately and often miss the board altogether. This condition has become so well recognised that it has been given the name "Dart-itus". The condition first gained recognition when the famous Eric Bristow went through a very bad patch in his professional career and for a year or two he constantly failed to maintain a decent standard of play.

The only way to recover from this condition is to play through it with constant practice if you are able to bear the embarrassment of appearing like a rank amateur.

Cuts on the fingers are an eternal problem facing labourers and people from many other trades but only professional players would consider insuring their hands against injury. Even a splinter in the wrong place can be off putting if it affects the grip on your darts. This is a good excuse when the wife asks you to do some DIY repairs before you go out to a match!



Rules.

All leagues must have rules under which they operate and by which the games are played. Some may seem unnecessarily wordy but they have to be clearly defined with no ambiguity. I include here some of the rules from one of the leagues I play for. As you will see from them they cover a wide range of issues and it is usual for the committee to resolve any controversy arising from their implementation or any matter not covered by them.

5) All signed players names must be in the secretary's possession at least 24 hrs before playing.

6) Teams are not allowed to sign new players after the midway point in the season.

8) The match board shall be 5'8" high from the floor to the bull and the throw line shall be 7'9 1/4" in a plumb line from the face of the board and measured along the floor.

9) The throw line shall be permanently shown in some distinctive manner and not be less than 2ft long. The line must be toed ie; not trodden on. A player may move as far along the line as he wishes.

10) Each player to have 3 darts.

11) A match shall consist of 6 singles games of 301 and 3 doubles of 501. All games to start and finish with a double. Opponents shall be drawn for. Each player to throw for nearest the bull at the start of each game to decide who throws first. Away team to throw first at the bull in each leg.

12) Match results will be decided by games won as a team. Two points will be awarded to the winning team in each match. The team with the highest amount of points at the end of the season will win the league. Should 2 or more teams have equal points the team winning the most individual legs shall be the winner. If at this stage teams are still equal a play off on a neutral board shall be held.

13) All darts thrown count as a throw whether they stick in the board or not except when throwing for the bull to start a game.

14) If a dart falls out before the announcer calls the score it does not count. Only darts actually touching, or in the board are counted when the score is announced. If a dart falls out after the

score is called it does count. If a dart knocks another one out, the fallen dart does not count.

15) The exact number must be obtained. If a score is made greater than the requisite number, the score shall not count and the player shall then throw for his original score. 18) Should a team fail to turn up the match will be awarded to their opponents as a 9-0 win. 20) Should a player sign or play for more than one team in this league, his registration will be cancelled for the season. Any team infringing this rule will be liable to forfeit 2 points and such points will be awarded to the opposing team. No player may transfer during the season.

23) All signed players must be a minimum of 16 years of age. You can see from the numbers that not all are included here as some refer to league fees and the like which are of little interest in this text. Other leagues will have other rules and be even more complicated such as the official BDO rules which specify the maximum length of a dart and state that no headgear should be worn. When playing for a team always obtain a set of league rules and familiarize yourself with them. Most leagues will be similar but may vary over the numbers of games and suchlike. Rules are there to ensure fair play for all so do try and abide by them.

The Game Of 301.

The game of 301 usually starts with a double which is the small segments in the outer ring of the board. Most leagues allow the players to start on any double although in some you have to nominate a specific double each throw and only the designated double will count as a start.

It is usual to score the game by the subtraction method. That is to say the score remaining is reduced by the score made each throw. In a match each score is written up as well as the remainder to facilitate easy checking.

When a player clocks out, that is to say he gets the score remaining it has to be by hitting a double to the required amount ie: 40 is scored by hitting a double 20. It is normal to play the bust rule whereby if the player scores more than the remainder he goes back to the score he had before he threw the last three darts. For instance if a player has 20 left and he hits a 10 and the double 20 in one throw instead of a double 5 he goes back to 20. Some leagues play no bust rule which means that the said player would have 10 left.

This is often considered a harsh rule because it means that a player cant bust an awkward remainder like 5 to go back to the previous double.

When 501 is played most leagues use a straight start but some again play a double start.

Stance.

It is very important when first starting to play to have a good stance that suits you personally. Some players pose, shuffling about on the oche until they are comfortable, but style does not really matter as long as you are comfortable and relaxed. Some professional players have a bad style and awkward stance but they are relaxed and it works for them. Some face the board and others stand sideways on. Some move whilst they are throwing and others stand like statues. The most important thing is to be comfortable and relaxed. I know of one player who has all the style of a pro but cant throw to save his life.

A lot of players like to move along the oche to get a clearer shot of the target but generally speaking it is not considered a good habit to get into. Obviously where the number is completely obstructed it may be necessary. Here again this is not a hard and fast rule because one regular pub player that I know of will often leave the

oche altogether in the middle of a throw when he is trying to get a double. Then he will have a drink of his pint and return to the oche. This is perfectly within the rules but is a little off putting when he does it in the middle of a match and as often as not he hits the target. So again it is a case of whatever it takes to improve your concentration, then do it.

The Throw.

Most players hold the barrel of the dart between their thumb and forefingers at the front of the barrel. Stubby barrelled darts are therefore popular and usually have gnurling on them for added grip, but others favour long thin darts for better grouping and hold them along the length of the barrel.

One county player that I know even throws his darts by the point, not touching the barrel at all. However you hold your darts you should always try and balance them evenly in your fingers for best effect. A well balanced dart gives a straighter trajectory. All darts will arc to some extent but they should not twist in flight. A heavy dart will arc much more than a light dart as its weight is affected by gravity more. The throwing action itself should be smooth from the elbow and forearm with the upper arm, shoulders and body remaining still.

Practice Makes Perfect.

They say that practice makes perfect and it is true that it certainly improves your game. Most people when starting out improve after a little practice, some take a few years to reach a decent standard and others will achieve it in a few short months. Then again others find that they don't improve no matter how long they play, they just have no natural aptitude for the game.

Undoubtedly the best players are born to the game and are naturals but even then they put in hours of practice every day. Practising must be serious, not just aimless throwing at the board. Playing games of 301 with a couple of friends becomes boring as does going round the clock. But it can be livened up by playing one of the games mentioned further on in the book.

One way of improving your concentration and relaxation is to learn the various recommended finishes for the game. The reason for some of them may seem obscure but knowing them will prevent hesitation on a shot out because you have to stop and work out a finish. The higher finishes are very often the only way out with three darts.

Below are listed most of the popular finishes for the intermediate scores. The higher finishes usually have only one way out and all involve the treble 20.

61 25 + Double 18	111 Treble 20 + 19 + Dub 16
62 Treble 10 + Double 16 or 12 + Bull	112 Treble 20 + 12 + Dub 20
63 13 + Bull	113 Treble 20 + 13 + Dub 20
64 Treble 8 + Tops or Treble 16 + Double 8	114 Treble 20 + 14 + Dub 20
65 25 + Tops	115 Treble 20 + 15 + Dub 20
66 16 + Bull	116 Treble 20 + 16 + Dub 20
67 Treble 17 + Double 8	117 Treble 20 + 17 + Dub 20
68 Treble 20 + Double 4	118 Treble 20 + 18 + Dub 20
69 19 + 18 + Double 16	119 Treble 20 + 19 + Tops
70 20 + Bull or Treble 18 Double 8	120 Treble 20 + 20 + Tops
71 Treble 13 + Double 16	121 Treble 17 + 20 + Bull
72 Treble 16 + Double 12	122 Treble 18 + 18 + Bull
73 Treble 19 + Double 8	123 Treble 20 + Treb 13 + Dub 12
74 Treble 14 + Double 16	124 Treble 20 + Treb 16 + Dub 8
75 Treble 13 + Double 18	125 Treble 20 + Treb 19 + Dub 4
76 Treble 20 + Double 8	126 Treble 19 + 19 + Bull
77 Treble 15 + Double 16	127 Treble 20 + Treb 17 + Dub 8
78 Treble 18 + Double 12	128 Treble 20 + Treb 20 + Dub 4
79 Treble 13 + Tops	129 Treble 19 + Treb 16 + Dub 12
80 Treble 20 + Double 10 or Treble 16 + Double 16	130 Treble 20 + Treb 18 + Dub 8
81 Treble 15 + Double 18	131 Treble 20 + Treb 13 + Dub 16
	132 Treble 20 + Treb 16 + Dub 12
	133 Treble 20 + Treb 19 + Dub 8

82 Bull + Double 16	134 Treble 20 + Treb 14 + Dub 16
83 Treble 17 + Double 16	135 Treble 20 + Treb 13 + Dub 18
84 Treble 16 + Double 18	136 Treble 20 + Treb 20 + Dub 8
85 25 + 20 + Tops	137 Treble 19 + Treb 18 + Dub 18
86 Treble 18 + Double 16	138 Treble 20 + Treb 14 + Dub 18
87 Treble 17 + Double 16	139 Treble 20 + Treb 13 + Dub 20
88 Treble 16 + Double 20	140 Treble 20 + Treb 16 + Dub 16
89 Treble 19+Double 16	141 Treble 15 + Treb 20 + Dub 18
90 Bull +Tops or Treb 20+Double 15 Or Treb 18+ Dub 18	142 Treble 20 + Treb 14 + Dub 20
91 Treble 17 + Tops	143 Treble 20 + Treb 17 + Dub 16
92 Treble 20 + Dub 16	144 Treble 20 + Treb 20 + Dub 12
93 Treble 19 + Double 18	145 Treble 20 + Treb 15 + Dub 20
94 Treble 18 + Dub 20	146 Treble 20 + Treb 18 + Dub 16
95 Treble 19 + Double 19	147 Treble 20 + Treb 17 + Dub 18
96 Treble 20 + Double 18	148 Treble 20 + Treb 20 + Dub 14
97 Treble 19 + Tops	149 Treble 20 + Treb 19 + Dub 16
98 Treble 20 + Double 19	150 Treble 20 + Treb 18 + Dub 18
99 Treble 19 + 10 + Dub 16	151 Treble 20 + Treb 17 + Dub 20
100 Treble 20 + Double 20	152 Treble 20 + Treb 20 + Dub 16
101 Treble 17 + 10 + Dub 20	153 Treble 20 + Treb 19 + Dub 18
102 Treble 20 + 10 + Dub 16	154 Treble 20 + Treb 18 + Dub 20
103 Treble 19 +10 + Dub 18	155 Treble 20 + Treb 19 + Dub 19
104 Treble 20 + 12 + Dub 16	156 Treble 20 + Treb 20 + Dub 18
105 Treble 20 + 13 + Dub 16	157 Treble 20 + Treb 19 + Dub 20
106 Treble 20 + 10 + Dub 18	158 Treble 20 + Treb 20 + Dub 19
107 Treble 19 + 10 + Dub 20	160 Treble 20 + Treb 20 + Dub 20
108 Treble 20 + 16 + Dub 16	161 Treble 20 + Treb 17 + Bull
109 Treble 19 + 12 + Dub 20	164 Treble 20 + Treb 18 + Bull
110 Treble 20 + 10 + Dub 20	167 Treble 20 + Treb 19 + Bull
	170 Treble 20 + Treb 20 + Bull

All finishes up to 170 are possible with the exceptions of nos 159,162,163,165, 166,168 and 169. 170 is the highest possible finish.

As can be seen from a lot of the numbers a missed shot still leaves an alternative such as with 82. 25 for instance would leave 17 then tops. With 78 a single 18 would leave 20 then tops. So you can see that allowing for an alternative shot is very important and it is not just a case of going for anything. It will also be seen

from the list that the bull is used a lot more by the professionals than by amateurs.



Progressing Up The Ladder.

To progress in the world of darts the first thing to remember is practice makes perfect. This means match practice as well as on a board at home. You will find that different leagues in your local town will be run on different nights of the week and if you live in a small town and there are not many leagues then travel a bit further afield. It should be possible in all but the most rural of areas to find matches run on most nights of the week.

Further experience can be gained by entering various league KOs that are held periodically. The atmosphere is totally different to an ordinary match as you will be playing for yourself instead of having a team behind you. Most towns also organise independent KOs held annually for prize money. In these sort of competitions you will meet the local superstars who will probably be county players. Playing against these players will provide valuable experience and if you crumble against them you may never make the grade.

The next stage will be to play in the Super league where the standard is generally much higher than in pub darts. Also matches are taken to 5 legs instead of one straight game as in pub darts. The game is 501 and the results are taken very seriously. Each score of every game is recorded and if your average over the season is high enough, usually over about 22 per dart then you can progress to the next stage. This is done by selection and you cannot just decide to play county. You have to wait for the little brown envelope to arrive through your door to say that you have been selected to play for your county. Young players may be picked for the under 21s without such qualifying scores.

From playing county darts you can move on to the next stage of playing in the big national competitions to gain more experience. These may be for quite substantial prizes and will attract the top players from all over the world. In fact you can travel the world nowadays playing in competitions and arrange holidays to coincide with matches. The Spanish Open is very popular from this point of view.

As you progress up the county ratings if you prove yourself you may eventually be selected to play for England. If you are capped then you have arrived and stardom with fame and glory awaits you. Turning professional is obviously the next stage of development in your darning career. However it may be possible to gain sponsorship quite early on in your career as I know of one young lad who plays in the under 21s in his county side and he has gained a sponsorship deal with one of the dart companies.



Trophies Versus Money.

When first starting your darts career it is nice to receive a few trophies to show to your friends and family but very quickly, if you have any skill, you will accumulate dozens of useless bits of plastic. Some will be made of wood and some may have a marble plinth but they will have no real value. Silver cups are nice to win but are only awarded for the bigger competitions or else they have to be returned every year. More and more pub leagues are realising that players are getting disenchanted with plastic prizes and some are starting to award prize money instead. The amounts are small and will only usually buy you a few free drinks. Prize money in town KOs is usually a little more, may be a couple of hundred pounds, but the really big money is only to be had in national competitions. Even there the prizes are not of the same order as for snooker, tennis or golf. For some reason the game of darts does not have the same kudos as these sports.

League Tables.

To run a Round Robin within the pub or even to run your own darts league it is necessary to have a set of league tables. It is possible to work them out yourself but to get the home and away draws correct is very difficult so to make things easy for you I include a full set of tables for 5 to 12 teams. The tables are formulated for an even number of teams but for an odd number simply change one of the numbers throughout the table to a bye. When using the tables decide how many teams you have to accommodate in the league, list them and then place a number by the side of each team. Then select the appropriate table and replace the numbers with the teams names next to each number.

Table for 5 or 6 Teams

Round 1	Round 2	Round 3	Round 4
1 Plays 4	4 Plays 3	5 Plays 4	6 Plays 5
2 Plays 5	6 Plays 2	1 Plays 6	3 Plays 1
3 Plays 6	5 Plays 1	2 Plays 3	4 Plays 2

Round 5	Numbers That Pair Up
6 Plays 4	1 and 4: 2 and 6: 3 and 5:
5 Plays 3	
1 Plays 2	

Table for 7 or 8 Teams

Round 1	Round 2	Round 3	Round 4
2 Plays 5	5 Plays 1	5 Plays 6	6 Plays 1
3 Plays 6	6 Plays 2	2 Plays 7	7 Plays 5
4 Plays 7	7 Plays 3	3 Plays 8	8 Plays 2
1 Plays 8	8 Plays 4	1 Plays 4	4 Plays 3

Round 5	Round 6	Round 7
6 Plays 7	7 Plays 1	7 Plays 8
5 Plays 8	8 Plays 6	6 Plays 4
2 Plays 4	4 Plays 5	5 Plays 3
1 Plays 3	3 Plays 2	1 Plays 2

Numbers that pair up 1 and 8: 2 and 7:
3 and 6: 4 and 5:

Table for 9 or 10 Teams

Round 1	Round 2	Round 3	Round 4
10 Plays 2	2 Plays 1	2 Plays 3	3 Plays
9 Plays 3	3 Plays 10	10 Plays 4	4 Plays
8 Plays 4	4 Plays 9	9 Plays 5	5 Plays 10
7 Plays 5	5 Plays 8	8 Plays 6	6 Plays 9
1 Plays 6	6 Plays 7	1 Plays 7	7 Plays 8

Round 5	Round 6	Round 7	Round 8
3 Plays 4	4 Plays 1	4 Plays 5	5 Plays 1
2 Plays 5	5 Plays 3	3 Plays 6	6 Plays 4
10 Plays 6	6 Plays 2	2 Plays 7	7 Plays 3
9 Plays 7	7 Plays 10	1 Plays 9	9 Plays 10
1 Plays 8	8 Plays 9	10 Plays 8	8 Plays 2

Round 9	
5 Plays 6	
4 Plays 7	Numbers that pair up 1 and 6:
3 Plays 8	2 and 7: 3 and 8: 4 and 9:
2 Plays 9	5 and 10:
1 Plays 10	

Table for 11 or 12 Teams

Round 1	Round 2	Round 3	Round 4
2 Plays 7	7 Plays 1	7 Plays 8	8 Plays 1
3 Plays 8	8 Plays 2	2 Plays 9	9 Plays 7
4 Plays 9	9 Plays 3	3 Plays 10	10 Plays 2
5 Plays 10	10 Plays 4	4 Plays 11	11 Plays 3
6 Plays 11	11 Plays 5	5 Plays 12	12 Plays 4
1 Plays 12	12 Plays 6	1 Plays 6	6 Plays 5

Round 5	Round 6	Round 7	Round 8
8 Plays 9	9 Plays 1	9 Plays 10	10 Plays 1
7 Plays 10	10 Plays 8	8 Plays 11	11 Plays 9
2 Plays 11	11 Plays 7	7 Plays 12	12 Plays 8
3 Plays 12	12 Plays 2	2 Plays 6	6 Plays 7
4 Plays 6	6 Plays 3	3 Plays 5	5 Plays 2
1 Plays 5	5 Plays 4	1 Plays 4	4 Plays 3

Round 9	Round 10	Round 11
10 Plays 11	11 Plays 1	11 Plays 12
9 Plays 12	12 Plays 10	10 Plays 6
8 Plays 6	6 Plays 9	9 Plays 5
7 Plays 5	5 Plays 8	8 Plays 4
2 Plays 4	4 Plays 7	7 Plays 3
1 Plays 3	3 Plays 2	1 Plays 2

Numbers that pair up 1 and 12: 2 and 11: 3
and 10: 4 and 9: 5 and 8: 6 and 7:

If there are 2 teams from the same venue in the same league you have to allocate these teams one of the paired numbers. This will prevent both teams from drawing a home match at the same time. Also of course in a league it is usual to reverse the fixtures for the second half of the season. This means that all of the home games become aways and all the away games become home matches.

Organising A K.O.

League tables have been discussed in the previous section but KOs have to run on a different basis. The main thing to remember is that the number of entrants has to be brought into line with a multiple of two by itself. This is because each round of games halves the number remaining. So for a KO you need any of the following number of players; 2, 4, 8, 16, 32, 64, 128, 256 and so on. It is unlikely that you will have exactly one of these numbers so byes or preliminary games will need to be introduced. It does not matter which you use to get the numbers right, both work just as well.

For instance if you have 40 players you can give 4 byes in the first round. This leaves 36 players to play 8 games which with the 4 byes will bring the number down to 32, or you can have 8 preliminary games which will leave 32 as well. It depends how you want to word it really. In other words take the nearest multiple of 2 away from the number of players and this will either be the byes or the number of preliminary games depending on whether the number is higher or lower than the number of players.

eg 1;- 60 players. $64 - 60 = 4$
4 byes with 60 players
playing 32 games with 4 byes mixed in draw.

or

eg 1;- 60 players - 32 leaves 28
 28 Preliminary games with 56 players gives 28 winners
 60 -56 gives 4 byes + 28 winners = 32 next round
 eg 2;- 70 players. $128 - 70 = 58$
 58 byes with 70 players
 playing 64 games with 58 byes mixed in draw.
 or
 eg 2;- 70 players - 64 leaves 6
 6 preliminary games with 12 players gives 6 winners
 70 -12 gives 58 byes + 6 winners = 64 next round

Organisers should allow 15 minutes for a game consisting of three legs of 501. Shorter or Greater distances should be calculated at the rate of minus or plus 1 minute per leg per 100 points, i.e. three minutes per leg for 301 or 4 minutes per leg of 401.

Three legs of 301 - average time 9 minutes
Three legs of 401 - average time 12 minutes
Three legs of 501 - average time 15 minutes
Three legs of 601 - average time 18 minutes
Three legs of 701 - average time 21 minutes
Three legs of 1001 - average time 30 minutes

It is vital for any organiser to know roughly how long a tournament is likely to take to be played if it is going to be played in one session. The answer will depend on the standard of those taking part, but the following table is a useful rough guide. The estimated times in the table below will be shortened considerably if following rounds are started before all games in previous rounds are completed.

Table Of Times Taken For 501 Knock Outs

Number Players	Number Boards	Estimated Time
16-32	4	1 Hr 15Mins - 2 Hr 15 Mins
32-64	4	2 Hr 15 Mins - 4 Hr 15 Mins
64-128	8	2 Hr 30 Mins - 4 Hr 30 Mins
128-256	8	4 Hr 30 Mins - 8 Hr 30 Mins
128-256	16	2 Hr 45 Mins - 4 hr 45 Mins
256-512	16	4 Hr 45 Mins - 8 Hr 45 Mins
256-512	32	3 Hours - 5 Hours

Table Of Times Taken For 301 Knock Outs

Number Players	Number Boards	Estimated Time
16-32	4	45 Mins - 1 Hr 20 Mins
32-64	4	1 Hr 20 Mins - 2 Hr 30 Mins
64-128	8	1 Hr 30 Mins - 2 Hr 40 Mins
128-256	8	2 Hr 40 Mins - 5 Hours
128-256	16	1 Hr 40 Mins - 2 Hr 50 Mins
256-512	16	2 Hr 50 Mins - 5 Hr 15 Mins
256-512	32	1 Hr 50 Mins - 3 Hours

Popular Games On A Dartboard.

Halve It

Player	20	D3	19	T16	11	7	Bull
Bob	80	86	143	191	95	109	54
Bill	40	52	90	138	160	80	40
George	60	66	104	52	74	88	44
Sue	40	20	10	5	2	1	51
Pete	60	30	68	39	50	25	12
Fred	100	106	144	72	36	50	25

The score board should be laid out as above minus the scores of course. This game can be played with any number of players whos names should be listed down the side. The numbers across the top can be changed but it is usual to finish on the bull and have some difficult numbers included.

The number and letter D3 refers to double 3 and by the same token T16 means treble 16.

The idea of the game is to end up on the highest score after the last number has been thrown for by everyone.

Players take it in turns to throw for each number and if they hit it they score the amount that they hit ie. Bob hit 4 x 20 and scored 80 points. If the player misses altogether with all three darts then their score is halved. This can be seen from Pete's attempt at Double 3 which he missed.

As can be seen from Bill's score of 160 it is consistency throughout that will win the game usually. However Sue only scored on 20's and had her score halved on every throw but a lucky dart hit the bull giving her second place. To avoid this the numbers selected should enable a good player to hit a high score when hit and not be all low numbers.

In a pub game like this it is usual for all players to put some money in for a prize, perhaps 50p each or less if there are a lot of players.



Mickey Mouse

Player 1	Player 2
III	20 III
III	19 III
III	18 III
III	17 III
III	16 III
III	15 III
III	14 III
III	13 III
III	12 III
Score	Score

I don't know if this is the proper name for this game but it is the name by which I have always known it. The scoreboard should be drawn up as shown with the numbers 12 - 20 down the centre. The I's represent lives and part of the game is for each player to try and score out all of them. Doubles count as 2 and trebles as 3. After a player is the first to hit 3 of a kind he scores every hit after that on that number.

He continues to score on that particular number until his opponent hits 3 as well and then the number is rubbed out and no further score can be made on it. The players then move on to another number.

Some players try and make it impossible for their opponents to score by hitting three of all the numbers first and others go for a big score on one particular number until it is wiped out.

The player with the highest score when no more scores can be made is the winner. As can be seen from the above explanation tactics can enter this game as well as scoring power.

Also of course it causes the players to practice their accuracy on a wide range of numbers. There is no reason why lower numbers cant be used instead of those illustrated but the principle is the same

Killer and Blind Killer

Player	No	Killer	Lives
John	12	-	III
Paul	10	K	III
Fred	3	-	II
Sue	1	-	II
Andy	8	K	III
Alex	7	K	I

The marking board should be set out as above for the different players which can be any number. When starting to play each player must take it in turns to throw at the board with their left hand or if they are left handed with their right hand. One dart is thrown and which ever number it lands in is the number that the players lives depend on and the number should be written next to their names. For instance when the above players threw up John hit a 12 and Paul hit a 10.

After all the players have thrown and the numbers have been scored the game can commence. The first object of the game is for each player to hit the double of the number scored next to their name. When they have done this they have a K put in the next column.

Now they can wipe off their opponents lives by hitting the various doubles next to their names. So if Paul hits a double 3 then Fred loses a life. If Paul were to hit a double 7 then as Alex has only one life left he would be out. As can be seen from the scoreboard players can lose lives before they become killers themselves.

Indeed it is possible to be out with all lives lost before a player hits their own double to start.

This game can be a lot of fun with more players because then it is more likely to have two numbers next to each other. This can result in a player hitting their own double after they have become a killer. If they do this they lose a life. Also if they hit someone else's number before they become a killer themselves then they lose a life off their own.

One way of completely changing the game is to play it blind. In this version numbered playing cards are shuffled and to start each player has to hit any double. Then they draw a card the number on which refers to their lives. It is usual to put into the pack at least two dead or extra numbers to confuse players.

Order	No	Lives
John K	1	III
Paul	2	II
Fred K	3	III
Sue	4	I
Andy	5	III
Alex K	6	II
	7	III
	8	I

It must be noted that the number 6 does not refer to Alex but refers to the unknown person who holds the card. This person only has two lives left and should own up when they are lost.

John may be a killer but hold card number 4 with only one life left. As it is quite a popular number this number would not last long. On the other hand number 4 may be a dead card with no one holding it. If it is it should be left in the pack until everybody has drawn a card because it is possible for someone to become a killer and then obtain a card/number with no lives left and be out straight away.

In this game it is fun to guess at who has which number because of course if you go for your own number to throw off the opposition and you hit it you lose a life.

In this game the fact that the players are blind prevents them from ganging up on each other as they cant usually guess each others cards until the game is nearly over. Also in this version it is not always the best player who wins as someone who draws the number 1 is likely to last longer than the person who has number 8 which is an easier number to hit.

The game is good practice at doubles but as only certain numbers can be used its usefulness is limited but is great fun.

Cricket

This game is best played by two players, or two sides. One side has to bowl while the other bats taking it in alternate goes. The side bowling has to hit as many 25s or bulls as they can and for everyone hit they knock off one wicket (two for a bull).For the other side to score they have to hit over 60 and any excess is scored as runs. So if the batsman hit a score of 85 he actually score 25 points.

The scoring point of 60 can be lowered for easier games.

If a batsman hits a 25 he loses a life automatically and does not score. Any dart out of the board also loses a life. Conversely if a bowler throws a dart outside the treble ring it automatically scores points for the opposition.

It is usual to play with 11 lives each and to play twice but again this is optional.

Big Un's And Little Un's

This is a simple game played with any number of players. The players names are chalked up on the board in order of rotation with three lives each next to their names.

To start the game the last player throws one dart on the board left handed and wherever it lands is the target for the first player. Trebles and doubles count as separate targets as do the small and large segments of a number.

After a number has been set the next player attempts to hit it. They only have three darts at it and if they miss they lose a life. If they hit it with their first dart they have two darts to set another number but the first dart to actually score is the number set. If they use all three darts to hit the target number and score with their third dart they then have three darts to set a new number. So they could go for a double with their first two putting them outside the board and if they missed they could play safe and go for the bull with their last dart. Bounce outs are just hard luck.

Some players play the rule that the person who set the target does not go for it and others do. As players lose all their lives they are knocked out until the winner remains.

Round The Clock

This is another simple game for any number of players and does not even need a score board. In this game the players start by aiming at the number one and then if they hit it they go for a two and so on finishing on the bull.

They each have three darts in turn at their targets but if they score three hits in one go they get another three darts. Trebles and

doubles usually count as three and two hits respectively. So if someone were to hit a treble one he would miss out twos and threes and go directly to fours. The first player to reach and hit the bull wins.

This game can be played with your own variations as the rules are very flexible.

There are many other simple games that can be played on a dart board and you can even make up your own as long as everybody can agree to the rules. Some quick games to be played while players are just taking it in turns to throw up at the board to warm up before a game are beat the score and get the finish. In the first each player simply tries to get a higher score than the previous and loses a life if he fails. In the second someone calls out a finish and players take it in turns to try and hit it losing a life when they fail and setting a new target when they succeed.



Darting Anecdotes.

During the many years I have played darts numerous incidents have happened, some of which were distinctly amusing and others which were poignant. Some of them even carry a cautionary tale so I will recall a few of them here.

My first taste of success came in 1976 when I had the most wins for my team in the season. For this I had the honour to represent my team in an exhibition match against some professionals on presentation night. I played quite well and won my game but unfortunately for me the marker had called the wrong score. After pointing out the error we restarted the game that I then lost on the final double. When the man of the match trophy was awarded I received it for my honesty. The glory was all mine and I liked it.

On different nights I played for different teams and after the match on a Friday I was in the habit of giving the captain a lift home. One day after a particularly heavy downpour we were on the way home when I saw a pool of water lying across the road. I said to him "Mind your feet as we go through this puddle as there is a hole in the floor," and he laughed politely. We did not slow down and must have hit the water at about 30 miles per hour.

His laughter was cut short and turned into a howl of horror as the water sprayed through the hole. There was so much water on the windscreen I had to stop and wipe the inside before I could see to continue. He was absolutely soaked from head to toe. Fortunately the spray was restricted to his side mostly so I could see the funny side of it but strangely enough he did not laugh.

On another night whilst playing for another pub there was a terrible gale blowing. We had been practising and drinking a few

pints when I decided it was time to pay a call to nature. The only way out was through a glass panelled door and I was in a hurry.

The door crashed to behind me smashing the glass and sending shards everywhere. As I was the culprit I tried to clear up the mess. Clumsily I cut myself quite badly on my fingers. As the blood dripped over the lino floor I fainted collapsing in a heap. It was some minutes before I was over the shock enough to walk without fainting again and with my hand bandaged in a handkerchief we made our way to the match where I played and actually won.

For a while I worked at a bank and I found out that the bank encouraged many inter-branch sporting activities , including darts. So I immediately entered. The local area competitions were played close to the branch where I worked so there was no problem in playing out of hours in an evening. I won the West Midlands And Wales Region without to much difficulty and was told the finals would be held in London at the banks expense. It meant having the Friday afternoon off and meeting up with some others in Birmingham and then travelling down on the train. We all then stayed a couple of nights in a hotel that the bank owned and travelled back on the Sunday.

The competition was played at the banks sports and social club on the Saturday. Before I went my manager sullenly said " If you are going to have a weekend at the banks expense in London you had better win." I played well all day until the final match came and then the pressure got to me and I crumbled.

My opponent was a county player of some repute but he admitted that he would have struggled against me, if I had played in the finals the way I had earlier.

When I got back to the bank and told my manager that I had come second he seemed to relax his view on my darts nights a little as long as it was not talked about in the bank.

During my time with the bank I was sent on a weeks course in London at the banks expense.

In the evenings during my course I would go out to the local pubs in search of a game of darts. On one such night I was offered a second hand set of tungsten darts for %10. This was 20 odd years ago and tungsten darts were very expensive then so I tried them and decided to buy them. Then I found that I had not got enough money on me so I told him I was off to the nearest bank to get some money. This was in the early days of cash dispenser cards and mine would only give me £10 but as this was enough I was happy. On my way back from the bank for some reason I took the penknife that I always carried in my coat out of my pocket and opened the blade. Then I put it back with the blade still open and held it by the handle.

When I returned to the pub the man who had offered me the darts came up to me and pulled out a knife. He threatened me with it saying that I should give him all my money. Then he told me to take my hands out of my pocket which I did still holding the knife. He took one look at it and backed off saying that he did not want any trouble. Then he sold me the darts and I went on my way none the worse for the unpleasant incident. I started to win more and more trophies as success piled on success and I was quite a popular player.

One year I entered the News Of The World competition which was one of the big ones with a car as the first prize. It was held in various stages starting with the first rounds played off in the local pubs. This I won and went on to the local town KO. Again I won and then played at the area finals. This was on a Saturday and when the day came I forgot all about it remembering at the last minute. I rushed to get there on time but was late so I did not get any chance to warm up and relax. Soon after arriving I went up to play and embarrassed, myself I was that bad. Needless to say I lost but it did not disillusion me and I continued to play as much as possible.

A lot of the bigger pubs and clubs held exhibition matches from time to time and I managed to get my name pushed forward to play in several of them as the local underdog against the visiting professional.

One game I remember was against the superstar of the day who was John Lowe. It was 1001 instead of the usual 301 that was supposed to separate the men from the boys but I gave him a good run for his money although I did not beat him.

My first try out for a super league team came at about this time and provides a cautionary tale. I was not registered but the captain decided to play me under someone else's name. I played quite well and won making a turning point in the match for my side. In those days the local teams efforts were reported in the local newspaper and my game was mentioned. Unfortunately the lad whose name I had played under was in hospital and returned to the side some weeks later. When the team played the opposition for the reverse fixture he played under his own name and there was hell to pay. Some of the opposition remembered him playing before and they swore it was a different person which of course it was. So never play under an assumed name because it can lead to the match being forfeited.

One night a car full of the Wednesday team was on its way to a match when the driver was seen to be having trouble with the gears. One bright spark in the back seat piped up "Whats up cant you find the right gear?" At this the irate driver turned in his seat and said "No, here you are you have a go," and then handed him the gear-stick which had come out. We all howled with laughter but after a brief struggle it was replaced without accident.

Another memorable game that I played was in a local hotel. This was a doubles game of 1001 and my partner and myself played a couple of Welsh internationals. Every time score of 100 or more was made and called out over the loudspeaker system the audience would applaud. At one point during the game one of our opponents went up to the oche and scored 140. The audience

politely applauded and then my partner took his throw, again scoring 140. The audience clapped a little more enthusiastically and after they had quietened down my other opponent had his throw again scoring 140. This time the applause took longer to die down and while it was still going I took my throw.

When I hit 140 the roof nearly came off and we had to wait several minutes for silence. Nowadays, 20 years later standards have gone up but then this was exceptional throwing. My partner and myself went on to win that game much to everybody's delight.

On a Wednesday we had one player who had an artificial leg which brought us all a little laugh. As usual it was a match night and we were all sitting huddled around the board watching the games when a dart bounced out of the board hitting the aforementioned player firmly in his artificial leg where it stuck. A gasp went round the room as all the opposition saw it and felt his pain. He did not flinch, well he had not felt anything as it had not hit his shortened leg, and another gasp went up as he pulled it out and returned it to the player who stood there open mouthed.

One other game worth note was in a local pub. Again it was 1001 against someone who was some international competition winner and I won. This time however his exhibition partner played with 6 inch nails performing various trick shots. As arrogant as ever I thought if I can beat your partner I can throw nails as well as you. I armed myself with some sharpened 6 inch nails and started practising at home. Within a few weeks I was not only getting them to stick in but was achieving some accuracy with them so I took them down to my local pub and put on my own exhibition. It was the birthday of one of the lads I knew and he was a little intoxicated to say the least. If he had not been I doubt whether he would have been persuaded to stand in front of the dart board with a stick of chalk in his mouth. I knocked the chalk out of his mouth and coins from his fingers. Then I played a few regular games of 301 with the nails. The captain and every body watching was impressed but when he got closer to the board he saw the damage the thick rough points were doing to it and he banned me from playing with them on the board again.

Some years ago after my skills on the board had started to wane a little I had one memorable game for a new team. It was a friendly but quite serious and as a new player the captain wanted to see what I could do. The side was not drawn but picked so he put me against a county player. It was just one of those nights when my darts went.

It was 501 and I started with 180 followed by 140. Then I hit 100+ and finished with the next 3 darts leaving my opponent well behind. One of the opposition was heard to say to a friend "Where the hell did you get him from? To which my friend replied "I knew him when he was good!"

I have this one friend who particularly likes a drink. When told by the doctor that the drink limit was 11 pints. He said " Oh, I rarely drink that much in a night ." To which the doctor replied, "I mean 11 pints a week."

At a match in a local town one night myself, my friend ,his wife and another couple were sitting together at a table when a young girl doing a drinks promotion for the brewery came round and gave everyone a free pint. As my friend was the only one who liked this beer he felt obliged to drink all 5 pints for us before continuing with his favourite brew. This was the only night I have ever seen him merry.

It is often said that 301 is anybody's game but I would say to this that the player who starts first is most likely to win.

This was born out in one recent competition that I witnessed.

Two good county players were playing each other. One started on 100 first throw and his opponent hit 101. The next throw they both hit 140 each leaving themselves 60 and 61 respectively. Needless to say the first one went up and finished in 9 darts. His opponent was sick but he had only had 6 darts and nobody can turn on a 6 dart game just like that although it is theoretically possible.

When playing any of the games mentioned in this book make sure that you have enough lives chalked up for a good game. Two of my friends suggested that we play 3 handed cricket in the pub one night. One friend was an average sort of pub player and the other to put it politely was not so good. He did not want the game to last too long so he only chalked up 6 wickets each. We started and I went for a score first getting a respectable 245.

Then the not so bad player went getting all out for a miserly 47. My other friend chuckled confidently and we started the next round. We bowled for the wickets before he could score and took 4 wickets with our first 6 darts between us. Then he went up and had 3 darts failing to score. I went up and the first dart hit tasking his remaining 2 wickets. He was out for a duck with one go at the board. After this he said, " This is a silly game " and put his darts away.



Darts Phrases.

Most sporting activities have words and phrases peculiar to that activity and darts is no exception. A lot of them are colloquial expressions and therefore might not be used outside the Midlands where I live and play darts, but some of them are used by commentators on the television. Indeed some of them have even arisen because of games on the telly.

Twenty six is referred to as "Bed and Breakfast" and called out as two and six. This goes back to the old coaching days when bed for the night was 2/6d.

The phrase "Highway robbery" is used when a player is at some stage of the game a long way behind the other who gets to a finish and can't get his double allowing the first player to catch up and win the game.

"Shanghai" is used to describe a throw of three darts where one hits a single number, the second hits the double and the third the treble all of the same number.

You will often hear television commentators say something like "this player needs shanghai on twenties," meaning he needs to hit treble twenty, single and finish on the double.

Getting your feet wet means that your toes are over the oche or throwing line. If you do this in a match you will get told about it in no uncertain terms. You should "toe the line."

A Bristow refers to an infamous score that Eric Bristow once made on a televised event when he hit three single ones in the same throw.

If you have "got it surrounded" it means that you are very close to your double and could not get any closer without hitting it.

123 Never wins a game again refers to a televised match where a player was well in front and had 123 left but lost the crucial game.

Three in a bed or three in a bed for game usually refers to scoring 3 treble twenties at once where in some parts of the country you can claim the game for such a score.

If you have double trouble it means that you cant get the right double to start or finish a game.

The brush refers to a game where one player cant get started and the other player is on a finish and gets it first. A brush is often unkindly drawn on one side of the marking board.

Under 11 a penny in the box. This phrase was used a lot when pubs had charity boxes by the dart board and anyone who scored under 11 in one throw had to put a penny in the box.

If you are said to be on form or if you have got your eye in you are playing exceptionally well.

They will give you that in Cannock. This phrase is peculiar to the town of Rugeley and surrounds which has a lot of rivalry with the town of Cannock. It means that you did not hit what you were aiming at,(usually a finishing double) but you were near enough for the people of Cannock who are not very fussy.

A Floater is a lucky dart that goes high and hits a good score such as a double 20 when you were aiming for treble 20.

A good marker is a dart that is very close to the target but not in and not obstructing the target.

A pint for the marker is often shouted when two competing players both have exactly the same score remaining on the board.

If you are in a mess it means that you have left yourself a small odd number after going for a finish and hitting an awkward score.

In the wrong bed means you have hit the wrong double (usually) to finish or start a game. If someone says you could play better with you eyes closed he means that you are playing very badly.

Muck Spreading is something ladies often do and refers to lucky scores of trebles and doubles that you were not aiming at.

If someone shouts " Quiet please , game on " he is asking for silence as the game is about to start.

You ~~B~~Bull Up+at the start of every game when each player takes it in turn to throw one dart at the bull for the nearest to start.

Someone is said to be suffering if they cant hit what they are aiming at but they are getting close with many attempts (usually a double)

A raised Oche is usually a piece of wood securely fastened to the floor where the throw line is. Being raised it prevents people from treading over the line.

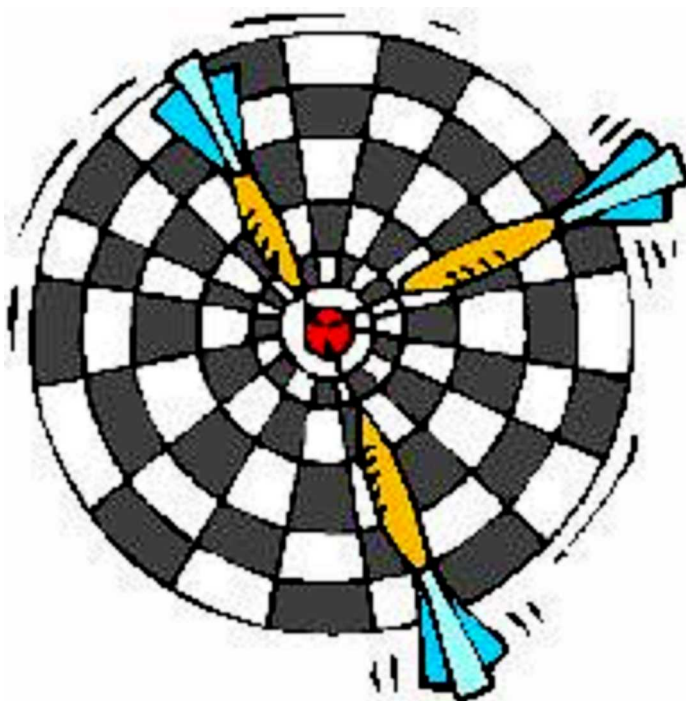
If a dart bounces out of the board and falls behind the throw line it is often said that you can throw it again. In league rules you cant.

If a dart is on the wire it is actually touching the wire of the required segment but not in.

Shouting check the board is the only time when it is excusable to interrupt a game by shouting. This must be done if the marker has put up the wrong score or added up the score wrongly. It is urgent because the rules state if the throwers both have a throw after the mistake is made the score has to stand whatever the error.

If a player is said to be walking it means that he thought that the last dart he threw at a finishing double was in because it was that close and he has taken a step foreword with darts still to throw.

Arrows or Arrows is of course another name for a set of darts dating back to the old days when players used miniature arrows to throw.



Brief Biographies Of The Superstars

Jim Pike.

Jim Pike was a darts superstar of the war years in the 1940s. After winning the News Of The World competition he and 3 other champions toured around the British Isles playing all comers at exhibitions staged at pubs and clubs. They raised a large sum of money through their winnings which they donated to charities for the war disabled. The group played many thousands of games , winning the vast majority making Jim Pike a household name.

At that time there was not much money in the game and the only way for him to make money was to start his own darts company. The 4 started Jim Pike Darts in 1945 and for many years Jim Pike darts were the only darts to have with their brass barrels, cane shafts and paper flights. As other superstars have come along they too have had darts named after them but Jim Pike darts as a company is still trading with up to the minute styles and quality darts.

John Lowe

John Lowe was born in the village of New Tupton, near Chesterfield, on July the 21st 1945. He grew up around the Chesterfield area in Derbyshire and has made the town the centre of his darting activities as he has for many years owned a darting accessories shop in the town.

He married a lady called Diane who gave him two children, a boy and a girl who are both now grown up, but he calls himself a family man even though his darts takes him all over the country

and sometimes even the world resulting in many overnight stays away from home.

As he grew old enough to go into a pub and have a drink he did and this was to change his life. One night in the Butchers Arms in Brimington, Derbyshire he was enjoying a quiet drink watching a game of darts when one of the players went out the back and asked him to take his turn. He was hooked and at the age of 21 in 1966 he started playing for the White Heart Pub at New Tupton in the Clay Cross League on a Monday night.

He was by trade a Joiner but it was not long before he gave this up and turned professional.

In 1972 the Super Leagues were formed and in 1975 John signed up for the Arundel Club in Sheffield for their Super League Team. It was not long before he was picked for the brand new Yorkshire County side.

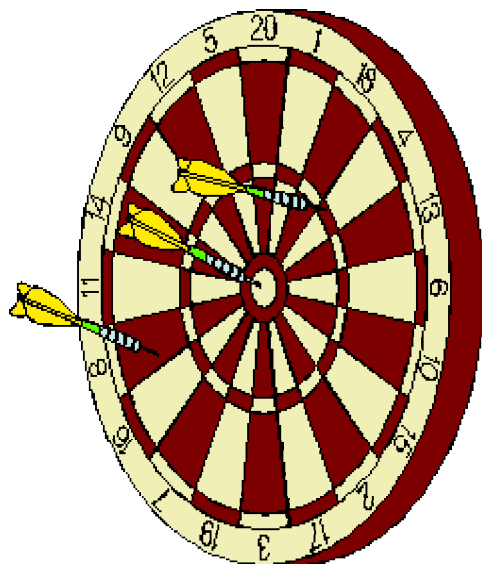
During 1976 he turned professional and by 1975 he was gaining quite a reputation as a leading darts player and was asked to name 16 top flight players for the Embassy World Professional Championship which was a new competition to be set up.

In 1984 he set a new milestone in darts when he was playing on television in the MFI World Matchplay Championship. During the competition he hit a 9 dart 501 game which was the first in such a competition and won him a prize of £100,000 just for that game.

Since then John Lowe has won most of the major titles around the country with a tally of several hundred competitions including The World Masters, The World Matchplay and The World Championship. He has played for and indeed has Captained England many times in his career.

As an added string to his bow he wrote a column in the Daily Star for many years and even went on to write a definitive book on how to play darts like a professional. He has also successfully published his autobiography.

He is an old fashioned player with his ideas which still give sound advice to youngsters today. He believes in getting to a match at least an hour before it is due to start so that he can have a drink and relax as well as get some practice. He also believes that a player should stand still on the oche, not moving unless absolutely necessary. Like Eric Bristow, the next player in this book, John is a keen golfer when not playing darts.



Eric Bristow

Eric's parents were married for 20 years and married quite young. They were ordinary working class folk who lived in London. On the 25th of April at 7-50am Eric was born in Hackney hospital. He was not a particularly big baby and gave no signs that he would grow to be 6ft 3 and 15 stone. Eric was an only child and is remembered by his teachers and school friends as being a cheeky boy.

In his early school days he was good at arithmetic but it was sports that he liked. He never shone at any sport until he grew older and his father encouraged him to play golf. Indeed if his father had been wealthier Eric might have gone on to become a professional golfer instead of a world famous darts player.

His father was quite old fashioned in as much as he did not want him going to a school where there was the distraction of girls so Eric was persuaded to go to Hackney Grammar School.

At the age of 9 he first started to play darts but it was not for a few years before the game really caught his imagination and he became dedicated to the game.

As a teenager he started smoking and developed other anti social pastimes which sometimes got him into trouble with the police. He experimented with drugs until one of his friends died from an overdose. He also took to petty crime which on one occasion ended in a fine from the courts, but mostly he escaped severe punishment. On several instances he shop lifted and a couple of times he took a car without the owners consent and drove it away. Nowadays this is of course called joy riding.

In 1971 he started to go to darts matches with his father at the Arundel Arms. His father encouraged him and out of some gambling winnings bought him a set of tungsten darts which were

starting to become popular. By this time he was becoming a useful player and even then had the trademark of the little finger cocked in the air.

Although he had attended a grammar school he was not destined to gain a good education and left without taking any exams. But when he left school he had little trouble finding a job for which he earned £12 a week. He had several jobs but did not settle in any of them and it was not long before he decided he wanted to be the best darts player there had ever been.

By the age of 17 he was winning small local competitions and playing for London County. In 1975 he threw for England and then there was no holding him back.

From an early age Bristow gave up work to concentrate on his darts and become a professional, however it was a few years before he started to make any serious money at the sport.

The game was becoming more popular and more money was available in it making it possible for him to earn a very good living at an early age, more than a professional football player of the day.

In 1976 one of his friends brought a memento back from America in the shape of a T shirt with the pub's name and logo on it of the Crafty Cockney. Eric was impressed by the shirt and started wearing it to matches.

After he had been seen on the television the slogan on the back became his nickname which has stuck ever since.

In 1979 Bristow became a regular partner of Maureen Flowers in doubles games and as they spent more time in each other's company romance blossomed. She was several years older than himself but as most of his previous girlfriends had been older as well this did not prove to be a problem.

Early in the 1980s Maureen wanted him to invest some of his rapidly accumulating wealth and in 1984 he bought a disused club in Burslem, Stoke on Trent.

After enlarging the car park he obtained a new license for it and reopened it as "The Crafty Cockney."

Eric Bristow went on to become the best player in the world for a number of years and has won just about every tittle going but he did go through a bad patch where he could not release his darts properly. This problem became known as Dartitus and gained recognition as a genuine condition.

Phil Taylor

Born in August 1960 in Stoke-On-Trent Phil Taylor is happily married with 4 children.

He has made the potteries and in particular, Newcastle-Under-Lyme the centre of his phenomenal darting career. In his early 40s he has been around quite a while and been at the top of the darts world for a decade.

Taylor worked his way up through the system to make a name for himself but it was his friendship with Bristow, who had made his home in the Potteries, that was to spur him on to superstardom and turn him into the greatest darts player that we have ever seen.

In 1990 he won the Embassy but a couple of years later was one of the 16 players that broke away from the BDO and formed the Professional Darts Corporation whose aim was greater televised coverage of the sport. Since 1992 when he again won the Embassy he has not been able to play in the competition and has played in the rival Skol event instead. Almost every competition he enters he wins and it is rare for him to lose a leg.

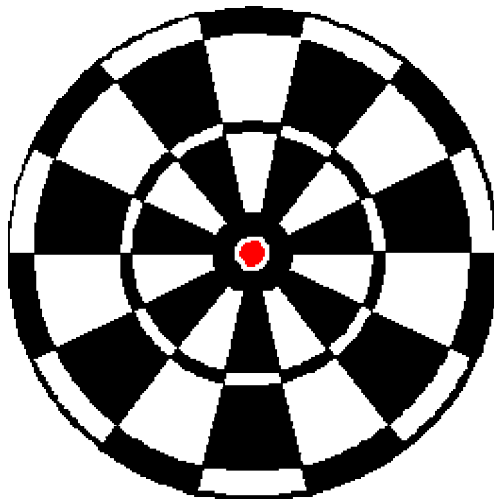
He has been world champion many times and it seems unlikely that anybody will take the title away from him for some time to

come although as he himself says %There are some good young players out there.+

He believes darts should have the same respect as any other sport and that darts players should exercise regularly to keep themselves fit. Although he is a stocky man he does not have a typical darts players physique with a big beer belly. In fact his love of motoring keeps his alcohol intake down to a minimum.

In the new years honours in 2001 Phil Taylor received an MBE which as a fervent royalist he was delighted with. The only other darts player to receive such an award was Eric Bristow and Taylor feels the awards gives great publicity and recognition to the sport in general.

He plans to stay in the sport as long as he is still making a good living and thinks that there is still a few more years in him yet. He has recently sold his pub so that he can concentrate on his game more.

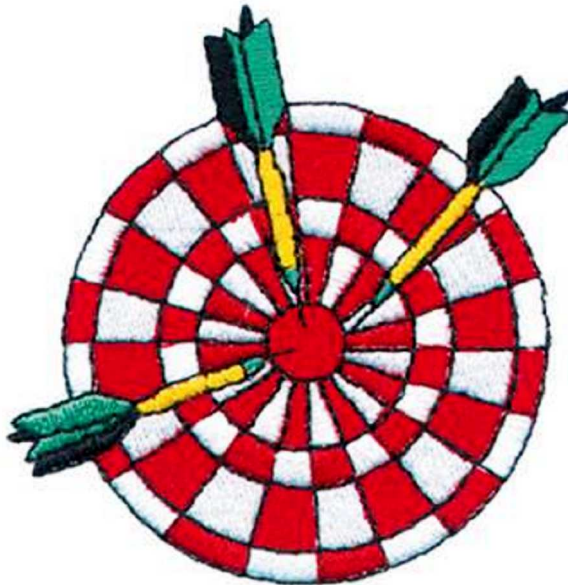


Cliff Lazarenko

Cliff Lazarenko is perhaps the biggest darts player on the professional circuit standing at 6 feet 4 inches with a large frame to go with it. Weighing in at over 20 stone he certainly deserves his nickname of Big Cliff.

He was born in Hampshire and has made Wellingborough his home. Cliff is married with no children and counts snooker amongst his interests.

Before turning professional he worked on a building site as a labourer until 1975. His first big win was the British Open in 1980. He went on to make a name for himself in several other competitions in the 80s but recently he seems to have lost his sparkle. He still plays in a lot of competitions but never seems to make it to the finals.



Keith Deller

Keith Deller is married with two children, a boy and a girl and lives in Ipswich where he was born. At 42 he still has many years of playing darts ahead of him and in recent years has consistently been in the top 10 for the world rankings although he has been around for quite a long time.

It was back in the early 80s when at the age of 23 he became world champion from nowhere. Since then he has won many competitions and is recognised as one of the stalwarts of the profession.

At 5 feet 11 inches he is not small but on the stage against some of the other players he looks it. Most players seem to be 6 feet or more apart from Jockey Wilson who has now gone into retirement.

Like a lot of players he likes the game of golf and is also a keen football fan. He also counts walking amongst his leisure activities.

Rod Harrington

Rod Harrington is a comparative newcomer to the professional scene in darts as he has only been at the top for some 10 years or so. His first real big win was in 1991 when he won the World Masters. Recently he has won numerous competitions and has even had the honour of being one of the few to knock Phil Taylor out of a competition. He was ranked No 1 at the turn of the century and is still going strong.

At 6 feet 1 inch he is not a small man but he does not have the usual beer belly associated with darts players and likes to keep himself fit with regular exercise. His image is not typical in other ways because he can always be seen playing in a waistcoat like the snooker players do. His style and skill has brought him a big following every where he goes.

In his mid 40s he hopes to play darts for years to come to support his wife and 3 children where he lives in Essex.

Bob Anderson

Bob Anderson is amongst the older players on the darts circuit as he was born in 1947 and his world ranking has deteriorated in recent years. Some people believe that he is past his prime as a player but his lack of ranking points is partly due to his reluctance to travel to distant competitions.

He has been a professional for over 15 years and has a stage shirt that he always wears and like Bristow this has given him a nickname. The shirt is of cowboy style, hence the nickname of the Limestone Cowboy.

At 6 feet 3 inches he is one of the tallest darts players on the professional circuit but does not have the usual heavysset build.

Bob Anderson lives in Wiltshire with his wife and two children and like so many darts players counts golf as one of his leisure interests.