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How Huw Ware commands the biggest stages in darts

EXCLUSIVES:

HUW WARE, LEWIS JONES, NITIN KUMAR & MORE

FEATURES:

**DARTS REFEREEING, REPLACING JOHN MCDONALD &
THE GROWTH OF INDIAN DARTS**



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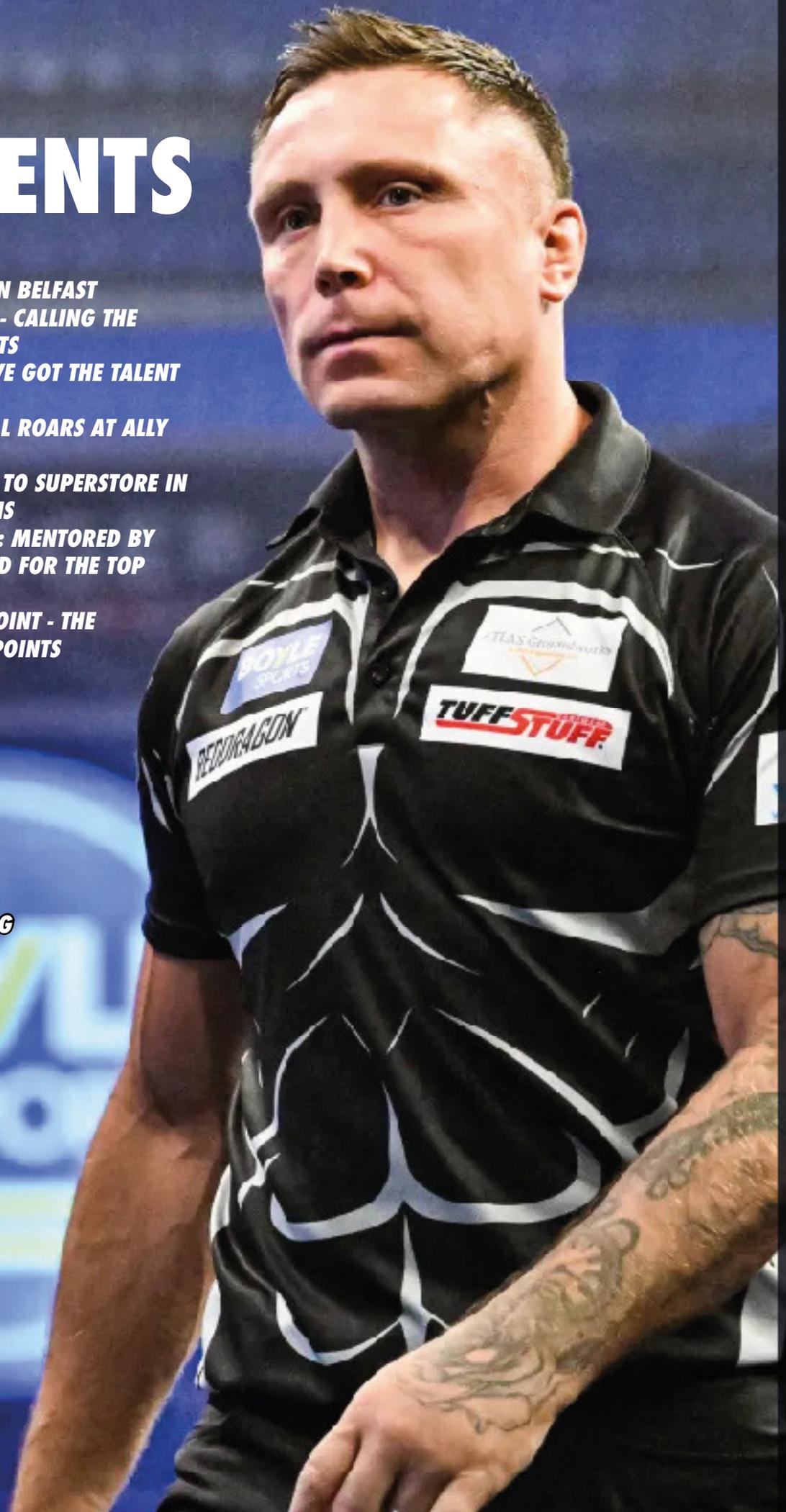
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BULLET FIRES BACK IN BELFAST

Stephen Bunting picks up his first nightly win of this year's Premier League campaign as Rock hits perfection



Credit: PA

By Jacob Bailey

QUARTER FINALS

Little vs Clayton

For the second week running, Clayton dominated the early proceedings, racing into a three-nil lead, pinning a 156 checkout in the process. The World Champ did manage to get himself back into the game, nicking two legs back before Clayton started to get away. 'The Ferret' went 5-2 up and eventually saw out an impressive 6-3 win.

Humphries vs Bunting

Humphries took an early lead before Bunting began to find his rhythm, reeling off three consecutive legs to go 4-2 up.

The world number two then battled back to take it to 4-4 before 'the Bullet' fired in the bullseye to take out 124. He then held throw to see out the match 6-4 to win his first game of this year's Premier League campaign and put his first points on the scoreboard in Northern Ireland.

Price vs van Gerwen

The Welshman flew out of the blocks and broke the MVG throw early with a bullseye finish to round off a 123. MVG then fought back, reeling off the next three legs before Price broke to pull it back to 3-2. The Dutchman then smashed in another two legs on the spin before Price fought back to force a last leg decider. 'The Iceman' then found his fourth maximum of the contest and fired in a 102 finish to clinch the match.

Van Veen vs Josh Rock

The homecoming of Northern Irishman Josh Rock will be remembered for years to come. The pair traded holds early doors before GVV started to run away with it and went 5-1 up. But Rock wasn't done as he struck perfection, smashing in back-to-back 180s before hammering in a 141 out on double 12 to hit a perfect leg in his hometown. Van Veen would go on to win the match 6-2.

SEMI FINALS

Bunting vs Clayton

Bunting shot out of the

blocks, reeling off the first three legs with minimum fuss, taking out his second 123 of the night in the process too. Clayton couldn't get a look in as Bunting continued to run away with it and rounded off a brilliant display in a 6-0 demolition.

Price vs van Veen

An impressive start for both saw plenty of holds, with it going all the way to 5-5 with neither being able to break their opponent's throw. In an enthralling affair, the game went right down to a decider, with van Veen holding his throw yet again to close out the game 6-5 and put himself into the final.

FINAL

Van Veen vs Bunting

Both players started well, with Bunting running into a two-nil lead and van Veen pulling a leg back. 'The Bullet' managed to reassert control, winning the next two legs to increase his lead to three.

Both then held throw before the Englishman managed to get over the line at 6-2, for his first nightly win of the campaign.



Credit: Sky Sports

Q&A: HUW WARE - CALLING T

From county halls to the World Championship final, Huw Ware has become one of the best in the business - how it all began, handling pressure on the sport's biggest stage

By Alex Tracy

How did it first come about refereeing at such a young age?

"I was 14. I was still very much a player at that point, obsessed with darts and obsessed with playing and becoming World Champion.



Credit: Lawrence Lustig

"One day, we had a friendly match where the caller didn't turn up, so I stepped in. Afterwards, some of the senior players came up to me and said,

'That was really good - do you want to start calling county?'

"I said yes straight away. I never played county darts, but within a week I was refereeing at that level. County Darts is still one of the best training grounds for referees. You're dealing with strong players, big personalities, and competitive matches, but in

an environment where you're allowed to learn. At the time, teams like Yorkshire and Lancashire would come down, and you'd be exposed to top-level darts very early on."

What was it like refereeing on television by the age of 17?

"I was so nervous. My legs were shaking like you wouldn't believe. I don't think anyone could tell, but I could feel it. My first matches were pre-recorded finals at the Winmau World Masters, and once those went well, I was given a senior men's match later

the same day and it was live on television. The first three darts I ever called on TV were 180. No one can take that away from me, even though my call sounds awful when I listen back now."

At that stage, did you think refereeing could be a career?

"Not really. At that time, refereeing in the BDO was basically voluntary. I loved it, but it wasn't something you could live off. So, alongside darts, I went to university and then into sports media, working for BBC Sport Wales. For

a long time, my refereeing and media careers ran side by side."

When did things begin to shift professionally?

"I joined the Professional Darts Corporation (PDC) in 2016, but opportunities were limited at first because there was already a very established refereeing team. I'd do the odd European Tour event or on the secondary stage at the UK Open.

"It wasn't until after COVID, around 2021, that things really changed. My workload increased, and refereeing became my full-time living rather than something alongside another career."

What do you remember about refereeing the World Championship final?

So I've had a few matches in my career, which I look back on, and they have just been a blur. I can't remember much about them. My television debut, my Lakeside debut, my Premier League Darts debut and that



Credit: PDC

THE BIGGEST GAME IN DARTS

the most recognisable voices in professional darts. Alex Tracy spoke to him about and the adversity that comes with refereeing at the top level.

World Championship Final. It's such a fast game, and is in a league of its own. I was so focused on not making a mistake that I don't remember much else. You feel the weight of the occasion more than pressure from anyone else. The World Final is where careers are defined, and you absolutely feel that standing on stage."

Did the historic significance of that match add pressure?

"Not pressure, but I was aware there might be some significance in being the first openly gay referee to officiate a World Championship final, but I didn't expect the level of attention that followed. I had interviews in Attitude magazine in the UK and Queerty magazine in the US, lots of big sorts of LGBT plus publications, historic publications, and The Times.

"So, it was just the most amazing 10 days. And as I say that level of attention, was what I was not expecting, you know. I felt very



Credit: PDC



honoured and privileged to have that platform, even briefly."

What qualities make a good darts referee beyond knowing the rules?

"Tone, rhythm, and authority. Your voice has to reflect what's happening on stage. If the game is electric, your delivery needs to match that without becoming the focus."

"Authority is important too. If something throws you, take an extra second and get it right. It's always better than panicking and saying something wrong."

How challenging is dealing with deviant crowd behaviour for you?

"It's one of the hardest parts of the job. Whistling and deliberate disruption ruins good darts, and once a player's been

put off, you can't undo it. Everything we do as referees is retrospective – the damage has already been done. I'm a darts purist, and I hate seeing good matches spoiled."

Away from the stage, you're heavily involved in advocacy and inclusion work. Why is that important to you?

"I was approached to take on those roles, and I felt honoured to accept them. I was Stonewall's first ever sport champion in 2018, I'm an LGBT+ ambassador for the PDC, and I also work with Macmillan Cancer Support. All these sorts of different roles that I have has been because I've been offered and I'm honoured to accept them."

What was the idea behind launching your own podcast 'Tops and Tales'?

"The podcast came through my global ambassadorship with Winmau. As a referee, I can't really do opinion-based darts content, so instead I focus on people. I want to show who players really are away from the oche and how their life experiences shape their darts."



LEWIS JONES: "I'VE GOT"

Finding his voice as Lewis Jones embraces the pressure



Lewis Jones
Credit: PDC

By Jacob Bailey

Imagine striding in front of 5,000 merry fans and having to whip them up to a frenzy. Well, that's what Lewis Jones has to do. He's the new kid on the block, and his job is to convey passion and excitement to the already jolly masses. The cockney oozes confidence, and with his cheeky chap and trusting attitude, he clearly believes in himself. He said: "I've got the talent to do it, which I was confident I'd have, but it's also about having the confidence and the balls to do it."

The task of portraying enthusiasm and a sense of calm in that environment can be a whirlwind, and under that pressure, problems start. He got his words muddled, introducing Gian van Veen as a World Championship semi-finalist (he got to the final just a week before).

He also comically announced the Bahrain World

Series into the wrong camera.

The Englishman is not shying away from the heat and even believes that some of it is warranted. When asked, Jones laughed saying: "You're always going to get criticism, and I think some of it is probably correct as well. You're not going to please everybody, but also a lot of people don't like change, and it's been a lot of change."

The enthusiastic caller boasts confidence and was keen to emphasise that replacing what many fans saw as an irreplaceable figure in John McDonald was always going to be a tall order.

Jones said: "It's a huge amount of pressure, and you're going to make mistakes doing it. I think anyone who starts a new job is going to make a mistake or two."

Despite this, Jones still trusts his abilities and does believe that he can one day reach the level of his predecessor. He said: "If I can improve as quickly as I am, I'm quite excited to see how good I can get over the next couple

of years."

'Lew-dog' (as he's known on social media) also wanted to point out that while he does receive some criticism online, in person it's a different story.

He said: "When you actually meet the fans, and you see that they appreciate you, they see that I'm not a bad bloke and that I am improving, those are big confidence boosts for me."

Jones appeared to be a newcomer but had previously worked within the sport for over 15 years, with spells working for Modus Sports Management and the PDC itself. The Portsmouth-born



Credit: PDC

T THE TALENT TO DO IT"

asure of following John McDonald into the spotlight

announcer also had an abundance of experience hosting on stage, having already featured at games in the World Matchplay last year and exhibition events up and down the UK.

Darts have had many great MC's up and down the years, with many fans recognising the iconic voices and bravado alike. John McDonald was the key man on the PDC Circuit over the last twenty years, having produced many of the sport's most iconic moments since the early 2000's. The legendary walk-on for Phil Taylor's final World Championship game still lives long in

the memory.

Jones is eager to fill his role, but he does admire the man who did it all before him and sees him as a role model and a mentor. He said: "They're big boots to fill. John's been an icon of the sport for the last 25 years, we speak regularly, and without him I would not have got to the stage that I'm at now."

To be a darts MC, there are many different elements that a person must have. Character, charisma, and high energy, to name a few - but the new PDC announcer revealed that he thinks it's a different characteristic that is the most important: "You've certainly got to have a voice for it, I've got a vocal coach who is helping with that."

He also revealed just how much preparation goes into what is ultimately a relatively small part of the proceedings. He said: "I prep all games two hours before I go on, script them and then have another vocal warm-up 20 minutes before I go on."

Despite the walk-ons being



John McDonald
Credit: Sandro Halank

the thing that the fans will see the most, it's a different part of the experience that he enjoys the most.

Jones said: "So when the ad breaks come on, I'm up on the stage, getting the fans going, singing Sweet Caroline and to be honest, that's a massive buzz to do those bits as well."

Having announced the walk-ons for some of the sport's biggest names at both the World Championships and Matchplay, it's the UK Open which Jones says he enjoys the most. He joked: "Of course, the Worlds is massive, but I think I've got a bit of a love affair with Minehead. There is something special there - to see the same fans all weekend, you get to know them."

With eight major tournaments remaining and over 500 walk-ons for Jones to call, only time will tell if he can get to the level of his mentor, John McDonald and truly make the role his own.



THE ROYAL BENGAL R

A landmark victory that could change

By Morgan Bennion

You might not associate India with top class darts. But Nitin Kumar is an exception. He comes from a country where darts is played so little that even Kumar's nickname nods to its unpopularity. Nicknamed 'The Royal Bengal', Kumar said: "Ever since I was a kid, I've had this fondness for tigers. One day it just sort of clicked - I was the only sort of 'pro' darts player India had. I was its number

one ranked player and the only player that was serious - I felt I was extinct. While the Royal Bengal Tiger is India's National animal, it's endangered as well. I saw a lot of parallels in this - hence the name."

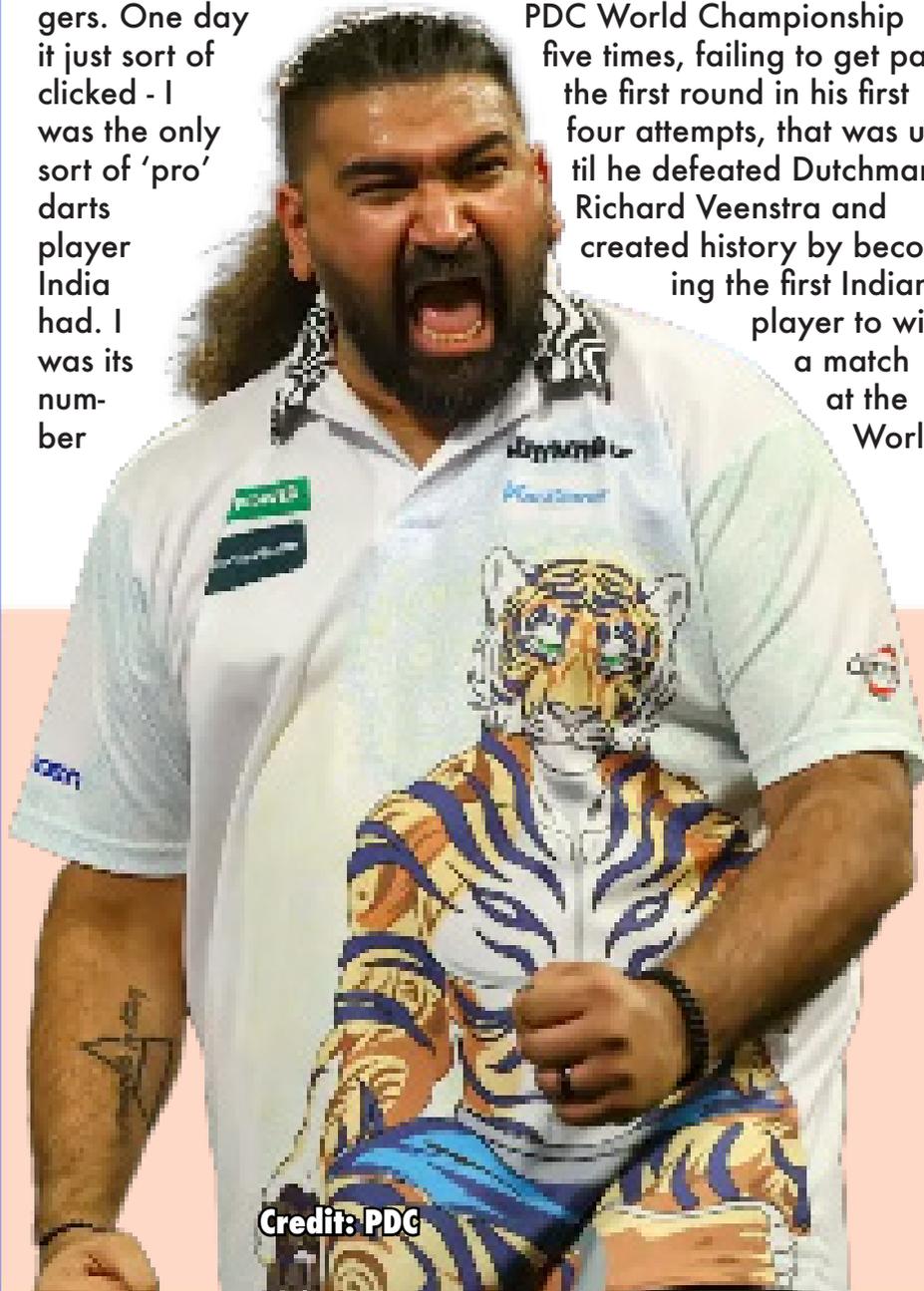
The Alexandra Palace has birthed many 'cult heroes' over the years at the World Darts Championship, and the crowd took an interest in Kumar. He has played at the PDC World Championship five times, failing to get past the first round in his first four attempts, that was until he defeated Dutchman Richard Veenstra and created history by becoming the first Indian player to win a match at the World

Championship. The 40-year-old was delighted with the win and said that he feels proud. He said: "I felt relieved at the time. Now I feel a bit proud. These small victories help my confidence, and the millions of doubts in my head have become a little quieter."

He defied Veenstra's 92 average and five 100+ check-outs to win 3-2 on the biggest stage. Kumar gained fewer legs than The Dutchman but won due to the tournament's unique set-play format. Kumar believes that the crowd getting behind him was great and playing on the big stage is an experience he 'loves'.

He said: "The crowd was great. They willed me on to be honest. For a person like me, it's only when I come for such big tournaments that I ever experience such great crowds. You can never be ready or work towards it - you just have to get used to it. It's an experience that I just love."

It was an incredible achievement for the Indian international, but it was just the first step towards potential greatness at Ally Pally. The win meant that he would face the sixth seed Stephen Bunting in round two. That was unfortunately where the journey would end for Kumar, after he was defeated by the two-time World Championship semi-finalist 3-0. On reflection, Kumar said that he would perform with a different mindset next time. He said: "There



Credit: PDC

ROARS AT ALLY PALLY

...the future of Indian darts forever

was actually no pressure at all. I just wanted to do my best. However, winning the first game put added pressure on myself and I lost the plan I had initially, which was just to enjoy the game. Against Bunting, I tried to do my best. While against Veenstra I was having fun - that's all it was. I won't let that happen again."

Darts has not exactly been a popular sport in the region with most people being unaware that the sport is played professionally, but Kumar says that it is gaining admiration. He said: "It's growing at a very fast pace. We've gotten a great organisation now in the Indian Darts Council (IDC) that is doing a good job in growing darts. The infrastructure is getting set up. We're at a growing stage but eventually, with the numbers, the growth will be huge. It's an awareness issue that we have. Most of India doesn't even know that darts is played professionally. Once that's cracked - the floodgates will open."

The 'Royal Bengal' has been playing the sport for 30



Credit: Nitin Kumar

years, first starting when he was just 10 years old.

"My parents played darts, and I used to practice at home until I got a bit older and could take part in league matches with them," said Kumar.

"It slowly became a family outing, and I got involved in darts slowly, just picking up the darts and throwing randomly alone at home or on tournament practice boards. My first big tournament was the Malaysian Open in 2007. I realised that I was not ready to handle the pressure then and lost against players who weren't very notable but the first step was taken."

He was born in India, but moved to Dubai from a young

age, and has lived there ever since. He plays in local leagues in Dubai and has won various tournaments in his career. Looking towards the future, Kumar says that his immediate aims are to play on the pro tour.

"Go to Q-School, get a tour card, play on the tour and get into the world rankings," said Kumar.

"I hope that eventually I get so old that I can't play darts anymore or become a world champion - whichever comes first."

The question is whether he will be the first Indian player to win the World Darts Championship? We'll have to wait and see.

Nitin Kumar. Remember the name.

FROM SETBACK TO SUPERSTORE

— How redundancy, £500 and a love of darts built a business

By Alex Tracy

A moment of misfortune was the turning point in Karl Holden's life. He opened St Helen's Darts Shop, now one of the leading darts shops in the UK and has helped produce some of the best talent that modern Darts has seen.

For Holden, darts was never just a business idea. It was part of his upbringing. His love for the game started at home, watching his father represent Lancashire in the early 1970s. "That's an easy answer," he said when asked how it all began. "My dad played for Lancashire. He started in 1973-74. I think he won player of the year his first year, and they went on to win the county championship. That was a big thing when I was young. My dad made history, shall we say." Those early memories planted a seed that never really left him.

Owning a darts shop wasn't the original plan. The turning point came when the factory

where he worked shut down, and he was laid off. Instead of heading to the job centre, he decided to take a chance.

"I thought I'd just sell darts because I like darts," he said. With £500 from the St Helens Chamber, he began selling locally, at first visiting pubs and clubs. What started as a way to get by slowly became something bigger. Online sales followed, interest grew, and customers kept asking the same question: could they try the darts before buying them?

At the time, there were no specialist dart shops offering that experience. The idea of 'Try Before You Buy' was born 18 years ago in the old premises, starting with just 50 sets of darts. Today, there are



Credit: Alex Tracy

good, but they still don't work." Providing players with the opportunity to throw before they spend has become the shop's defining feature and a major reason it has continued to grow year after year.

Growth hasn't come without risk. The original shop was small, with low overheads and few financial pressures. Moving into the current St Helen's Megastore changed everything. "Your overheads go from about £15,000 to £60,000 overnight," he says. The new space is roughly eight times bigger than the old one and can comfortably hold more than 100 customers at a time. On busy weekends, up to 2,000 people pass through the doors. Where the old shop felt cramped at 25 people, this one feels built for a sport on the rise.

That rise is especially visible among younger players. Darts in St Helens has changed dramatically since the shop first opened. Youth participation has exploded, with



Credit: St Helens Darts Shop

RE IN THE HEART OF ST HELENS

uilt one of the UK's leading specialist retailers —

kids' playing darts just because they love it," he says. "Parents regularly come in looking for a set because their child won't stop asking for a game." What was once something kids played because their dads has turned into a genuine ambition, with young players dreaming of futures in the sport.

High-profile success stories have helped fuel that shift. Local hero Michael Smith had a huge impact when he became world champion, boosting the shop's sales by around 25 per cent and inspiring a wave of new players in the area. Nationally, the rise of Luke Littler has taken darts into a new spotlight, while the weekly exposure of the Premier League Darts keeps the sport in front of millions. "It's not a pub sport with big old-men anymore," he says. "It's changed, and it's changed for the better."

In a world dominated by online shopping, it would be easy to assume that specialist retailers struggle to compete. He disagrees. He's seen customers return with unsuitable sets or disappointed expectations after buying online. He believes his advantage is his knowledge. Understanding grip styles, weights, balance and technique is something no algorithm can replace.

Much of the work that keeps the shop running happens out of sight. Rising tungsten prices recently forced every single dart in the shop to be repriced. "Every supplier has

gone up," he says. "It took us two weeks just to reprice everything." Add in stock ordering, restocking after busy weekends, VAT, bookkeeping and event planning, and the background workload quickly adds up. The shop regularly hosts player appearances, with events involving professionals such as Ricky Evans requiring hours of preparation that customers never see.

Despite the pressure, pride shines through when he talks about what the shop has become. The space is still evolving, with new boards, upgraded systems and sections available for hire. A unique collaboration with Target is set to introduce a lane where customers can throw virtually any dart for up to an hour, including high-end models they might never otherwise get to try. It's another step toward making the shop not just a place to buy darts, but a place to learn and experi-

ence them.

At its core, St Helens Darts Shop remains deeply rooted in the local community. Around 80 to 85 per cent of sales come from people living in the local area. Leagues and academies in St Helens and Warrington are sponsored by Holden, and young players are supported with discounts to keep them encouraged. He said: "We want to get those kids playing. We want to help them out."

After nearly two decades, his proudest achievement isn't the size of the shop or the amount of darts on the wall. It's the people who leave better than they arrived. "There's no better feeling than somebody walking out of here with more knowledge and better at darts," he says. In a sport built on precision and patience, St Helens Darts Shop has quietly become a place where both are passed on, one throw at a time.



Holder (far left) with the team.
Credit: St Helens Darts Shop

JACK DRAYTON: MENTORED BY WE

Much of the darts spotlight is starting to be dominated by youngsters rising under the mentorship of established players.

By Morgan Bennion

Almost everyone has heard of 19-year-old star Luke Littler, but have you heard of Jack Drayton?

The youngster from Thornton-Cleveleys (near Blackpool) is the same age as Littler and is on the verge of bursting onto the scene but is relatively unknown. He won PDC Development Tours four and five in Leicester last weekend, defeating female number one Beau Greaves en route to his first title.

Drayton was delighted to win his first two development titles.

"It still doesn't seem real now," he said.

"It came as a bit of a shock. I was expecting to do well, considering my performance last year, but I wouldn't have thought I'd win this early on."

It appeared as though winning the first title gave him the confidence to go on and do it again the very next day. He said, "I got up on Sunday, I played two games, and I said to one of my mates, I'm going to win this again today. I just had that gut feeling."

Some of the standout names to have played on the development circuit include back-to-back World Champion Littler, former World Champion Luke

Humphries, World Championship finalist Gian van Veen, and World Cup champion Josh Rock. Could Drayton be the next to follow in their footsteps? There's no reason why not.

He has a manager and signed a professional contract with Sportsman Management Company Ltd to further his career. He is under the same management as established players, in particular, former World Matchplay champion Dimitri Van Den Bergh, former Grand Slam of Darts champion Jose De Sousa and world num-

ber 17 Jermaine Wattimena.

It's very early days for the youngster, but he has high ambitions for what he can achieve in the sport and believes he can be one of the greats. He said: "I think if I play at the top of my game often, I know I could probably be one of the best in the world. Within the next 10 years, comfortably."

Drayton has had a lot of mentoring from Wes Newton of Blackpool, who was once the fifth seed in the PDC. Newton has helped Drayton with game situations by giving him advice on how to handle certain match scenarios. "I've learned a lot from Wes [Newton] in terms of how to play the game, how to handle losses and how to handle being under pressure in certain areas," said Drayton.

He also credited former PDC major champion Colin Osbourne, who has encouraged him to enter more events on the PDC circuit. "Having Colin there as well, giving me a lot of advice, going to Q School, Challenge Tour and Development Tour," said Drayton. "He just gave me tips on how to stay focused, to just focus on you and the board."

"So having those two is a massive thing, knowing that I've got two former professionals egging me on to do the best and go to big tournaments and get the best out of me, so I can produce it in



Credit: Jack Drayton

WES NEWTON, DESTINED FOR THE TOP

By younger players, Jack Drayton is no exception, quietly following in the footsteps of former PDC star

in bigger events.”

When asked about idols, Drayton said that he doesn't really have one, but if he did, it probably would be Newton. “My idol growing up was Wes [Newton]. I used to go everywhere watching him, within reason, and I watched every single PDC game he played. But I wouldn't say I really have any idols, I just want to be with the players that are on tour now, I want to be associated with the best players in the world.

“When they mention their name, they mention my name, play with them on tour and travel the world. I'd say that's my main goal.”

Q-school is a tournament in the PDC every January that offers aspiring dart players the chance to earn a two-year PDC tour card and compete on the professional circuit. Drayton entered this year and was unsuccessful in his attempt. However, he wasn't too upset as he wanted to said he went to the tournament to gain more experience. He wants to get used to the same routine, whatever match he plays, to get the best out of himself and not be in unfamiliar territory.



Credit: Target Darts

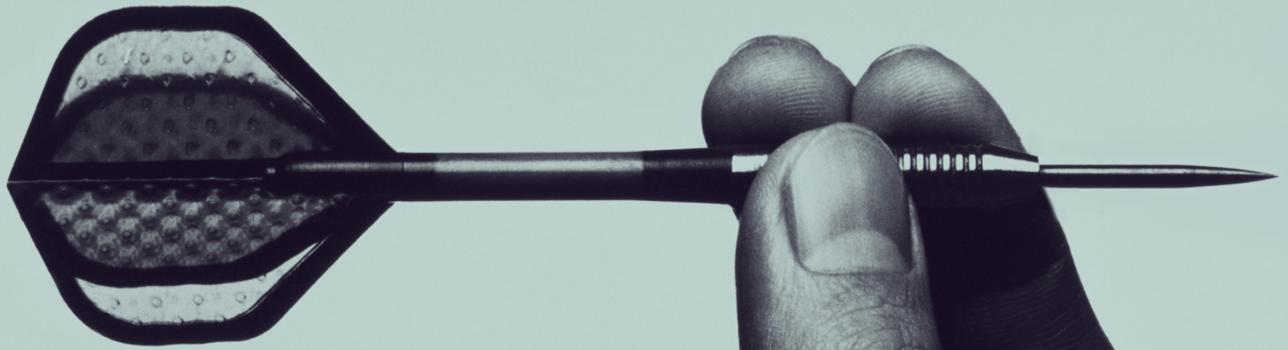
Darts is all that Drayton has ever known, and that isn't going to stop. He has played in many local tournaments, and his first one came four years ago. “I've been playing darts my whole life, but only at home,” Drayton said. “I think I played my first tournament in Blackpool in February 2022. But even then, I was just like playing the odd tournament every month, and then I started getting into pub darts.

“So that was like every week and then there were a few months where I was literally playing every day or night, whether it was a tournament

or a pub game. In the Fleetwood League, I kind of got to a stage where I was hitting like mid 80 averages constantly, week in, week out. So that's when I decided to invest in a manager, he sent me to the Development Tour last year to try my luck.

“I did well, and now here we are becoming one of the best youngsters at the moment on the circuit.”

It's a long way to go for the two-time Development Tour winner, and not many people will have heard of him but chances are, they will in years to come.



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STRAIGHT TO THE POINT

Threaded for change: the beginning of the interchangeable dart design

By Alex Tracy

For much of darts history, the point of a dart was the simplest part of its design, a fixed steel spike pressed permanently into the barrel. It did one job: stick in the board. Yet over time, the humble dart point has undergone a remarkable transformation. What was once a basic, non-replaceable component has become a precision engineered, interchangeable system that allows players to fine-tune performance and



Credit: Adrien Murrell

allow for more customisation.

If a point snapped or wore down, the only solution was to replace the entire dart. At the time, this was acceptable. Dartboards were softer, competitive play was largely local, and equipment innovation was limited. For pub players and early league competitors, fixed-point darts were reliable and uncomplicated.

However, as dartboard technology improved and tournament play became more competitive,

the limitations of fixed points became clear. Denser boards increased the likelihood of bounce-outs, and damaged points could end the life of an otherwise perfectly good set of darts. There needed a more practical and cost-effective solution.

With the problem, a solution arrived with the introduction of replaceable steel points. Manufacturers began threading the front of dart barrels, allowing points to

be removed and replaced rather than permanently fixed. This was a significant step forward.

Players could now replace worn or bent points without discarding their barrels, reducing

long-term costs. It also opened the door to experimentation. Players could use different point lengths, and profiles became available. This enabled players to influence entry angle, grouping and board penetration.

Despite the advantages, traditional threaded points had drawbacks. Repeated changes could wear down barrel threads and points sometimes loosening during play. Replacing them often required specialist tools.

While replaceable points were a major improvement, further refinement was needed.

Modern interchangeable systems represent the latest stage in this evolution.

One of the most influential is the Swiss

Point system from Target Darts, which integrates a reinforced thread mechanism into the barrel for secure, quick changes.

Similarly, Harrows Darts developed the Quick Point system to allow fast, reliable point swaps. Winmau introduced the Switch Point system with durability and secure fitting in mind, while Caliburn Darts brought forward the EVO Point system, engineered for improved board penetration and long-term consistency.

These systems offer enhanced durability by protecting barrel threads and simplifying broken point removal. From varying point lengths to textured finishes and specialist coatings, customisation has become central to modern dart performance.

The journey from fixed steel spikes to advanced interchangeable systems highlights how even the smallest component can shape the evolution of a sport. As darts continues to grow globally, point technology will undoubtedly keep advancing.



THE RETURN OF THE UK OPEN DARTS

TOP 10 FACTS ABOUT THE UK OPEN



1. It all began in 2003 and quickly became one of the PDC's most distinctive events.
2. It is known as "The FA Cup of Darts" due to its open draw format where anyone can face anyone, thus creating giant killings throughout the competition.
3. There are no seedings after certain rounds - players are re-drawn at multiple stages meaning the top dogs can clash early doors.
4. It features multiple stages ongoing at once.
5. It moved from Bolton to Minehead.
6. Phil 'The Power' Taylor dominated the early years winning it five times over.
7. Michael van Gerwen has lifted the trophy multiple times in the modern era of darts.
8. It gives amateurs a real chance to succeed with players from the qualifiers and secondary tours competing alongside world champions of the game.
9. It always produces shock results with numerous seeded stars being knocked out early.
10. The final is a long-format showdown, contrary to the opening rounds being short and sharp.

WORD SEARCH: UK Open Edition

Test your darts knowledge with our UK Open word search - celebrating the history, heroes and giant-killing magic of the UK Open Darts.



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|-----------------|-----------------|
| 1. QUALIFIER | 5. REDRAW |
| 2. MINEHEAD | 6. GIANT KILLER |
| 3. GILDING | 7. POWER |
| 4. SHORT FORMAT | 8. WADE |

