

# GOOD DARTS!

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BY

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## ABOUT THE AUTHORS:

Darwin and Gary grew up together and have been close friends for forty years. As consulting psychologists, they have developed, researched, and authored positive assessment and life skills development programs that are used internationally in business, education, and clinical settings. In this book and program, they have applied their Personal Skills Development Model to improve their dart games and to put more fun in their lives. Their hope is that the **Good Darts** program will encourage you to do the same.

## INTRODUCTION

The ability to **throw Good Darts** is a highly developed skill involving both technical and psychological skills. As authors and psychologists, we love darts more than any other game or sport. We have written this book and developed the "Dart Improvement Program" to improve our own skills, increase our own levels of personal satisfaction, and share our experiences with others.

This book and program were designed for beginning and experienced players who desire to improve their dart game. Skills and information presented apply to both steel and soft tip darts. However, the book was written primarily for the steel tip game of darts. Other books and video programs tend to feature world class players and illustrate models of play requiring years of practice and competitive tournament play. In contrast, this book and program are for the many people who want to play a self-satisfying game of darts, enjoy the fun of league play, and systematically develop their game to a highly competitive level.

The **Good Darts** book and the "Dart Improvement Program" were designed to teach the technical and psychological skills essential for competitive dart play. In the broadest sense, throwing good darts is the result of learning and applying self-mastery skills. Few players disagree with the idea that the mental aspects of the game are the most important. Thus, we have tried to achieve a balance with the emphasis on technical and psychological skills. Our primary goal was to provide a basic program that anyone could follow to improve his/her game of darts. In addition, we hope that the information will allow you to feel good about yourself and really have fun with a wonderful game.

## GOOD DARTS!

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Darwin B. Nelson

P.S. Throughout the book, you will encounter Dr. Good Darts and team members of an A-1 league team called the Hawks. We created the Dr. Good Darts cartoon series in an effort to capture the fun, complexity, stress, and dynamics of league darts. Dr. Good Darts just happens to be a psychologist as well as a serious and thoughtful dart player. The other players on the Hawks team know him as a quiet and sometimes calming member of the team. They also semi-appreciate his knowledge of psychology and contributions to the team.

The players on the Good Darts Hawks team are:

**KILLER:** A very aggressive player subject to intense and seemingly spontaneous emotions. Known as an aggressive player who hates to lose, Killer is always thinking and reacting to game situations.

**SPEEDY:** A quick-throwing and skilled player who sometimes makes errors in shot strategy and counting. Speedy throws rapidly to reduce the pressures and stress of thinking too much.

**CHOKER:** A good player subject to making errors in clutch situations. Choker demonstrates an excellent technical style of throwing but the mental aspects of the game are a continuing challenge. Choker is easily distracted by a variety of internal and external factors.

**BEAR:** A serious, experienced player who intends to win. As team captain, Bear is very deliberate in his strategy and throwing style. A true student of the game, Bear is constantly thinking about strategy and ways of improving team performance.

In pressure situations, Bear becomes even more diligent and stalks back and forth while awaiting the next throw.

DOC: A psychologist, also known as Dr. Good Darts, who loves the game of darts. He is a quiet sort of fellow who dispenses advice on all matters related to darts, relationships, and life. Doc lives the game of darts to the fullest and is tolerated by the Hawks team.

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## SECTION

### The Game of Darts: An Overview

- History and Development of Darts as a Game

#### • Rules of Play

- Basic Dart Games: How to Play and Score

- Etiquette, Conventions, and Sportsmanship

- Dart Talk: Terms to Know

- Dart Books: An Annotated Bibliography

## HISTORY AND DEVELOPMENT OF DARTS AS A GAME

As you can see by looking at our **Good Darts** book and "Dart Improvement Program," our emphasis was on developing a practical resource that beginning and experienced dart players could use to improve their game and love for darts. Most books fit neatly on shelves, but the **Good Darts book** was designed to go with you. You can read it, listen to it, write in it, and create your own information that will help your dart game.

This first section was included for beginning players who have just started to get excited about playing darts and who want to get acquainted with the basics. Our purpose in discussing the history of darts was to provide beginning players with a basic knowledge and appreciation of the major events that contributed to the development of the game of darts as it is currently played in the United States.

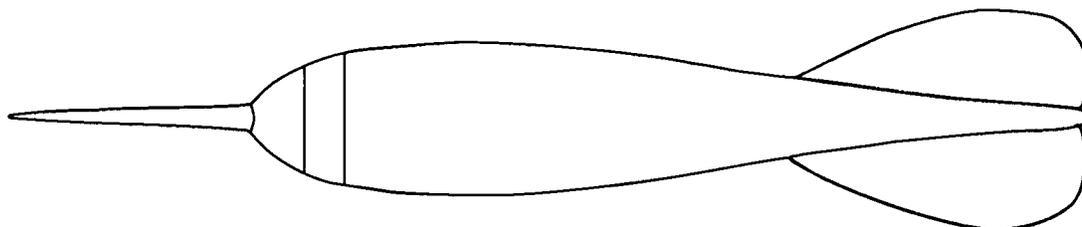
Since our major focus is on improving your game, our treatment of the history of the game is brief. Several dart books have devoted entire chapters to the history, development, and origins of the game. At the end of this section, we have provided an annotated bibliography of available books on darts. For the person who is interested in learning more about the history and development of the game, any of these books are excellent resources.

One of the most interesting aspects of darts is the long pre-history of the modern game as it is now played by millions of people in all parts of the world. The modern game of darts is a gift from the English as an indoor imitation of target archery. Darts, as we now throw them, are not ancient, medieval, or even centuries old. The ancestors of the modern dart and dart board now used in international play date back to only the early and mid-nineteenth century.

Many dart books read and reviewed by the authors seemed to suggest a much longer history for darts, such as references to darts as gifts to Henry VIII, and as a game played by the Pilgrim fathers on their journey to America. However, these darts were not darts as we know them today; nor of similar form. The ancestors and creators of modern darts were English working men in urban centers like London, Manchester, and Yorkshire during the mid-nineteenth century.

As late as 1900, darts as a game was a new and novel pass-time usually played in pubs and taverns. Darts probably appeared in America during the latter part of the nineteenth century as a result of increased and improved travel between England and the United States. World War I was the greatest influence and the major factor in the game of darts becoming popular throughout the world.

Darts used around the turn of the century looked about like the one illustrated below:



These darts were made of turned or carved wood and were fitted with a metal point and a three-feathered flight. A band of lead was often affixed to the dart at the center for the purposes of weight and balance.

As we were writing this book, a friend pulled out his first set of darts he used thirty-five years ago in weekly competition. The darts were **almost identical**



to the one illustrated. On rare occasions, you still may end up throwing with an opponent using wooden darts and massive, feathered flights.

An American patented a folded paper flight in 1898 and a Yorkshireman patented an all-metal barrel in 1906. At about the same time, the London, or Standard Clock Board, became accepted as the most widely used dart board. These events were major factors in the evolution and improvement in basic equipment. Other new metals may point to further refinement.

The first book exclusively on darts was published by a professional writer, Rupert Croft-Cooke, in 1936. This event was probably influenced by the post World War I boom in the popularity of darts. After World War 1, thousands of players were engaged in competitive play in England. The first major organized tournament, the "News of the World," was held in 1928 with over 1000 entries. By 1947-48, the number of entries in the "News of the World" tournament had increased to 280,000 and involved the whole of England and Wales. Today, millions of people in England watch the television coverage of this tournament.

By contrast, the American Dart Organization (ADO) was not founded until 1975. The growth of ADO and the increase in the number of sponsored tournaments in the United States has been phenomenal. While it is still developing as an organization, the ADO has grown to approximately 100,000 members and endorses approximately 120 tournaments annually. There is not an absolute, accurate means for estimating the number of people now playing darts in the United States; however, the number is in the tens of millions.

This brief history of the modern game of darts was presented to convey its rapidly increasing popularity. The beauty of darts as a game is in its combination of simplicity and challenge. Almost any type of person at any age can enjoy the game of darts. Because darts is an intriguing game of skill, we can expect the popularity of the game in the United States to continue to grow. Most of us prefer a game that we can play as well as watch. In darts,

you can play as often as you like. Your most worthy opponent is always close at hand. If you have trouble locating an available opponent, all you need to do is peek in the nearest mirror.

After reading a dart book written by a scholarly English author, we took a look at ourselves as we were preparing to leave for our weekly league match. We were dressed in our team shirts with our names on the front, and our team emblem and name spread across the back. Our pockets were pulled out of shape by the weight of our darts and spare supplies of flights and shafts. We smiled at the spectacle of ourselves as experienced psychologists who were about to stay up most of the night playing darts. The best part of all was we were excited about the opportunity to play, and we knew there was great fun ahead, regardless of the outcome of our league match

We truly appreciate the long history of the game of darts, and we thank the English for making the game as we know it possible and popular. Our enthusiasm lies in the ability to play and the opportunity offered by competition to improve the quality of our game. In that sense, we are practical in our orientation and, perhaps, a bit gaudy in our costume. We do enjoy the game as it is now played in the United States.

Darts are played in most countries around the world and have now become a truly international sport. Television coverage and sponsored tournaments offering respectable cash prizes, as well as the opportunity to compete with the best players, have increased public awareness of the game. In our local area, which is not exactly a hot bed of international dart activity, over 300 people entered the last ADO endorsed tournament with several countries represented.

In addition to the excitement and challenge of competition, the true spirit of darts is captured in the fun and fellowship of play. A few years ago at an ADO tournament in San Antonio, one of the authors was sitting at a table talking with a couple from England who were vacationing in the city. They had read about the dart tournament in the newspaper, and the husband had

thought it would be good fun to have a go at the game Texas-style. He was sure the experience would generate some good stories to share with the boys in his local pub back home. He had entered open singles.

When the announcer called out Leighton Rees as his first opponent, he turned to his wife and said, "Can you imagine them putting me up against Leighton, me just a pub player?" When he met Leighton at the hockey, his wife was busy taking pictures. He was having the time of his life and tremendously excited about the opportunity to play such a great player. He shot a good game and was beaten in short order. He also had the best time imaginable on his visit to San Antonio.

This brief example illustrates one of the unique aspects of darts ...the opportunity to play anyone. This is one aspect of the game that we hope remains intact. Champions and world class players offer amazing models of playing skill, and they have developed their skill by years of practice and competition. Some of you will do the same, and we hope the opportunity to play with the best remains a part of the game in the United States.

Anyone who is willing to have fun and play regularly can enjoy the game of darts. You can be of any size, shape, and age. You can also have fun as you improve your game to a more competitive level. Unlike many games of skill, darts is more of an equalizer with respect to the aspects of strength, endurance, speed, and agility. Darts is a wonderful game for all ages, and gender is of no particular advantage.

Although the history of darts indicates that the game was played almost exclusively by men, this is far from true today. There are thousands of excellent female players in the United States. The level of competition among women is as keen as it is among men.

We hope that our book and program will be helpful to female and male players who are interested in developing the psychological and self-mastery **skills that are** important to **Good Darts**. We offer a positive and systematic

approach for beginning play that can be applied to rapidly improve the basic skills required by competitive dart play. We have attempted to achieve a balance between fundamental skills and psychological skills, so that both dimensions of your game can be developed in harmony.

From a psychological point of view, darts is a game of personal skill and, more specifically, a game of active self-control skill. Unlike many competitive games of skill, you do not have to "react" to the plays or scores of your opponent. In essence, you are playing against or with yourself. Another person is simply taking turns with you in the pursuit of a similar goal. The goal is to play at your best level and finish as quickly as possible. Your true opposition is your remaining score, as you play down for the opportunity to hit a finishing out and win.

Darts is a game played against an achievable standard of perfection. Perfection in 101 is throwing three darts to finish the game. Perfection in 301 requires 6 darts, and only 9 darts in 501. Herein lies the excitement, challenge and potential addiction of playing **Good Darts**. It seems so simple, and it looks so easy to do. In the opinion of the authors, the ability to consistently throw **Good Darts** is one of the most difficult self-mastery skills to perfect and maintain.

When you really begin to break the game down into the skill and precision required to win at high levels of competitive play, an illusion of simplicity or luck quickly dissipates. A good example is a video tape of John Lowe's perfect 501 game in competition and on stage. Six darts into triple 20, the seventh into triple 17, the eighth into triple 18, the ninth into double 18, is a performance that any dart player would want to see replayed over and over. What is sometimes overlooked is the years of practice, competition, and experience that contributed to such a brilliant success.

Because darts is a precise game of skill, you will derive many personal benefits as you improve and refine your game. As you play the game and apply the skills we present, you will notice that the confidence and

self-control you develop in playing **Good Darts** will transfer over to other areas of your life. When a person develops a self-mastery skill (something one does well), s/he benefits personally and psychologically.

Psychological research indicates that healthy and high achieving people are active in their orientation to living and working. They accept personal responsibility for their thoughts, feelings, and behaviors. They use self-control skills to effectively deal with difficult problems and high stress situations. This is the basis for the application of our Personal Skills Development Model for darts. The game of darts presents you with many tasks and situations that require an application of psychological and self-mastery skills. As you learn and practice these skills to improve your game, you will also find other situations in life and work where their use is beneficial.

Another major attraction and benefit of playing darts is the social nature of the game. You can obtain hours of fun and enjoyment by simply playing against yourself on a home board. However, sooner or later most people venture out from their home, or in the authors' cases, their garages, to find other sporting folks who like to play darts, talk about darts, and, in general, share the addiction of darts. Yes, it does seem that positive addiction occurs as a result of continuously hurling pointed objects at a fixed target, retrieving **them, and hurling** them again.

Many people fail to grasp the challenge and excitement inherent in such behaviors and tend to say things like, "I thought darts was a kid's game." Once you allow yourself to start playing and experience the enjoyment first hand, comments like that will not dampen your spirit or curtail your darting behavior. You will never hear comments like that from a person who has seriously tried playing the game.

One of the major social benefits associated with darts is the opportunity to meet all kinds of people from all walks of life. Love of darts is a good common denominator and few people pay any attention to whether you are a

doctor, lawyer or Indian chief. Even psychologists seem to be accepted ...or at least tolerated. One of the authors met a talented and intriguing lady during a game of darts. It is even rumored that a relationship began as a result of a bet during an extended marathon of dart competition. While it is not quite clear who actually won, the rumor produced a lot of fun and gossip at the local level.

This relationship grew into a mixed doubles team with many personal and competitive benefits. Gary Low and Julie Buhidar have thrown in mixed doubles competition and achieved top finishes in ADO sanctioned tournament play. After a lapse in playing, they are again considering competing in tournament play. They are using the "Dart Improvement Program" to enhance their competitive games in the coming year.

The benefits of playing darts are evident to the authors. A major goal of our book and program is to provide a systematic approach to achieving a level of play that most beginning players can reach in one year of regular and dedicated practice. Our book and program are for the majority of players who want to improve their game to a level where they can enjoy and experience the rewards of successful performances. Another goal in the development of the **Good Darts** book and "Dart Improvement Program" is to organize the information and strategies in a practical and easy to use format.

In the next few pages, we have included the rules of play used by ADO in tournament play. To fully enjoy the game of darts, it is important you have a clear understanding of the rules of the game both as a player and as a scorekeeper (or chalker). One important factor in learning the rules early is you can then begin using every playing or scoring opportunity to improve counting and learn how different players approach finishing outs.

For these reasons, we have included the ADO guidelines so you can always have a basic set of rules with you to answer questions and make accurate decisions as a scorekeeper. Once you are confident about the rules of play and have practiced scoring the basic games, you will be much more willing

to chalk in league and tournament play. Many beginning players are nervous about scoring for others. Knowing the games and rules of play will help you feel comfortable in chalking, especially if you practice scoring your own games correctly from the very beginning. In some places it is customary for you to wait your turn at the board and score the game before your turn to play. This is not a rule, but rather a courtesy. Chalking is best thought of as an important part of playing darts, rather than a chore to be avoided.

## GENERAL RULES OF PLAY

The rules of play presented are those followed in ADO tournament play. Informal and fun play may have different rules as agreed upon by the players. We have listed those followed in most league or tournament play in the United States. At all levels of play, good sportsmanship is the prevailing attitude and at the heart of the game of darts. Rules are a way to answer questions and the basis for objective decision-making during play.

*NOTE:* For terms that are unfamiliar and unique to the game of darts, you may want to refer to "Dart Talk" at the end of Section I.

### Throw

1. All darts must be thrown by and from the hand.
2. A throw consists of three darts unless a leg/match is completed in a lesser amount.

Any dart bouncing off or falling out of the dartboard shall not be rethrown.

## Starting and Finishing

1. All matches will be begun by throwing at the bullseye (cork). The first player to throw at the cork will be decided by a coin flip. The winner of the coin flip may select the option of throwing at the cork first or second. The player throwing closest to the cork shall throw first in the first leg. The loser of the first leg has the option of throwing the cork first in the second leg. If a third leg is necessary, the cork will again be thrown with the loser of the original coin flip having the option of throwing first for the cork.
2. When the first thrower hits a bullseye, the second thrower may acknowledge the first dart as an inner or outer bull (cork) and ask for that dart to be removed prior to his/her throw. Otherwise, the dart must remain in the board in order to count. Additional throws may be made when throwing the cork until such time as the player's dart remains in the board. Should the second thrower dislodge the dart of the first, a rethrow will be made with the second thrower now throwing first. Rethrows shall be called if the scorer cannot decide which dart is closest to the cork or if both darts are anywhere in the inner bull or if both darts are anywhere in the outer bull. **DECISION OF THE SCORER IS FINAL.** Should a rethrow be necessary the person who threw second will now throw first.
3. In all events, each leg shall be played with a straight start (no double required) and a double will be required to finish unless otherwise stated by the local tournament organizers.
4. For the purpose of starting and finishing a leg/match the inner bull is considered a double 25.

5. The "Bust Rule" shall apply. If the player scores one less, equal, or more points than needed to reach zero, s/he has "busted." His/her score reverts back to the score required prior to the beginning of the throw.
6. Fast finishes such as 3 in a bed, 222, 111, shanghai, etc. do not apply.
7. A leg/match is concluded at such time as a player/team hits the "double" required to reduce their remaining score to zero. Any and all darts thrown subsequently shall not count for score.

### Doubles/Team Events

1. It is permissible for the doubles/team player finishing a leg to throw the cork and start the subsequent leg. It is also permissible for one member of a doubles or team to throw the cork first and have his/her partner or teammate shoot first.
2. It is permissible for a doubles or team to participate with fewer than the required number of players, provided that team forfeits a turn(s) in each rotation, equal to the number of missing players. The missing player(s) may not join a leg in progress but is allowed to participate in a subsequent leg(s) of that match.
3. No player may participate on more than one doubles team or regular team in any respective darts event. There shall be no recycling of players (either male or female) under any circumstances.
4. No substitutes shall be allowed after the first round of doubles/team play.

## Scoring

1. For a dart to score it must remain in the board 5 seconds after the third or final dart has been thrown by that player. The tip of the dart point must be touching the bristle portion of the board in order for that dart to be counted as score.
2. No dart may be touched by the thrower, another player, scorer, or spectator, prior to the decision of the scorer.
3. A dart's score shall be determined from the side of the wire at which the point of the dart enters the board.
4. It is the responsibility of the player to verify his/her score before removing the darts from the board. The score remains as written if one or more darts have been removed from the board. Errors in arithmetic must stand as written, unless corrected prior to the beginning of that player's next throw. In case of doubles/team matches such errors must be rectified prior to the next turn of any partner/player on that team.
5. In doubles/team events no player may throw (during a leg) until each of his/her teammates has completed his/her throw. The first player throwing out of turn shall receive a score of zero points for that round and his/her team shall forfeit such turn.
6. The scorer shall mark the board so that scores made are listed in the outer columns of the scoreboard, and the totals remaining are listed in the two middle columns.
7. The scoreboard/sheet must be clearly visible in front of the player at the hockey.

8. The scorer may inform the thrower what s/he has scored and/or what score is left. The scorer may not inform the thrower what s/he has left in terms of number combinations. It is permissible for a partner, teammate, or a spectator to advise the thrower during the course of a match.

## AMERICAN CRICKET RULES

*(adapted from ADO as approved August 21, 1981; revised August 14, 1986)*

1. The objective shall be to "own/close" certain numbers on the board and to achieve the highest point score. The player/team to do this first shall be the winner.
2. Cricket shall be played using the numbers 20, 19, 18, 17, 16, 15, and both the inner and outer bull (cork).

Each player/team shall take turns in throwing. (Three darts in succession shall constitute a turn.)

4. To close a number (inning), the player/team must score three of a number. This can be accomplished with three singles, a single and a double, or a triple.

Once a player/team scores three of a number, it is owned by that player/team. Once both players/teams have scored three of a number, it is closed and no further scoring can be accomplished on that number by either player/team.

6. To close the bullseye, the outer bull counts as a single and the inner bull counts as a double.

7. Once a player/team closes an inning, s/he/they may score points on that number until the opponent also closes that inning. All numerical scores shall be added to the previous balance.
8. Numbers can be "owned" or "closed" in any order desired by the individual player/team. Calling your shots is not required.
9. For the purpose of "owning" a number, the double and triple ring shall count as 2 and 3, respectively. Three marks will close an inning.
10. After a number is "owned" by a team, the double and triple ring shall count as 2 and 3 times the numerical values, respectively.
11. Winning the game:
  - a. The player/team that closes all innings first and has the most points shall be declared the winner.
  - b. If both sides are tied on points or have no points the first player/team to close all innings shall be the winner.
  - c. If a player/team closes all innings first and is behind in points s/he/they must continue to score on any innings not closed until either the point deficit is made up, or the opponent has closed all innings.
12. It shall be the responsibility of the player to verify his/her score before removing the darts from the board. The score remains as written if one or more darts has been removed from the board. In accordance with the inherent "strategy" involved in the cricket game, no alterations in score shall be allowed after the fact.

## SCOREKEEPING HINTS

If the play is informal and no scorekeeper is available, agree with your opponent on the procedures you will follow in keeping your own scores. The simplest method is for each player to throw their darts and then record their own scores. The safest procedure is to record and subtract your score before removing your darts from the board. Your opponent can see your darts and check your score before starting to throw.

In league or tournament play, the demands on the scorekeeper increase and these demands make scoring a full-time job. A good scorekeeper is not noticed and play is completed with few hesitations or corrections. Once you have become familiar with the rules of play, you can become a good scorekeeper by applying the following suggestions:

- Do not drink or smoke while at the scoreboard.
- Stand still.

Face the scoreboard at arms length and at a 45 degree angle looking at the board.

Do not lean or move your head to see where individual darts land. In most cases, you are permitted to tell a player where a dart has scored when asked.

Wait until all three darts have been thrown to determine the total of the throw.

Verify the score before the darts are removed from the board and call the score so both players can hear.

Write scores clearly and boldly so they can clearly be seen by players and spectators.

Mark through each previous score to clearly show the players exactly what they have left. Outside columns are for numbers scored. Middle columns are for the totals remaining.

Do not talk to the players or anyone else while keeping score.

Once the darts are pulled, the score of the throw cannot be disputed.

Once the opposing player has thrown the first dart, the subtracted and written score of the last round stands.

It is a good idea to let the players know you are available to keep their scores as soon as they are ready to start. Get their names or initials so you can set up the scoreboard for their game, as soon as they determine throwing order.

If the match format calls for the best of three legs, leave the scoreboard set up in the same way for the second leg, regardless of the winner. Erase scores and indicate the winner of the first leg by a small mark by his/her name or initials. In tournament play, return the cards to the players so they can be signed and handled properly. In tournament play, it is best to consult an official if there is a serious question or dispute that might affect the outcome of a game or match.

## BEGINNING TO PLAY

If you follow our "Dart Improvement Program," you will spend some time playing and practicing darts alone. In most other cases, dart games are played between at least two players or teams. As you learn to play and score the basic games, the examples printed in the next pages illustrate play between two players.

Who goes first in informal play is usually decided by a throw for the cork. The loser of the first leg usually throws first to start the second leg of a best of three leg match. The throw to start the second game is usually preceded by the statement, "Mugs Away." In the basic games, the person going first has a distinct advantage, so do not overlook the practice session, "Target Double Bull," included in Section V.

When you venture out to local dart establishments to play, it is a good idea to check on the rules and conventions of play followed and practiced in that particular place. Some taverns have boards hung all over the place and you can just walk up and begin to play on an empty board. In other places, there may be only one or two boards that are occupied by players and you may need to ask about how to get into the game. You may want to offer to score for other players before velling out a challenge to all comers.

Sometimes, one of the most challenging tasks in American darts is finding a scorekeeper. Everyone wants to play and equal enthusiasm for scoring or chalking is rare. If you are unwilling to score for others, you can count on seeing the backs of a lot of people when you are anxious to play and need a chalker.

## BASIC DART GAMES: HOW TO PLAY AND SCORE

With millions of people playing darts all over the world, we can assume that hundreds of dart games exist and are being played somewhere even as you read this section. For the purposes of our book and program, we wanted to emphasize the games that you will immediately encounter in the United States in local and tournament play.

In this section, we included only the 01 games and American Cricket so you can learn the rules, strategies, and scorekeeping procedures. We have included other fun games to build specific skills in our "Dart Improvement Program" (Section V).

### The 01 Games

The most popular and frequently played dart games in the United States have a beginning score ending with 01. Most of these games, 301, 501, 601, 1001, are somehow included in the league format of play in different areas of the country. Singles and doubles competition usually involves 501 or 301. The 601 or 1001 games are usually played with three or four member teams in league play. Although not included in most U.S. tournaments, 301 is one of the most popular games in informal play, and the North American Open still favors 301 for singles and doubles competition.

The most brief and challenging of the 01 games is 101 requiring a double to start. This is one of the best practice and warm-up games before beginning competitive league or tournament play. We have included 101 as a practice option in our "Dart Improvement Program" because it is productive for the beginning as well as the more experienced player. The skills involved in 101 (double start) are the ones of essence in all other 01 games.

## 301 (Double Start)

The most popular dart game in the world has been 301 and it is the game most frequently encountered in informal play. In the United States, 301 has almost disappeared from ADO sanctioned tournament play in favor of 501, with a straight start. However, we encourage you to begin 301 play immediately after purchasing your darts.

Many beginning players tend to avoid playing 301 because of the required double to start. This is the very reason you should begin playing 301 first. Playing 301 is a good way to practice your doubles, as well as to begin learning how to deal with pressure and psychological reactions when you have to struggle to start. For this reason, we included 301 as a recommended option in the basic 30 minute daily practice session of our "Dart Improvement Program" (Section V).

### How to Play 301

Both players begin with the score of 301 with the shared goal of reducing their score to zero. Before a player can begin to score, the first rule requires a player must hit a double to start. Any dart hitting the board before a starting double is thrown is not counted. Any double will work to start. When the first dart is thrown in the double ring, that player is on (started).

After the starting double is scored, the player counts the value of the double and any other darts scored in the same throw. The value of the throw is the value of the starting double plus the score(s) achieved on darts thrown subsequently.

The total score achieved in each throw of 3 darts is determined and subtracted from 301, until the score of zero is achieved by the winner. Each

player shoots in turn and must score a double to start his/her game. Yes, it is not uncommon to be beaten before you actually start. Americans tend to call this being "skunked." We also like the less emphatic British term, "brushed." It seems a bit more tolerable to be "brushed" rather than "skunked."

The second rule in 301 requires your score be reduced to exactly zero by hitting a double with the last dart, in order to finish the game and win. With a remaining score of 19, a player would be required to even the score, because there is no finishing double for that score. A player might reduce the 19 by throwing a single 3 and then win by hitting double 8. Double bull (50) can be used to start or finish a 301 game.

The lowest possible score to finish any 01 game is double 1 (2). Any dart thrown that reduces the score below 2 causes the player to "bust," and the score reverts back to that of the previous round. As soon as any player hits the required double to reduce his/her score to zero, the game is immediately over and that player wins.

### 501 (Straight Start)

In league and tournament play in the United States, 501 and the 01 games of longer length (601, 1001) are the ones most often played in singles, doubles, and team competition. Any 501 game is played exactly like 301, except 501 does not require a double to start unless specified.

In a straight start 501 game, the first dart thrown on the playing area of the board begins scoring. Like 301, 501 requires the reduction to zero be a finishing double to win.

These games require very little effort to learn the rules, and a great deal of practice to play well. We have included scoring formats and some examples

of record games on the following pages. Take a few minutes to look over the games as scored in order to acquaint yourself with the visual process of correct scoring.

Once you have learned the rules for the 01 games and American Cricket, you will have all the information you need to start playing. The best way to learn the games, and to get comfortable in scoring for others, is to play each one and practice scoring your own games.

We have presented a brief section on the strategy involved in the 01 games and American Cricket. If you are a beginning player, you may want to spend some time playing all the games during your home practice. We have included scoring charts and encourage you to record the number of darts that you required to finish the respective games in our "Dart Improvement Program."

Do not discourage yourself with the high number of darts you require to finish the games in the beginning. As you practice, your games will go more quickly, and you will require fewer and fewer darts from start to finish. Keep a record of your best game (fewest darts) for 101, 301, 501, 1001, 3001, and American Cricket. This will give you a record to shoot for each time you play.

## BASIC DART GAMES: EXAMPLE SCORESHEETS

<p>101 (Double Start)</p> <p style="text-align: center;">101 10</p> <p>40                    32</p> <p>57                    57</p> <p>4                      12</p> <p style="text-align: center;">2)</p> <p>(1)20,19,(20,T 9,1)12) 19,1)6)</p> <p>Perfect Game: 3 Darts</p>	<p>301 (Double Start)</p> <p style="text-align: center;">301 301</p> <p>160 141 15 149</p> <p style="text-align: center;">out out</p> <p>(T20, 19, 12)</p> <p style="text-align: center;">(20,T 0,D 16)</p> <p>Perfect Game: 6 Darts</p> <p>Back to back perfect</p> <p>Games, Kevin Hayes.</p> <p>1983</p>	<p>501 (Straight Start)</p> <p style="text-align: center;">501 501</p> <p>8T0 321 321 8T0</p> <p>8T0141 141 8T0</p> <p style="text-align: center;">out out</p> <p>(T17, 18,1)18)16,T</p> <p>Perfect Game: 9 Darts</p> <p>John Lowe, England,</p> <p>1977. (141 out, T17,</p> <p>T18,D18). Paul Lim,</p> <p>USA, 1990. (141 out,</p> <p>T20,T 19,1) 12)</p> <p>American Cricket</p> <table style="margin-left: auto; margin-right: auto;"> <tr><td style="padding: 0 10px;">0</td><td style="padding: 0 10px;">20</td><td style="padding: 0 10px;">0</td></tr> <tr><td style="padding: 0 10px;">0</td><td style="padding: 0 10px;">19</td><td style="padding: 0 10px;">X</td></tr> <tr><td style="padding: 0 10px;">0</td><td style="padding: 0 10px;">18</td><td style="padding: 0 10px;">/</td></tr> <tr><td style="padding: 0 10px;">0</td><td style="padding: 0 10px;">17</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td colspan="3"> </td></tr> <tr><td style="padding: 0 10px;">0</td><td style="padding: 0 10px;">16</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td style="padding: 0 10px;">0</td><td style="padding: 0 10px;">15</td><td></td></tr> </table>	0	20	0	0	19	X	0	18	/	0	17					0	16		0	15	
0	20	0																					
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<p>601 (Straight Start)</p> <p style="text-align: center;">601 601</p> <p>8T0 421</p> <p>8T0 241</p> <p>8T0 61</p> <p>(T19, 2)</p> <p>Perfect Game: 11 Darts</p>	<p><b>1001 (Straight Start)</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;">0011001</p> <p>8T0 821</p> <p>8T0 641</p> <p>8T0 461</p> <p>8T0 281</p> <p> </p> <p>8T0 101</p> <p style="text-align: center;">(T17PB)</p> <p>Perfect Game: 17 Darts</p> <p>T20,T20,T20,T20,T20,</p> <p>T20,T20,T20,T20,T20,</p> <p>T20,T20,T20,T20,T20,</p> <p>T17.DB. Alan Glazier,</p> <p>England, 1977.</p> <p>Cliff "Ticker" Inglis,</p> <p>19 Darts, England, 1975</p> <p>T60,T80,T40,T80,T21,</p> <p>T80,40.</p>	<p>(SB,DB)</p> <p>Perfect Game:8 Darts</p>																					

## DART MATH: A SHORT COURSE

Highest Possible Score	- 8T0 (T20, T20, T20)
Highest Possible Score (2 darts)	- 2T0 (T20, T20) - 60
Highest Possible Score (1 dart)	(T20) - 170 (T20, T20,
Highest Out (3 darts)	DB ) - 110 (T20, DB) -
Highest Out (2 darts)	50 (DB) - 159 - 99 -
Highest Out (1 dart)	159
Lowest score not possible (3 darts)	
Lowest score not possible (2 darts)	
Lowest shot out not possible	
Lowest even number shot not possible - 162	
Safest run of split doubles	- D16 D8 D4 D2 D1

### American Cricket

As played in the United States, Cricket may be the most popular game in both informal play and in tournament competition. If you are a beginning player, spend some time really learning the ADO rules for American Cricket. This knowledge will give you a comfortable feeling about the game as well as the basic strategy.

Scoring Cricket requires some actual experience in playing the game. A good and quick way to learn the game is to play a few games against yourself on your home practice board. Score the throws for each of your two selves. Finish several games so you will know how to record points scored quickly and accurately.

American Cricket is a target game using the numbers 20, 19, 18, 17, 16, 15, and bull. After determining start, each player in turn tries to close all the numbers by hitting three of each number. For closing purposes, a single

counts one, a double counts two, and a triple counts three. A triple 20 on the first dart closes the number 20. If the opponent has not closed the 20s you may throw another single 20 and score 20 points and a double 20 (or 2 singles) would score 40, and a triple 20 scores 60. Any number that you close before your opponent offers an opportunity for you to score points.

The numbers in a Cricket game can be thrown in any order that you choose. You do not have to call your shot. In Cricket, if your dart hits any number, the shot counts. In other words, you may be throwing at a 20 and hit triple 18. The off-target dart would count and your 18s would be closed. The rather descriptive term for this occurrence is "SLOP," but it still counts. "SLOP" darts feel very good when you throw them and can be discouraging to your opponent.

The Cricket game is over when you have closed all your numbers and you are even or ahead on points. Closing the numbers quickly and staying even or ahead on points is the basic strategy of Cricket. The skill level of your opponent becomes quickly evident in Cricket, because the ability to throw triples accurately greatly accelerates the pace of the game. It is not uncommon for a better player to close 20s and 19s and score additional points with the first three darts.

Two basic skills will greatly improve your ability to play good Cricket. The first skill involves the ability to accurately hit single numbers on demand. The second is the ability to score triples. In scoring Cricket games for better players, it is also helpful to know the values of all the possible multiples of the numbers. We have emphasized all these skills in our recommended daily practice session in our "Dart Improvement Program."

Once you have mastered the rules of Cricket and have scored several games, you are ready to think more about the strategy involved in the game. In the sections that follow, we have briefly presented additional strategies that you may want to examine in improving your play in the 01 games and American Cricket.

# BASIC DART GAMES: PLAYING STRATEGIES

## 01 STRATEGIES

301 In all dart games, you have no control over your opponent's darts. The major variable in darts is your own level of skill and accuracy. In 301, the objective is to get started quickly, score well, and finish sharply with the required double. As a beginning player, you may wish to increase the possibility of hitting the starting double by using the right or left side of the board. This strategy assumes that a vertical throw is more accurate than one that is horizontal. Using the right-side throw, you have the possibility of a vertical hit on D13, D6, or D10. On the left-side throw you have D14, 1311, or D8. The idea is, your chances are better here than at the top of the board (1320), or at the bottom of the board (D 19). Many top throwers also use this approach to start 301 games. Having a higher getting started percentage outweighs the slightly bigger numbers of D20, D19, D18, etc. Also, another advantage to a quick start is avoiding the added pressure of being "skunked" or "brushed."

In summary, the major strategies for 301 include:

A fast start. Play the odds and throw for vertical numbers like D 13, D6, D 10 on the right side and D 14, D 11, D8 on the left side.

Score as consistently as possible from the initial start throughout the middle part of the game. Most players practice and throw for the T20 or T19 during this phase of the game.

A fast finish. This requires counting skills and setting up the best percentage finishes or your best out numbers. Our "Dart Improvement Program" encourages doubles practice and setting up preferred outs ...the most common are D16 and D20.

501 The straight start and longer distance of 501 make scoring ability and consistency the major factors of the game. As the distances increase in 601 and 1001 games, these factors become even more evident. The unavoidable and major variable of any of the 01 games is the individual skill level of the player. Herein lies the seemingly simple and basic strategy, as well as the excitement and challenge. Score as much as you can, as consistently as you can, and finish quickly.

The apparent simplicity of the 01 dart games certainly causes addiction to these games. If you want to complete 501 games in the neighborhood of 20-25 darts, you must be willing to spend time developing the support skills of scoring consistency and fast finishing.

Our "Dart Improvement Program" provides one avenue for use in developing these skills. It is possible to play darts for years without approaching consistency in scoring or developing the ability for fast finishes. These skills can be developed much more quickly through specific and systematic practice.

## AMERICAN CRICKET STRATEGIES

The basic strategy is a direct result of the rules of Cricket. To win, you must close all numbers (20, 19, 18, 17, 16, 15, and bull) and be even or ahead on points (extra score after you close a number before your opponent). The key is to make the game easy by exerting more pressure on your opponent. You accomplish this by either scoring first (to obtain an advantage) or by closing numbers ahead of your opponent.

The strategy of Cricket is, therefore, more complex than that of the 01 games. Cricket requires staying in tune to the game and deciding what to throw based on the score of the game and your opponent's throwing ability. At higher levels of play in leagues and tournaments, Cricket is a very

competitive game. The competitive aspect is often revealed through the terminology of "Killer Darts" and "Thermonuclear Cricket."

So, what is the best Cricket strategy? Though there are many opinions and arguments about Cricket strategy, we believe for most dart players there are some basics that apply.

Remember, most Cricket games follow a pattern. It is important to close the "big advantage" numbers first (20, 19, 18, 17). Because of scoring rules,

these numbers and the bullseye are the most important numbers. The reasons are simple: T20 scores 60 points; T19 scores 57 points; T18 scores 54 points; T17 scores 51 points. The bullseye is important, if closed, because you can throw 2 **bulls** (2 single bulls or 1 double bull) and score 50 points. This will outscore 3 single 16s or 3 single 15s. So 2 of 3 bulls will outscore 3 of 3 single 16s or 15s.

Another strategy in counting points is to think in terms of the number of bulls you are ahead or behind. Cricket games often are determined by the number of bulls you are ahead or behind when you reach that phase of the game. Remember that 1 bull is worth 25 points. So, if you are from 1 to 25 points behind, you are still only one bullseye behind. However, if you are 26 to 50 points behind, you are two bullseyes behind. For example, if both you and your opponent have closed all numbers except bullseye, and you have a 26 point lead, all you have to do is throw 3 bulls to close out and win. On the other hand, your opponent must also throw 3 bulls to close and 2 extra bulls in order to win (because of your 26 point lead) before you close the bulls.

## BASIC PRINCIPLES OF CRICKET STRATEGY

Win the cork (this requires practice throwing bulls).

2. Close your numbers as quickly as possible.
3. Stay ahead or at least even on points.
4. If ahead or even on points, close numbers. (Remember to stay strategically ahead by counting the number of bulls you are ahead. 1 bull = 25 pts or less; 2 bulls = 26 to 50 pts; 3 bulls = 51 to 75 pts, etc.)
5. If behind on points, move to another number so you can score points.
6. Remember to focus on the big advantage numbers and establish them to score points (20, 19, 18, 17, bull).
7. Remember that 2 single bulls are more valuable than 3 single 16s or 15s.
8. Think triples on all numbers and think double bulls.

Throwing single numbers is an extremely important part of Cricket in many games. At more advanced levels, Cricket is a game of triples and bulls. Our "Dart Improvement Program" provides practice on all Cricket numbers as well as bullseye practice. Cricket is an emotionally challenging game requiring practice of fundamental and psychological skills. Section III provides a comprehensive overview of the psychological and self-mastery skills so essential to throwing **Good Darts**.

## ETIQUETTE, CONVENTIONS, AND SPORTSMANSHIP

Our book and program have a practical focus and emphasize the "how-to's" of playing a good game of darts. How you conduct yourself as you play is also important. Although behavior during a dart game is mainly a matter of common courtesy, we have chosen to emphasize a few points we consider important.

At all levels of play and in all settings, a basic convention of good play is to shake hands with your opponent and wish them well. Once play has started, it is important not to distract your opponent consciously or unconsciously. An opponent at the line should be given a minimum of 2 feet (610 mm) of private space, and you should stand to the rear totally out of the line of peripheral vision.

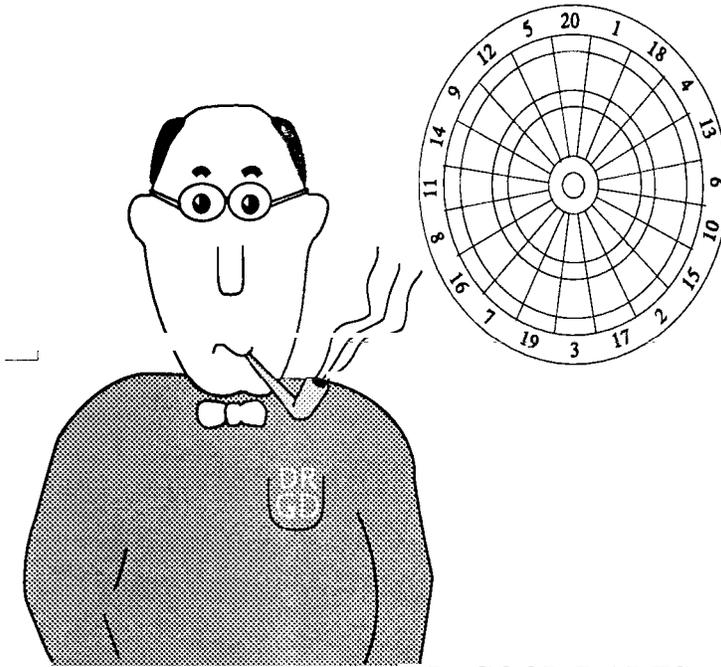
When you walk to the board to retrieve your darts after your throw, you should walk quickly from the board and to the side. Your opponent will be at the line to prepare for his/her next throw, and your movements should not be distracting. It is distracting to make a 180 degree turn and walk straight back toward your opponent.

Unlike the British Darts Organization (BDO), ADO guidelines permit prompting and talk from other players and spectators during match play. At times, this convention makes for a lot of noise and distraction. You can always ask the scorekeeper the amount scored and the amount required to finish at any time during your throw. You are not allowed to ask the scorekeeper how to shoot the out.

# SPORTSMANSHIP

## HAWKS

0 20 0  
0 19  
0 18 0  
J 17 0  
~ 16  
0 15 0  
n 0



DR. GOOD DARTS

DOC: If their team hits double 16, we lose the match.

KILLER: Hex!

SPEEDY: Wall shot!

CHOKER: How about a fat 7?

BEAR: Grrrrrr!

DOC: Looks like sportsmanship needs to be on the agenda for the next team meeting.

Many teams have devoted spectators and enthusiastic supporters that are more than noisy. If you are an easily distractible person, you may want to spend some extra time learning anxiety management, anger control, and relaxation skills. About the only time you get to play darts in an ideal setting is the finals of a tournament. For most of us, that is not a frequent event. Until then, we all have to learn to deal constructively with distractors.

A few things may occur in local or league play that can be handled with courtesy and accepted convention. If your opponent is consistently over the line, you are within your rights to point out that s/he is getting his/her feet "wet." If the behavior is not corrected after being pointed out, you may interrupt the next throw as it occurs and point out the foot-fault to the scorer. If it continues to happen after these measures have been taken, you may ask that darts thrown with feet over the line be scored as zero. **Always remember that courtesy rules. Darts is a game that begins and ends with a handshake.**

## DART TALK

As with any sporting game played by millions, the game of darts has its own language. We have included terms that you will hear used frequently as you begin to play. The list is by no means inclusive and we are sure that you will add many more terms of your own.

ADO - American Darts Organization.

BDO - British Darts Organization.

Throw - A throw consists of three darts, unless a leg or match is completed in a lesser amount.

Bust Rule - If the player scores 1 less, equal, or more points than needed to reach zero, s/he has busted. The player's score reverts back to the score required prior to the beginning of the throw.

Cork - Bullseye, bull.

Scorer - Scorekeeper, chalker, marker.

Leg/Game - One element of a match recognized as a fixed number (i.e. leg 1 in a 3 leg match).

Match - The total number of legs being competed for between two players/teams.

Inner Bull - Double bull; for the purpose of starting and finishing a leg/match, the inner bull is considered a double 25 (score of 50).

Straight Start - No double required to start scoring.

Arrows - Darts.

Away - A double throw to start.

Breakfast - 26 scored by the counteraction of single 20, single 5, single 1. It is the curse of twenty throwers.

Double-In - Starting a game with a required double. No points are scored until after the double-in.

Double-Out - Finishing or winning double throw.

Hockey - Oche, line or throwing mark.

Leg and Leg - One and one in a match.

Level - To bring the legs even in a match.

Madhouse - Double 1 left to finish or win.

Diddle - Diddle for the Middle. Throwing for a bull to determine who shoots first in a game.

Strike - The player winning the start or going first.

Mugs Away - Loser of first leg throws first automatically in starting the second leg. (Convention, informal).

Pot Shoot - Informal tournament played in darting establishments. Usually requires an entry fee to play.

Skunked - Brushed. Being beaten without achieving a start (usually in 301).

Three In A Bed - Three darts in the same number or bed.

Ton - 100 scored. For example, T=100, 2T0=120, 4T0=140, 8T0=180.

Double Top - Tops. Double 20.

Wet Feet - Standing with your feet over the hockey or line.

Bag of Nuts - 45 scored.

All the Varieties - 57 scored.

Basement - Double 3.

Bed - Any scoring segment on the board, usually refers to doubles or triples.

Downstairs - A shot to the lower part of the board, usually nineteen.

Robin Hood - Impaling a dart into the flight or shaft of a dart already in the board.

Barrel - Weighted or metal part of a dart.

Game On - A request for quiet during play (convention, formal play).

Nearest and Furthest - Four players throw for the bull to select partners for a doubles game. Nearest and furthest play against the middle pair.

Shanghai - Three darts scoring single, double, and triple of the same number. For example, a 2T0 is Shanghai on 20s.

Wiring One - Bouncing a dart off the wire or landing it next to the wire.

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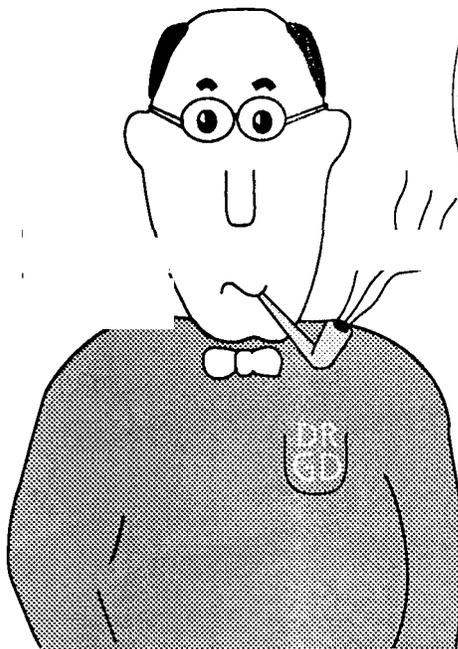
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# DART WIDOW

HAWKS

60	0	ZO	0	/
19		/	X	
18				
X17				
16				
15	B			
		/		



DR. GOOD DARTS

DART WIDOW: Hey Doc? What time will you be in tonight?

DOC:                    Pretty early, Sweet. It's just a league match and a few friendly shoots with the guys - about eleven o'clock.

DART WIDOW: P.M. or A.M.?

## SECTION II

### Darts: Technical and Fundamental Skills

- Productive Practice
- Avoiding Burnout
- Learning from Models
- Choosing Your Equipment
- Setting Up Your Home Practice Board

Stance, Grip, Throw and Release, and Follow-Through

- Counting: Learning Outs
- Developing Consistency
- Sense of Humor

## PRODUCTIVE PRACTICE

As you begin to focus on developing the fundamental and technical skills involved in good darts, you will need to use your home board to practice these essential skills. The authors were introduced to the game by a friend, coincidentally the editor of the **Good Darts** Book, and as a result of our ensuing addiction, we hastily nailed up an old, discarded board in the garage.

Throwing darts over the fender of a dysfunctional 1954 Buick and dodging the friendship attempts of the family dog were not conducive to productive practice. We did have hours of fun, however, and our game improved rapidly due to throwing darts at every opportunity for hundreds of hours.

For productive practice, we have suggested setting up a new board in an area of your home that gives you ample room to walk around, keep score, and record your practice sessions. The distance of the line and height of the board should be in exact accordance with ADO specifications. If you plan to enter any tournaments, it is a good idea to use a raised line rather than a mark or piece of tape, so you can get used to your feet being against a solid barrier.

Your practice environment should also include an Out-Chart to help you memorize the preferred shots and combinations for two and three dart finishes. We designed our **Good Darts** book so you could use the Out-Charts and think about counting strategies. Section V also includes recording forms to help you with productive practice sessions.

The closer the home practice environment approximates the actual places where you throw darts competitively, the more productive your practice sessions will be. We are not recommending that you invite 20 or 30 people to your practice sessions and encourage smoking, drinking, and loud music. However, it is important to remember that darts is a very social game and you rarely get to play in quiet settings.

On some occasions, practice with a friend or family member. Take your **Good Darts** book along and do some practice sessions in your favorite local dart establishments. We have included an audio tape that can prepare you for productive practice sessions. If you are going to play darts, you will have to learn how to adjust to all types of noise, distractions, and interruptions.

In the first few months, a beginning player can begin to master the fundamental and technical skills involved in throwing **Good Darts**. As your experience and confidence develop, you may want to enter local tournaments and "Pot Shoots" so you can continue to improve your game in actual competitive situations.

Remember, when you are throwing against an extremely good dart player, you have an opportunity to learn by watching him/her play. A healthy mental attitude about improving your own game includes being kicked around by experienced players. Losing to a top player is beneficial if you learn from the experience, rather than disturbing yourself about not winning.

## AVOIDING BURNOUT

The most important aspect of productive practice is making the sessions fun and rewarding: something you look forward to doing. In darts, unlike football and basketball games, the practice sessions do not have to be boring and difficult. The authors still remember "two-a-day" practice sessions in football and "running the lines" practice sessions in basketball. Though these practice sessions were not fun, they were something you had to tolerate if you wanted to play the games.

This is not so with darts! By systematic and regular practice to promote dart improvement, we mean devoting more time to playing darts and having fun. Many of our friends, who started playing darts when we did, have burned out on the game. Their intense approach and style of play quickly resulted in physical and mental fatigue. The best way to avoid burnout, play more darts, and have more fun is to organize your practice sessions so that they are enjoyable and at the same time, helpful to your game. Practice in many settings, not just at home.

You must vary your practice sessions so you are challenged to improve your game. You must also be able to "see" and "feel" the results of your practice efforts. We have provided most of the things that you will need to design productive practice sessions that will greatly improve your level of play. In Section V, there are recommended practice sessions as well as forms to record and monitor practice results.

If you know specifically what aspect of your game to improve, you can then select a practice routine to help develop the essential skills for improved performance. If you record your results daily, summarize them monthly, and use them to set your next month's goals, you will be able to see your improvements and be rewarded by the positive results.

The psychological concepts of reward and punishment are key ones to consider in avoiding burnout, negative feelings, and frustration with your dart game. A basic law in psychology states that any behavior immediately followed by positive results is reinforced; and thus, this behavior tends to recur. If behaviors are not reinforced, they tend to decrease and gradually disappear. Apply these concepts to dart play.

For example, a beginning player really gets excited about darts and begins to play every day. His/her game improves rapidly. Scoring consistency increases and some brilliant outs are thrown. The player is continually reinforced by positive results. People begin to say, "**Good Darts!**" He or she becomes thought of as a "good" player. The player begins to expect more and more each week. As performance levels increase, apparent improvements become smaller and smaller.

However, important things come up in the player's life, and less time is spent on playing darts. The player begins to experience "bad darts" and "bad games." People say things like, "You sure don't throw like you used to," or "You are really in a bad slump." The player becomes discouraged, and there are few external sources of positive reinforcement. Dart throwing behavior becomes negatively reinforced, decreases, and may gradually disappear. Because of these factors, you have to take charge of the quality of your game and insure the fun through self-directed practice.

The value of our "Dart Improvement Program" (Section V) is that it keeps your game on track and continually improving. Give yourself ample time to experiment with, enjoy, and develop the fundamental and technical skills (at least 6 months). If you set your own personal goals at higher levels of play, give yourself the time to learn and develop the psychological and self-mastery skills to improve the finer aspects of your game as you complete our "Dart Improvement Program."

## RENEWING YOUR INTEREST IN DARTS

In addition to encouraging beginning players in developing their skill and providing some assistance to experienced players who want to improve their game, we hope that our **Good Darts** book and "Dart Improvement Program" will reinterest dart players who have stopped playing the game regularly. Most peoples' lives are pretty busy these days, and there is little time for having fun and playing games. We feel darts has a lot to offer in terms of fun and social benefits. We hope that some people will come out of retirement, play again, and enjoy the wonderful game of darts.

The most challenging aspect of our program is the necessity to play regularly, if not daily, for 30 minutes or so. Both of us stay pretty busy, and a few minutes of darts each day is a guarantee that each day will have a little fun in it. If we are successful in communicating the potential for the fun and enjoyment of **Good Darts**, we will be accomplishing our major goal.

Go find your old darts and begin to play. If you have the book and no darts, read the next brief sections. Then go make an investment in a new set of darts so you can stop reading and start playing.

## LEARNING FROM MODELS

As we introduce you to the fundamental and technical skills of **Good Darts**, the emphasis is on you individually developing a comfortable style of play. There is no singular perfect stance, grip or throw. You will develop the stance, grip, throw, and release most comfortable and best for you.

One very important and powerful form of learning involves the use of good models. A picture of someone actually performing conveys a lot of knowledge. Pick out good models to watch and learn from as you begin to work on the fundamental skills. Observe top local players, world class players at tournaments, or video tapes showing finals of international play.

Watch the stance, grip, release, and follow-through of these model players. You will notice common characteristics such as good balance, comfortable stance, and an almost machine-like precision in grip, release, and follow-through. You will notice the darts going straight into the board at a constant speed. You will also notice an extremely well-developed sense of concentration. These are skills that have been developed over years of practice and competitive play. They represent behaviors you will want to learn, develop, and incorporate into your- own game.

Friends and teammates can watch your game and give you helpful feedback about further improvements or changes you can make. It does take several months and many hours of practice to be comfortable with the fundamentals. You can speed up this process and improve more quickly by observing good models.

## CHOOSING YOUR EQUIPMENT

The kind of equipment you choose to use in playing darts is influenced by your anticipated level of play and your personal goals. Our book and program are based on the assumption that you want to learn how to play well and that you will practice systematically and regularly. This assumption will require you to purchase a set of darts, a high quality regulation dart board, a score board, a back board, and extra flights and shafts. You may also need an additional light fixture to properly illuminate your practice board.

If possible, shop around your local area for dart supplies. Spend some time looking at what is available and comparing prices. Although dart supplies are sold in sporting goods stores, taverns, and some department stores, your best bet is to find a professional dart store where you can try darts out before you buy. Obtain assistance from someone who really knows the game.

In the next few pages, we present major points to consider as you equip yourself to play darts. Most experienced players who really love the game are willing to talk about all these areas, as well as share pointers on learning how to play. If you do not know any dart players personally, make a few calls around town to see how darts are organized and played in your area. Meet some of the regular players, and begin to play as soon as possible.

## DARTS

Darts are sold in sets of three and consist of the barrel and point, the shaft, and the flight. There are literally hundreds of variations of these three basic components offered for sale. If you want to buy a set of darts to use in all situations, you could still have hundreds of choices. ADO rules, with regard to darts acceptable in tournament play, specify the overall maximum length be 30.5 cm (12 inches) and the maximum weight per dart be 50 gm. In other words, you can throw needles or bombers as long as each dart has a recognizable point, barrel, and flight.

The best darts for you are ones that feel best for your grip and ones you can accurately throw. If you are a beginning player, it may be best to begin your first month or so of play and practice by using a medium weight (22-25 gms) set of brass alloy barrels. You can make all sorts of adjustments with shafts and flights until you arrive at the type of dart best for you. A suitable set with accessories can be purchased for about \$15 - \$25.

As you master fundamental and technical skills, you may want to invest in a set of tungsten darts in order to improve your scoring capabilities. The heavier weight of tungsten allows barrels of smaller diameter and improves your chances of getting all three darts in a tighter group. When you make the move to tungsten barrels, titanium shafts, and custom flights, you are addicted to the game. You will then be looking for any equipment change to help your game.

It is important to give yourself time in both selecting and/or changing your darts. Leighton Rees suggests a regular player give new darts a year before deciding to change again. The persuasive advertising and marketing of new "improved" dart products makes this somewhat more difficult than it first sounds.

The authors have many friends who seem to change their darts every month or so. This is far too short a time to really determine the effects of the changes. If you have a lot of money and like to collect darts, changing every week or month can be fun but rarely productive in really improving your play.

The authors have been playing several years and basically have used only three sets of darts each. During the coming year, we will follow the "Dart Improvement Program" we recommend as part of this book. We now have enough information about ourselves, and our games, to select a high quality set of darts to fit our individual styles of grip and throwing. At the end of this next year, we will be able to decide whether or not any other changes are required.

We do feel it is important to use good equipment. When you decide on the darts you are going to use for a long period of time, it is best to buy two sets. Darts have an uncanny ability to disappear when you most need them, so a spare set will serve you well.

## DART BOARDS

As the game of darts is played now, the board almost exclusively used in tournament and league play is the standard 1-20 clock pattern, eighteen inch, bristle board. Bristle boards can be purchased from several major manufacturers. You are advised to purchase a board for home practice exactly like the one you will play on in leagues and tournaments.

Boards have different color combinations, but the scoring wedge indicated by the 20 must be the darker of the two wedge colors and must be the top center wedge. The inner narrow band scores triple the segment number (T20=60) and has an inside width measurement of 8 mm (5/16 inch). The outer narrow band scores double the segment number (D20=40) and the inside width measurement is the same as the triple ring, 8 mm (5/16 inch).

The outer bull scores 25 and has an inside diameter of 31 mm (1.25 inch). The inner bull scores 50 and has an inside diameter of 12.7 mm (.5 inches). The dartboard is mounted at a height of 5' 8" (floor to middle of the centerbull), and the minimum throwing distance is 7'9-1/4" measured from the front of the board to the hockey. Measured diagonally from the center bull to the back of the raised hockey or line at floor level, the distance is 9'7-3/8".

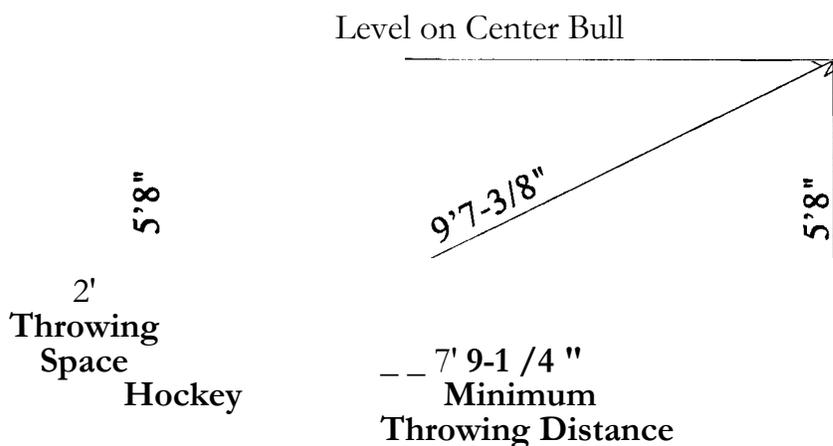
The above information was given so you know what you are looking for in a home board and practice area. This type of board is called many names: International Dartboard, Trebles, London Board, or Clock. If it is an 18" bristle board manufactured for professional play, you have picked the correct board. The board you buy should look like the one on the cover of your **Good Darts** book. You should rotate your board weekly to balance the wear. The metal ring containing the numbers is easily removed. You can then rotate the dartboard to balance the wear and replace the metal ring in its proper position.

If you are an experienced dart player and picked up our book to focus on the psychological and self-mastery skills, rather than the fundamental or technical skills, you may want to consider the potential advantage of selecting a Champion's Choice board for home practice. The narrow double and triple rings make high scoring much harder and require you to fine tune your scoring consistency and accuracy.

We recommend the Champion's Choice board as most beneficial for those playing at what we call Level 6. Level 6 players regularly enter ADO tournaments, have mastered fundamental skills, and have achieved high scoring consistency (60-80 points as their average throw). By using this board in individual practice sessions and focusing on changing and improving the mental aspects of your game, you can lift your game to the next level of skill and competition.

## SETTING UP YOUR HOME PRACTICE BOARD

If you have purchased your darts and board, all you need to set up your home practice board is a small chalkboard, a backboard, and a light fixture to properly illuminate the board. If possible, you need a raised hockey at least 1-1/2" high and 2' long placed at the minimum throwing distance. If you have a spouse or partner who does not share your enthusiasm for the game and objects to having a hockey fastened through the carpet, a throwing line marked with tape will have to suffice. The backboard is essential, not necessarily for you, but for younger throwers, novices, and friends who drop over and end up throwing darts. Some beginning players think you throw a dart like a baseball, and the results of such faulty thinking usually lead to damaged walls and furniture. n



Get your practice area set up so you can begin to play, as well as to develop the fundamental and technical skills of stance, grip, release, follow-through, and counting. However, before getting into those aspects of the game, find a pair of shoes that you can always wear comfortably when practicing or playing darts. If you become a dart addict, you will walk hundreds of miles and spend hours on your feet. You cannot develop a consistent stance and release if you do not wear the same shoes, and you need extremely good shoes with a comfortable fit.

## FUNDAMENTAL AND TECHNICAL SKILLS OF DARTS

Peter Arnold (in his book entitled **Darts**) begins his chapter on how to play by citing a study of the world's leading dart players. This study suggests that advice on how to stand and throw a dart appears worthless because all these dart players seem to do it differently. He then answers his own question, "How, then, can there be only one way to play darts?" by saying there is no single answer. There is no singular, or right way.

Further, we liked the way Peter Arnold qualified his answer by clarifying that top world players are not simply "naturals." To get where these players are, they had to "think" about their game, to "refine" it, to "develop" it to suit themselves, and above all, to "practice" it.

This is what our book and program were designed to do ...to be a helpful guide. Consider the **Good Darts** book to be a guide in developing your game to the level you decide while using your own style and time frame.

For our purposes, we have identified the fundamental skills **of Good Darts:** (1) STANCE, (2) GRIP, (3) THROW AND RELEASE, (4) FOLLOW-THROUGH, AND (5) COUNTING.

The enabling and supportive skills that let you master the fundamental and technical aspects of your game are systematic and self-monitored practice. The outcome, or predictable by-product, of systematic and self-monitored practice is consistency in starting, scoring, and finishing dart games.

Remember, the most important variable in developing the fundamental and technical skills is your personal style. Let's go through the basics so you will have some essential information as you invent and become comfortable with your own style of play.

To re-emphasize a previous point, a very productive way to reinforce your fundamental and technical skills is using a process psychologists call

"modeling." Observe a top professional or world class player as s/he throws in competition. Video tapes are a start, and it is worth a visit to a tournament just for the purpose of selecting and observing a model who has perfected a style similar to your own.

Your learning will improve if you select a model player with whom you can identify with in terms of physical stature, style of play, and temperament. Many dart books emphasize modeling as an excellent way of learning the fundamental skills, and most of these don't tell you how to select or observe a model.

Learning through observation is an active process, not a passive one. When you have selected a model who illustrates mastery of the fundamental skills with a style similar to yours, watch him/her throw. Notice that the fundamental skills are a smooth and blended process of comfortable movements, stance and balance, grip and position, backswing, throw, release, and follow-through. Through years of practice and competition, the fundamental skills blend into an almost automatic process of smooth, comfortable movements.

The goal in learning the fundamental skills is to make the many complicated steps a smooth and personally comfortable process. We break these steps down briefly so you can identify each, along with the key behaviors. When your game is excellent, you will still find you must go back through the fundamentals to correct a slight problem that is greatly influencing your performance.

## STANCE

How you stand at the line is an individual choice derived by considering balance. Most right-handed throwers stand with their right foot toward the line and their weight slightly forward and centered over their right foot. Your right heel needs to remain solidly in contact with the floor. The most important point to keep in mind, and your long-term goal, is to be able to reproduce the same throw time after time. This is difficult, if not impossible, to achieve unless your stance is always comfortably balanced.

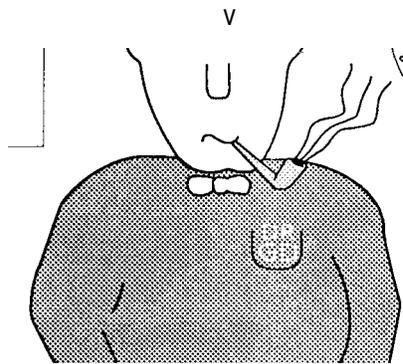
Balanced stance allows you to minimize, and ultimately eliminate, unnecessary movements during and between throws. For the most rapid gains in learning, select a model who demonstrates an immobile and balanced stance while throwing.

Once again, one of the most important aspects to attain balance involves wearing the same type of shoes every time you practice or play darts. The costumes of American dart players are varied, and you see people throwing darts in cowboy boots, thongs, barefeet, and at times, high heels. Though we prefer to stay out of the fashion business, it is scary to see a dart impaled in a bare foot. Obtain a couple of pairs of good, comfortable shoes. Then any adjustments in stance will be to improve your game and not merely be movements to compensate for uncomfortable footwear.

Many players prefer a more squared stance with both feet parallel to the line. The weight is still primarily on the same foot, but the other foot has been brought around for additional support and balance. Both feet are firmly on the floor and the body is held straight, rather than leaning to one side or forward.

## FUNDAMENTAL AND TECHNICAL SKILLS

HAWKS  
0 20 0  
0 19  
0 18 0  
R 17 0  
/ 16 0  
9 15 X  
0 R 0



5 20  
q ,v  
g Y rW  
0  
0

DR. GOOD DARTS

CHOKER: Okay, Killer, you throw next, and all you need is D16.

DOC: Remember the fundamentals!

KILLER: No sweat. Solid, comfortable stance; natural grip; smooth throw and release with elbow as smooth well-greased hinge; clean, smooth followthrough. No problem! I'm ready.

CHOKER: Hey, Killer, you're up!

KILLER: Where's my beer? Where's my darts? I had them just a minute ago!! Where are they??

DOC: How fundamental skills go awry!

Stance is the essential foundation of fundamental skills. Most dart players agree that stance is more important than grip and is the key to the throw, release, and follow-through. Often just moving one foot slightly further back or to the side helps with balance and to develop a consistent throw.

## GRIP

How you grip or hold your dart is extremely important and is a process you will repeat thousands of times. Again, your major objective in developing a comfortable grip is to arrive at a procedure you can duplicate exactly on every throw. The most natural grip is similar to how most people hold a pencil. The thumb is placed under the center of gravity of the dart, with the index finger on the side opposite of the thumb.

What you do with your second finger while holding a dart is something for you to decide in the process of developing a smooth throw. Most players support the point of the dart with the second finger in different ways. Variations in grip involving the second finger include: placing the finger alongside the barrel just touching the point, pressing the finger against the very tip of the point, or placing the finger underneath the point.

The important thing to remember is to find your natural grip. Then support this basic grip by including a comfortable way to use your third finger for extra support. Give yourself plenty of practice time deriving a comfortable grip, and then begin working on duplicating this grip on every throw.

Depending on your grip preference, you may feel the size and shape of your darts are not comfortable. If this happens, make a special trip to a well-equipped dart store to try out and compare numerous other possibilities. Again, allow yourself plenty of time before deciding to switch barrels and shafts. Contrary to popular myth, there are no perfect darts sold that solve all your problems with the fundamental skills.

## THROW AND RELEASE

Your throwing action must be a smooth flow. Your objective is to use the same movements on each throw, with smooth movements and no jerks, pushes, or lobs. You may visualize the throw consisting of a backswing and a release.

The elbow is the key factor in throwing because it is the pivot point where the forearm moves from the backswing forward to the release. Your elbow must remain relaxed and in the same position, throw after throw. Keep your elbow immobile and visualize it being a fixed and smoothly working hinge. Peter Arnold makes this point very clear. It is very difficult to achieve consistent accuracy if the elbow is dropped too far down and is moved while throwing.

Hold your backswing constant as you bring your dart up and back smoothly to eye level. The dart is brought back in a comfortable swing before being released ...and the release is at the end of a throw and is not a push.

When your throwing action becomes automatic (grooved), you will begin feeling natural in your movements and hardly aware of the separate steps required in throwing a dart. The throw and release is an essential element of fundamental darts. This phase is the key to consistency in throwing for score and building confidence to finish games. On your release, the dart speed should be constant ...throw after throw after throw.

## FOLLOW-THROUGH

The last step in releasing a dart is the follow-through. The dart is released cleanly with a forward motion, loose wrist, and smooth follow-through. Failure to end each throw with a smooth follow-through results in the dart losing dart speed and dropping.

Good follow-through on your throws produces darts thrown at a constant speed, that enter the board straight and group closely together. In practicing your throw, release, and follow-through, your primary objective is throwing all three darts in a close group or cluster on the board. You also want the cluster around your target area. Many people just walk to the board and start throwing, but do not have any conscious intent behind their throw.

Productive practice (systematic and self-monitored) and learning from models are two of the best approaches to developing mastery of the fundamental and technical skills. Stance and balance, grip, throw and release, and follow-through rapidly improve when you follow these approaches.

One additional procedure for speeding up the process of mastering the fundamentals is finding an experienced local player willing to coach your skill development during several fun sessions of play. Have the player observe your throws and ask for feedback on what s/he sees you doing. Tell him/her specifically what you are trying to improve and on which fundamental skills you need help.

## COUNTING

A key fundamental skill in playing **Good Darts** is the ability to rapidly calculate and select the best route to finish on a winning double. We encourage you to master this aspect of the game in the beginning stages of play. It is important to know what you need to throw on a given out before you actually develop the skill to accomplish a three dart out. If you have mastered counting, your technical and performance skills will catch up to your mind's expectations. If you are confused about what you need to throw, your mind will interfere with your ability to make accurate throws. Learn to count from the beginning.

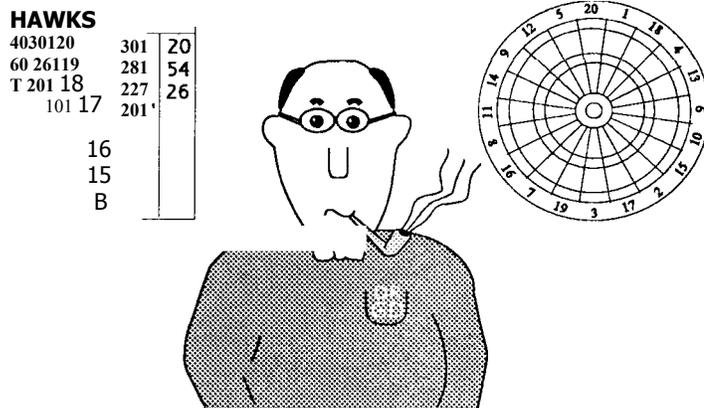
We have included out-charts showing suggested dart finishes from 170. As you become experienced in dart play, you will begin devising variations from our suggestions that are better for you. To master counting, we will take you through the process of learning outs as a step-by-step procedure.

Before beginning the study and practice of outs, complete the steps that follow:

1. Learn the position of each number on the board. Check your learning by closing your eyes and creating a visual image of the dartboard. In your mind's eye, start with the 20 and move to the right and see if you can supply all the numbers around the board. When you can complete this visual exercise without error or hesitation you have learned the position of the numbers.
2. Learn the numerical value of all the doubles and triples.
3. Memorize all the possible multiples of American Cricket numbers. If you play and score a lot of Cricket games, it is essential you know all multiples up to 9x (the value of 3 triples) the numbers of 20, 19, 18, 17, 16, and 15.

We have included visuals to help you with these initial tasks. If you are a beginning or a regular player who has never really focused on learning to count, you will benefit from this section. You will benefit greatly from a concentrated effort to learn the outs and to help work out your own preferred shots from 170 down. You can do this by using our suggested breakdowns and practicing outs as separate games. When you master the skill of counting, the process will be almost automatic as you calculate your preferred shots from 170 down to the finish (in 01 games).

## COUNTING



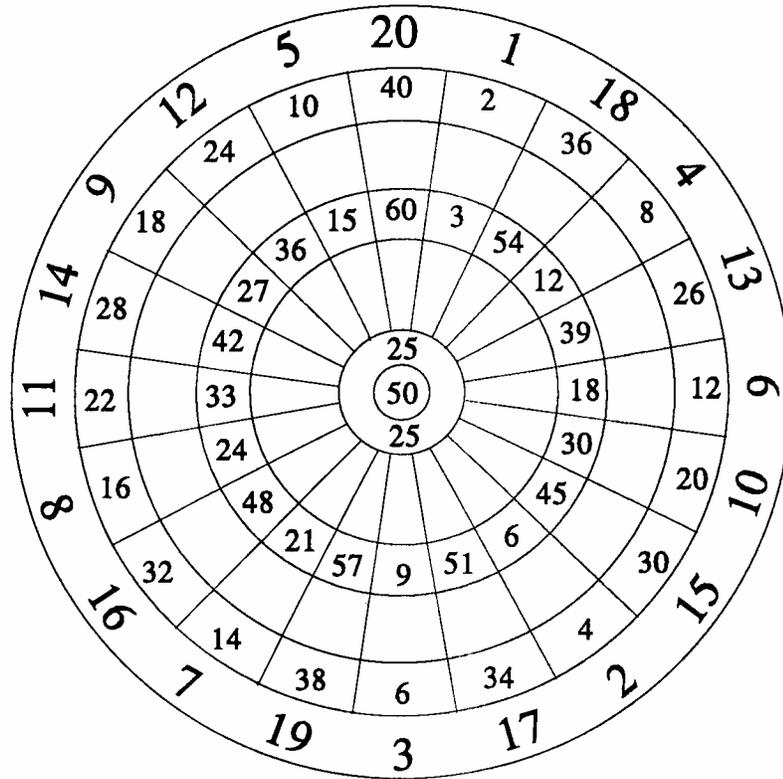
## Dr. GOOD DARTS

- BEAR:** Hey Doc! Speedy is scoring and getting down fast, but he won't know what to throw at for his out, what can we do?
- DOC:** Simple, Bear, counting is a theoretical auditory quantitative skill that only a few people have naturally. Try the book. It has theoretical visual quantitative presentations for out strategies along with mnemonic aids and memory linking strategies to improve retention in serial learning.
- SPEEDY:** Wha'd he say?
- KILLER:** I think he said there's an Out-Chart in the book.

For most beginning players, we recommend learning the information included in the visuals on counting. You can learn the fundamental skill of counting through practice and memory work-outs. You can greatly improve your game and confidence by knowing the strategy and options for scoring and finishing. Concentrate on learning the numbers and counting strategies involved in the following charts and illustrations:

- Doubles and Triples Values in Cricket
  - Phase 1: Madhouse to Tops (40 down to 2)
  - Phase 2: Sweet 16 (60 down to 41)
  - Phase 3: Triple Quick Finishes (110 down to 61)
  - Phase 4: Show-Outs (170 down to 111)

**DOUBLES and TRIPLES VALUES  
FOR ALL NUMBERS  
AND ALL MULTIPLES OF CRICKET SCORES**



CRICKET NUMBERS

	15	16	17	18	19	20
4=	60	64	68	72	76	80
5=	75	80	85	90	95	100
6=	90	96	102	108	114	120
7=	105	112	119	126	133	140
8=	120	128	136	144	152	160
9=	135	144	153	162	171	180

BULLSEYE

1SB	25
2SB	50
3SB	75
1DB	50
2DB	100
3DB	150

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## PHASE 1: COUNTING AND FINISHING (40 down to 2)

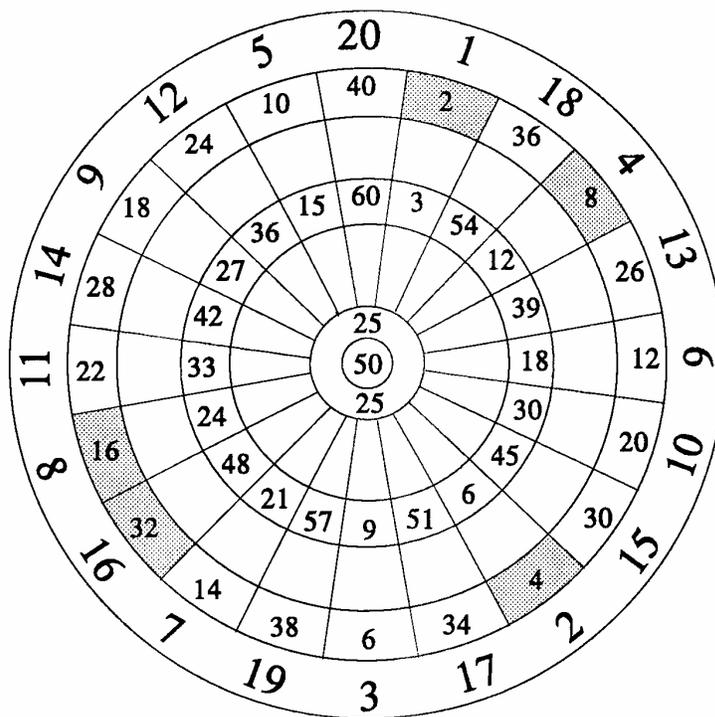
In Phase 1, **Madhouse to Tops**, your goal is knowing your finishing outs when you reach the final part of 01 games. This chart is especially important when you miss an out-shot because you must know what number to hit to reach the next preferred out-shot.

The options on 14, 17, and 25 are provided to allow you to think about dart strategy early in your development. The out for 14 is D7; however, sometimes it may be safer (if you have a good lead on your opponent) to aim for the 6/10 wedge and leave yourself with either 8(D4) or 4(D2). With 17 remaining, the throw is usually S1, D8. However, you could throw for a S 13, leaving you with 4(D2). The only advantage in this option is a single on either side still allows another single throw to set up an out. A missed throw on either side of the S 1 busts you immediately. With 25 remaining, you could aim at the S17 and leave an 8(D4) out. If you miss to the left and hit a S3, you still have an out, 22(D11).

Darts is a mental game, so think about all the various options. For the most part, however, when you reach 40 or below, just throw it out.

# COUNTING and FINISHING

## MadHouse to Tops - 40 Down to 2



<u>Hints/Options</u>	<u>Finishing Outs (Even)</u>	<u>Finishing Outs (Odd)</u>	<u>Skills Developed</u>	
We recommend D16 as the beginning focus or preferred out to practice and set up. D16 splits four times: D8,D4,D2,D1. Always leave your practice board with a feeling of confidence by hitting your favorite out. D16 or _____	2-D1 4-D2 6-D3 8-D4 10-D5 12-D6 *14-D7 16-D8 18-D9 20-D10	22-D11 24-D12 26-D13 28-D14 30-D15 32-D16 34-D17 36-D18 38-D19 40-D20	3-1,D1 5-1,D2 7-3,D2 9-1,D4 11-3,D4 13-5,D4 15-7,D4 *17-1,D8 19-3,D8 21-5,D8 23-7,D8 *25-9,D8 27-11,D8 29-13,D8 31-15,D8 33-17,D8 35-3,D16 37-5,D16 39-7,D16	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Counting</li> <li>• Accuracy</li> <li>• Doubles</li> <li>• Self-Confidence</li> </ul>
			* Refer to strategy discussion	

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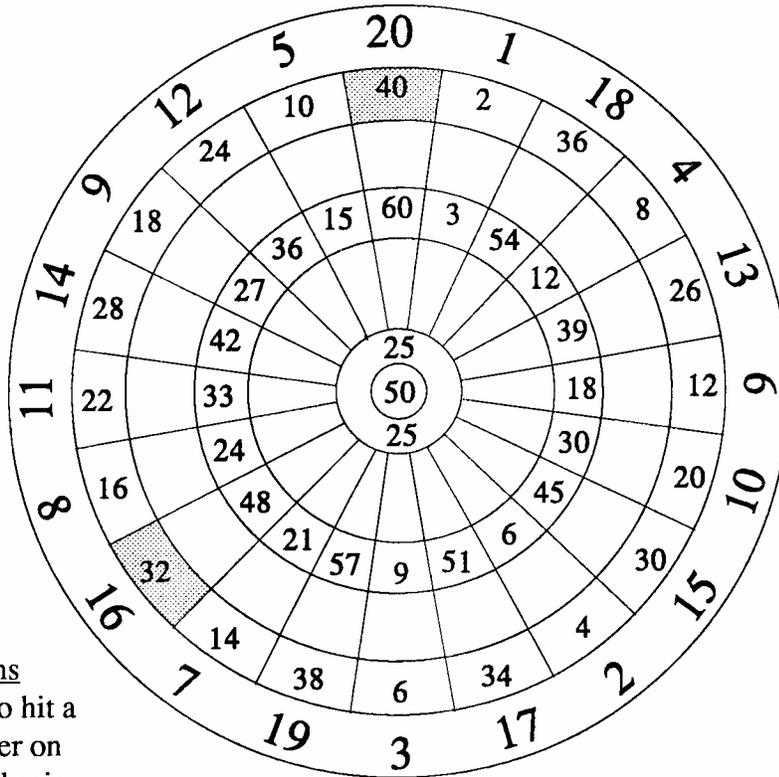
## PHASE 2: COUNTING AND FINISHING (60 down to 41)

In Phase 2, **Sweet 16**, your goal is to learn what single number you must hit to achieve a focused out of 32(1316) or 40(1320). Solidly hitting the correct single on the first throw allows you 2 darts to win the game. You can win many dart games by gaining proficiency in hitting outs from 60 down to 41. Work on throwing these outs in your practice sessions.

There are more options than the ones we present in Phase 2. The options on 42, 44, 46, 48, 51, and 52 are provided to develop real appreciation for the value of counting strategy. With 42 remaining, the preferred shot is S 10, 1316. However, you may choose to aim at the 6/10 wedge. If you hit a S6, you still have a good out at 36(1318). With 44 remaining, a throw of S 12, 1316 is correct. However, sometimes aiming slightly above the triple 12 is a good idea. If you hit a triple 12(36), you still have a good out-shot at 8(134). With 46 remaining, aim at the 6/10 wedge. A S6 provides the preferred out of 40(1320). However, a S 10 leaves you with a good out-shot of 36(1318). The wedge shot gives you more room for a slightly errant dart without hurting your chances of winning. With 48 remaining, another wedge shot of the 8/16 split provides a good breakdown of either 40(1320) or 32(1316). With 51 remaining, you could choose to throw a S 11 leaving you with 40(1320). A slight advantage is that, if you happen to hit a triple 11, you still have an out-shot of 18(139). With 52 remaining, you could choose to throw slightly above the triple 12. A S 12 leaves you with 40(1320); a triple 12 leaves you with a 16(138).

# COUNTING and FINISHING

Sweet 16 - 60 Down to 41



## Hints/Options

The ability to hit a single number on demand is a basic skill required in playing **Good Darts**. Practice these outs as a game until you have developed confidence in finishing quickly. Our recommended daily practice session will help you focus on this skill and develop it quickly. Once developed, the skill must be maintained through systematic practice.

### Finishing Outs (Even)

\*42-10,D16  
 \*44-12,D16  
 \*46-6,D20  
 \*48-16,D16  
 50-18,D16  
 \*52-20,D16  
 54-14,D20  
 56-16,D20  
 58-18,D20  
 60-20,D20

### Finishing Outs (Odd)

41-9,D16  
 43-11,D16  
 45-13,D16  
 47-15,D16  
 49-17,D16  
 \*51-19,D16  
 53-13,D20  
 55-15,D20  
 57-17,D20  
 59-19,D20

### Skills Developed

- Counting
- Accuracy
- Doubles
- Self-Confidence
- Strategy

\* Refer to strategy discussion

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### PHASE 3: COUNTING AND FINISHING (110 down to 61)

In Phase 3, **Triple Quick Finishes**, your goal is to finish the game with one set of darts (2 or 3 perfect darts). This phase is extremely important. You can win a lot of games when you are comfortably able to throw your best darts from 110 down to 61.

The primary goal is to throw a Triple Quick Finish and win. A secondary goal is to set yourself up with a focus out-shot of 32(D16) or 40(D20) if you are unable to win the game with a Triple Quick Finish.

There are many more options than the ones we present in Phase 3. The options on 63, 64, 66, 72, 77, 80, 82, 90, 91, 92, 93, 94, 95, 103, and 108 are provided to develop your thought processes concerning counting strategy and its variations. With 63 remaining, you could choose to throw T17, D6 (51/12). If you hit a S 17, you have 46 remaining. Such a remainder permits a throw at the 6/10 wedge explained in Phase 2. With 64 remaining, you could choose to throw at the T16/T8 wedge. A T16 leaves the preferred out of 16, 138; a T8 also leaves a good out of 40, D20. A S16 leaves 48, permitting a throw at the 8/16 wedge discussed in Phase 2. A S8 leaves 56 permitting another throw right back at S 16 to leave a good out of 40, D20 with your third shot. Also, with 56 remaining, a hit into either the T8 or T16 leaves good outs of 32, D16 or 8, D4 respectively. With 66 remaining, you could choose to throw T10, D18 (30/36). With 72 remaining, you could choose to throw T12, D18 (36/36). With 77 remaining, you could choose to throw T15, D16 (45/32). With 80 remaining, you could choose to throw T20, D10 (60/20). An advantage to this option is that a S20 leaves you with 60 just throw another S20 and then the D20.

For fun and practice, think about throwing the first dart at the DBull on the numbers 82, 90, 91, 92, 93, 94, and 95. Even though this will not set up a Triple Quick Finish, they are exciting outs. If you hit a DBull on the first dart, you have an immediate out on the numbers 82 - DBull, D16 (50/32)

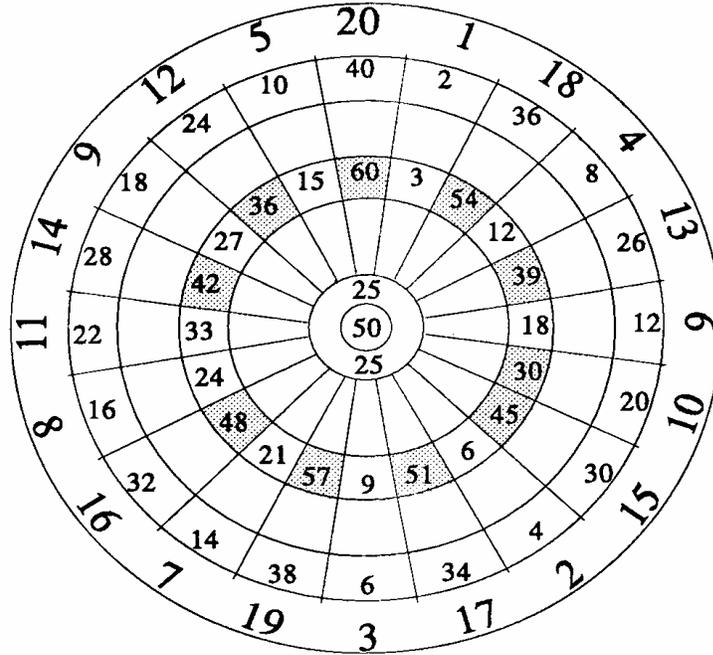
and 90 -DBull, D20 (50/40). If you hit a SBull for any of the numbers, you have only to throw a single number with the second dart to set up an out. For example, with 91 remaining, a SBull leaves 66 for a S16, DBull finish (25, 16, 50). The other numbers of 82, 90, 92, 93, 94, and 95 offer the same opportunity. These shots make for real dart excitement. You may not hit these, but it is grand fun trying. In addition, this approach will become much more strategic when you reach higher levels of competition. We have won several exciting games in ADO sanctioned tournaments with this strategy.

While many tournament players sometimes use this strategy, one of the authors first became acquainted with this approach during a West Coast Tournament. John Whitted, Jr. explained this strategy during a blind-draw, doubles event. Again, experienced players have a lot to offer, so take advantage of their expertise. Watch and learn from model players.

With 103 remaining, you could choose to throw T17, T12, D8 (51, 36, 16). A single 12 with the second dart leaves D20. With 108 remaining, you could choose to throw T19, S19, D16 (57, 19, 32). One advantage with this shot is that all the numbers are in the same quadrant, or lower left-side of the board.

# COUNTING and FINISHING

## Triple Quick Finishes - 110 Down to 61



### Hints/Options

By memorizing the numerical values of all the triples and doubles combinations on the board, you can now think numbers when approaching your outs. Using Self-Talk to help you focus, say to yourself before each out, the following sequence:  
 61 is 45+16(T15,D8)  
 62 is 30+32(T10,D16).  
 Say and use the numbers. The area of the board in terms of Triple and Double rings will come to you by associative learning.

### Finishing Outs (Even)

- 62-T10,D16 (30/32)
- \*64-T16,D8 (48/16)
- \*66-T14,D12 (42/24)
- 68-T20,D4 (60/8)
- 70-T18,D8 (54/16)
- \*72-T16,D12 (48/24)
- 74-T14,D16 (42/32)
- 76-T20,D8 (60/16)
- 78-T18,D12 (54/24)
- \*80-T16,D16 (48/32)
- \*82-T14,D20 (42/40)
- 84-T20,D12 (60/24)
- 86-T18,D16 (54/32)
- 88-T16,D20 (48/40)
- \*90-T18,D18 (54/36)
- \*92-T20,D16 (60/32)
- \*94-T18,D20 (54/40)
- 96-T20,D18 (60/36)
- 98-T20,D19 (60/38)
- 100-T20,D20 (60/40)
- 102-T20,10,D16 (60/10/32)
- 104-T18,DB (54/50)
- 106-T20,6,D20 (60/6/40)
- \*108-T19,19,D16 (57/19/32)
- 110-T20,DB (60/50)

### Finishing Outs (Odd)

- 61-T15,D8 (45/16)
- \*63-T13,D12 (39/24)
- 65-T15,D10 (45/20)
- 67-T17,D8 (51/16)
- 69-T19,D6 (57/12)
- 71-T13,D16 (39/32)
- 73-T19,D8 (57/16)
- 75-T17,D12 (51/24)
- \*77-T19,D10 (57/20)
- 79-T13,D20 (39/40)
- 81-T19,D12 (57/24)
- 83-T17,D16 (51/32)
- 85-T15,D20 (45/40)
- 87-T17,D18 (51/36)
- 89-T19,D16 (57/32)
- \*91-T17,D20 (51/40)
- \*93-T19,D18 (57/36)
- \*95-T19,D19 (57/38)
- 97-T19,D20 (57/40)
- 99-T19,10,D16 (57/10/32)
- 101-T17,DB (51/50)
- \*103-T19,6,D20 (57/6/40)
- 105-T19,16,D16 (57/16/32)
- 107-T19,DB (57/50)
- 109-T19,T12,D8 (57/36/16)

### Skills Developed

- Counting
- Accuracy
- Self-Confidence
- Triples Accuracy
- Doubles Accuracy

\* Refer to strategy discussion

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## PHASE 4: COUNTING AND FINISHING (170 down to 111)

In Phase 4, **Show-Outs**, your goal is to finish with spectacular outs that create the most excitement for players and spectators. It is important to approach this phase with maximum confidence and concentration. Knowing what numbers you must hit frees your mind of any unnecessary doubts or worries. Also, throwing at the right numbers and combinations of numbers gives you the best chance of winning. You also keep your opponent from developing any extra confidence as you enter the final steps of the game.

Your primary goal is to win with a spectacular 3 dart Show-Out finish. A secondary goal is to set up your best double-out number for the next throw, if unable to win the game with a Show-Out finish.

There are many more options than the ones we present in Phase 4. The options on 132, 135, 137, 148, and 158 are provided to encourage thinking about counting strategy and variations. With 132 remaining and your opponent in an out position, you could choose to throw the first dart at the Bull. If you hit a DBull, you have 82 remaining - T14, D20 (42/40). If you hit a SBull, you have 107 remaining - T19, **DBull** (57/50). With 135 remaining, you could also follow the same strategy and go for the Bull with your first dart. A DBull leaves you with 85 remaining - T15, D20 (45/40). A SBull leaves you with 110 remaining - T20, DBull (60/50). These options are fun and can be exciting. They also send out a clear message that you are playing to win.

With 137 remaining, you could choose to throw T17, T18, D16 (51, 54, 32). A single 17 with the first dart sets up a familiar and easy number to count down. Just throw at the T20 to reduce your score to a good out number. With 148 remaining, you could choose to throw T18, T18, D20 (54, 54, 40). This is a good and spectacular Show-Out. With 158 remaining, the same strategy prevails. You could choose to throw T18, T18, DBull (54, 54, 50). A DBull finish is the best possible conclusion to a Show-Out finish.

Phase 4 strategy is extremely important to developing a winning attitude in darts. Your mental set is more attuned to the game when you have a specific strategy. We think you should start your counting strategy when you reach 230. It is important to count down after each dart (this takes practice) or have a specific strategy to set-up a Show-Out finish. Even in the early stages of developing your game, try to leave Show-Out finishes ...170, 167, 164, 161, 160, 158. Try not to leave no-out numbers ...169, 168, 166, 165, 163, 162, 159. This approach lets you practice **Good Darts** philosophy of anticipating and focusing on each throw. By leaving yourself a Show-Out number like 170, instead of a no-out like 169, you are practicing more on spectacular dart finishes. This philosophy is even more important as you reach higher levels of competition. So, start practicing this part of the game from the very beginning.

As you approach the Show-Out finishes (170 down to 111), try to follow this strategy:

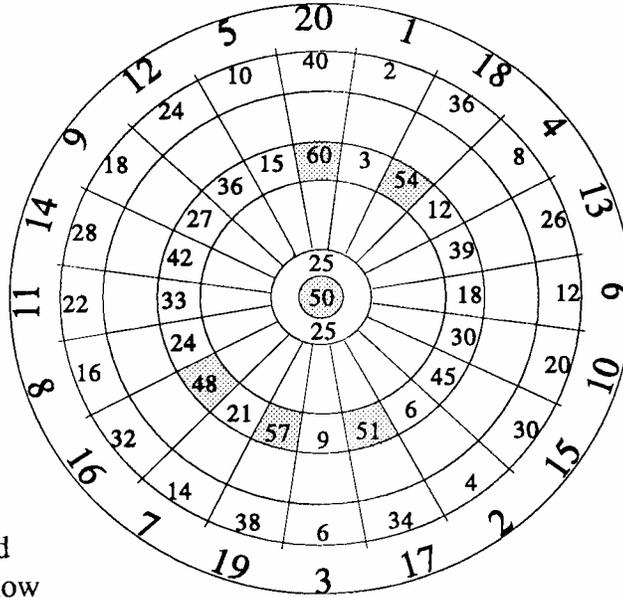
- leave 170 remaining and not 169 or 168
- leave 167 remaining and not 168 or 166
- leave 164 remaining and not 165 or 163
- leave 161 remaining and not 162 or 159
- leave 160 remaining and not 162 or 159
- leave 158 remaining and not 159

Remember, start thinking about your out-strategy at least by the time you reach 230. With 230 remaining, a score of 60 leaves 170. With 229 remaining, a score of 60 leaves a no-out score of 169. So if you throw a S20 (leaving 209) and another S20 with your second dart (leaving 189), your last dart should be at the T19. If you throw a S 19, you now have a Show-Out at 170 rather than a no-out at 169.

A **significant part of Good Darts** is mental. We deliberately include counting and counting strategy as a fundamental and technical skill. Study the visuals presented in this section over and over and practice your counting strategy. Counting strategy becomes more powerful when used with the psychological and self-mastery skills presented in Section III.

# COUNTING and FINISHING

## Show-Outs - 170 Down to 111



### Hints/Options

If you have mastered Phase 3, you will know almost all of these outs. If you go for T20 first, say to yourself,  $152-60=92$  (T20 first) 92 is  $60+32$  (T20,D16) No 3 dart finishes for 159, 162, 163, 165, 166, 168, or 169. Avoid leaving these numbers on your way down. Start thinking OUT at 240-230, and always leave yourself a Show-Out (3 darts). You will not shoot many 7T0's out unless you shoot at it several hundred times. Give yourself the chance to make Show-Outs. Set them up.

### Finishing Outs (Even)

112-T20,20,D16 (60/20/32)  
 114-T20,14,D20 (60/14/40)  
 116-T20,16,D20 (60/16/40)  
 118-T18,T16,D8 (54/48/16)  
 120-T20,20,D20 (60,20,40)  
 122-T18,T20,D4 (54/60/8)  
 124-T20,T16,D8 (60/48/16)  
 126-T19,19,DB (57/19/50)  
 128-T18,T14,D16 (54/42/32)  
 130-T20,T18,D8 (60/54/16)  
 132-T20,T16,D12 (60/48/24)  
 134-T20,T14,D16 (60/42/32)  
 136-T20,T20,D8 (60/60/16)  
 138-T20,T18,D12 (60/54/24)  
 140-T20,T16,D16 (60/48/32)  
 142-T20,T14,D20 (60/42/40)  
 144-T20,T20,D12 (60/60/24)  
 146-T20,T18,D16 (60/54/32)  
 148-T20,T16,D20 (60/48/40)  
 150-T20,T18,D18 (60/54/36)  
 152-T20,T20,D16 (60/60/32)  
 154-T20,T18,D20 (60/54/40)  
 156-T20,T20,D18 (60/60/36)  
 158-T20,T16,DB (60/48/50)  
 160-T20,T20,D20 (60/60/40)  
 164-T20,T18,DB (60/54/50)  
 170-T20,T20,DB (60/60/50)

### Finishing Outs (Odd)

111-T19,14,D20 (57/14/40)  
 113-T19,16,D20 (57/16/40)  
 115-T19,18,D20 (57/18/40)  
 117-T20,17,D20 (60/17/40)  
 119-T19,T10,D16 (57/30/32)  
 121-T17,T18,D8 (51/54/16)  
 123-T19,T14,D12 (57/42/24)  
 125-T18,T13,D16 (54/39/32)  
 127-T20,T17,D8 (60/51/16)  
 129-T19,T16,D12 (57/48/24)  
 131-T20,T13,D16 (60/39/32)  
 133-T20,T19,D8 (60/57/16)  
 135-T20,T17,D12 (60/51/24)  
 137-T19,T16,D16 (57/48/32)  
 139-T20,T13,D20 (60/39/40)  
 141-T20,T19,D12 (60/57/24)  
 143-T20,T17,D16 (60/51/32)  
 145-T20,T15,D20 (60/45/40)  
 147-T20,T17,D18 (60/51/36)  
 149-T20,T19,D16 (60/57/32)  
 151-T20,T17,D20 (60/51/40)  
 153-T20,T19,D18 (60/57/36)  
 155-T20,T15,DB (60/45/50)  
 157-T20,T19,D20 (60/57/40)  
 161-T20,T17,DB (60/51/50)  
 167-T20,T19,DB (60/57/50)

### Skills Developed

- Triples Accuracy
- Doubles Accuracy
- Self-Confidence
- High Performance Under Pressure
- Stage Presence

\*Refer to strategy discussion for the Out #'s of 132, 35, 137, 148, 158.

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## DEVELOPING CONSISTENCY

Achieving consistency in scoring, starting, and finishing is your focused goal on the fundamental and technical skills of **Good Darts**. As you develop personal comfort in your stance, grip, throw and release, and follow-through, you will also learn counting and triples and doubles accuracy by practicing the outs that we recommend. If you are a beginning player, allow yourself about six months to focus on developing these skills.

Consistency is the by-product of systematic and self-monitored practice. Your dart game will not remain consistent at any level of play unless you support it with practice sessions you complete, record, and study on a regular basis. Our "Dart Improvement Program" provides a guide in achieving and maintaining consistency as you practice and have fun playing darts.

We have done most of the work for you in our "Dart Improvement Program" by providing structured practice sessions, record forms, summary charts, and fun games to build specific skills. All you have to do is decide how much time you are willing to devote to have fun playing darts. Then, start throwing darts and recording your progress and improvement. By following these methods, you continually know what is needed to improve and advance your game to the next level.

If you throw darts regularly, you may ask why you should practice systematically. The answer is clear. When you are involved in formal or

fun tournaments, you spend most of your time waiting to play, rather than actually playing. You may spend hours at a local dart establishment playing a blind-draw tournament; however, you may only play thirty or forty minutes in this tournament, even if you reach the finals. Although these are great fun, the benefits of tournaments are mostly social and do not substantially develop your game. You enter local tournaments to have fun and to gain experience in playing competitively. Remember, your individual dart game is improved more through

## SENSE OF HUMOR

A good sense of humor is a characteristic often mentioned in describing a mentally healthy person. Developing the skill to laugh at yourself as you strive to become the best dart player possible, is almost essential to your emotional survival and well-being. The quality of your dart game at any given moment can vary greatly because of a thousand influencing variables. Being consistently "great" can only be achieved by making dart play a full-time job. This is the difference between an amateur and a professional. Even professionals must develop a healthy sense of humor about themselves and their games.

A healthy sense of humor involves a willingness and ability to laugh at events that are truly funny. Occasionally, catastrophic events creep into our dart game, and we may overwhelm ourselves with feelings of dread and doom. A healthy way to defuse or eliminate negative reactions to these feelings is to find humor, both in yourself and in these events.

The key in using humor to positively manage stress is the ability to reframe or change the context of the stressful situation into one that reduces personal anxiety. You can accomplish this by introducing humor either during or after your reaction to a personal stressor. Viewing a situation from a humorous, rather than a distressing perspective, is a personal skill worthy of development and practice. Not laughing at things that are truly not funny is also a skill.

## SECTION III

### DARTS: PSYCHOLOGICAL AND SELF-MASTERY SKILLS

- A Philosophy of Darts
- Good Darts as Personal Skills Development
- Psychological and Self-Mastery Skills: Introduction
- Self Assessment
- Self Monitoring
- Personal Goal Setting
- Positive Self-Efficacy
- Positive and Helpful Self-Talk
- Focusing and Concentration
- The Inner Game of Darts
- Positive Imagery
- Anger Control
- Identifying Personal Stressors
- Thought Changing
- Anxiety Management
- Relaxation and Mental Training
- Recognizing and Changing Problem Behaviors

## A PHILOSOPHY OF DARTS

Darts is a game of skill. The ability to play good and consistent dart games requires learning, refinement, and continual practice of specific skills. As you begin play, technical and fundamental skills are most important. After you develop a comfortable stance, grip, release, and follow-through, you will notice your mental attitude becoming more and more important with increasing levels of play.

As in any sporting activity, darts involves self-mastery and self-control skills. Your personal philosophy of darts is also important. We all tend to judge our dart game against what we believe we should be able to do. If you are fiercely competitive and want to beat everyone in your city, your state, and the entire country, this philosophy commits you to years of daily practice and continual tournament play against top players. If you want to throw better darts, feel good about yourself as you play, and be a part of a team in local league play, your philosophy is close to ours. **Good Darts** was designed to help improve your game to a level that will bring you satisfaction from the skills you develop.

An important thing to remember is your dart game will not remain consistently good unless you consistently practice. How you practice is, at times, more important than how long you practice. If you are unable or unwilling to practice regularly, you must adjust your mental attitude and philosophy toward your game.

Beginning players often become excited about the game of darts, and they play for hours and at every opportunity. Consequently, the beginning player's game improves rapidly with such intensive practice. A beginning player may throw some amazing darts, and such rapid improvement in the initial phase of play is extremely rewarding and motivating. Because the beginning player achieves some great games, s/he begins to raise performance expectations. In other words, the person begins to expect more and more on each trip to the line and in every game.

**If a schedule of consistent and** systematic practice is not followed after these rapid, initial gains, a beginning player can expect wide variations in the quality and level of dart play. In many cases the beginner's dart game is a series of peaks and valleys; sometimes throwing extremely good darts and sometimes throwing extremely poor darts. It is important to remember that peaks and valleys in your game are predictable and unavoidable. Even the very best players experience periods where they are off their game and not playing at their potential level. They correct and adjust through practice.

Your game philosophy needs to allow for the concept of peaks and valleys. So, enjoy the peaks and support them with systematic practice. Then, you can maintain and enjoy good play for longer periods of time. Valleys are also predictable. To avoid being frustrated and angry with your game, you need to view periods of poor or inconsistent play (valleys) as an indication for systematic and regular practice. Valleys are an opportunity to check and improve the technical and/or psychological aspects of your game. Regular practice and refinement of skills minimize the negative effects of valleys at your level of play.

We have observed many beginning players improve rapidly and then become frustrated about their inability to play consistently. Some of these players become very critical of themselves and angry at their game. When these negative effects occur, enjoyment and fun begin to diminish. Your dart philosophy needs to include a healthy way of viewing and changing your performance.

A healthy philosophy of darts is similar to a healthy and positive view of oneself. Having a developmental viewpoint of yourself and your game is very helpful. Knowing you can change or further develop anything about yourself is vitally important. This is a lifelong process for all of us.

Darts can be a lifelong activity that brings a great deal of fun and enjoyment to our lives. In personal development as well as in the development of our dart game, it is important to continually remind ourselves and be aware of

our strengths and weaknesses. Strengths are good things about ourselves that bring us pride and self-confidence. Weaknesses are aspects of ourselves and our dart game we want to change or improve. Weaknesses can be changed to strengths by developing and refining key skills.

**Good Darts** was written and designed to provide information, skills, and processes to help you improve your game of darts. If you love darts as we do, self satisfaction and enjoyment increases as your skill level increases. Our philosophy of darts includes feeling good about ourselves. We play darts to increase our satisfaction and fun in life and to meet and enjoy being with all kinds of people. We do, however, prefer winning to losing.

We view darts as a game we want to develop as a lifelong activity. Being able to play **Good Darts requires** developing and refining skills that build self-mastery. Throughout this section, we include information, concepts, and methods consistent with our philosophy of darts and self-improvement.

## GOOD DARTS AS PERSONAL SKILLS DEVELOPMENT

For over fifteen years, we have developed assessment and learning materials to help people master essential skills for positive living, increased productivity, and positive mental health. For the past several years, we have enjoyed playing darts and being members of teams involved in local league play. **In the Good Darts** book and "Dart Improvement Program," we applied our personal skills development model to improve performance and psychological and self-mastery skills.

Our intent is not to take the fun out of darts by making it a serious endeavor. Rather, we hope to share our experience so beginning players can improve their game in a systematic fashion. Improved performance is achieved through systematic practice. All dart books we have read emphasize this point. However, none of the books really tell you how. Our program provides the how-to and the specific activities and skills to apply in improving your game of darts.

The view that throwing **Good Darts** is the result of developing specific personal skills requires the beginning player to become what we call "a personal scientist." A "personal scientist" observes behaviors an individual wants to change, and then develops a plan of action to achieve better performance through experimentation. For dart players, this means systematic practice. We need to know and study our own game so we are aware of our strengths and weaknesses. To achieve consistency and better game results require consistent practice and systematic adjustment.

If you commit yourself to the goal of improving your game, you will find our "Dart Improvement Program" a helpful guide. What is initially required is commitment to approximately 30 minutes of systematic daily practice. Remember, you are to become a "personal scientist" for studying and improving your performance. As a "personal scientist," you must be objective about your ability to throw darts. In other words, be analytical and not critical of your performance. A scientist often makes a thousand mistakes before achieving the desired results. Mistakes are lessons from which to learn. These lessons can be beneficial if they improve your ability to play and enjoy darts for many years.

Our "Dart Improvement Program" is a six-step personal skills development model. Again, the program initially requires commitment to practice at least 30 minutes daily for a period of three months. This commitment includes observing and recording your practice and competitive play sessions in order to have a performance record of your progress. Our "Personal Skills Development Model" is illustrated on the next page.

## GOOD DARTS SKILLS DEVELOPMENT MODEL

### PROCESS DESCRIPTION

### ENABLING ACTIVITIES

Step 1: Self Assessment

Identify and measure your current level of dart skills by completing the 30 minute daily practice session. Record your results daily for one month.

Step 2: External Assessment

Get a friend or experienced player to observe your competitive play. Record the results on the Competitive Play Feedback Chart for one month.

Step 3: Reframing

Study and identify your strengths and weaknesses as they appear in both practice and competitive play sessions from Steps 1 and 2. These are behaviors you want to maintain and strengthen as well as those you want to change and improve. Reframe problem behaviors into skills to practice and develop.

Step 4: Personal Goal Setting	Set your personal goals for improving specific behaviors and your desired level of play. This is an action planning step to develop goals based on insight from Step 3.
Step 5: Practicing and Developing Skills	Review, learn, relearn, and practice the technical and psychological skills to improve your dart game. Adjust and extend your practice sessions to achieve targeted results.
Step 6: Monitoring Performance and Using Models	Monitor and track your performance and skill over a one year period. Observe top players (models) and use systematic practice to improve performance.

Note: The "Dart Improvement Program" is a positive assessment and skills training process to improve performance in darts. The process is based on an application of the "Personal Skills Development Model" (copyright Nelson and Low, 1986) and specifically adapted to the sport of darts.

The major goal of our model is helping you develop the skills essential for throwing **Good Darts**. By-products derived from following our program are beneficial on a more personal level as well. Learning a game you can play for a lifetime and one you can gain more and more satisfaction and fun from as you become more proficient are only a few of those benefits. The "Dart Improvement Program" in Section V includes all the activities, tools, and forms necessary for implementing the **Good Darts Skills Development Model**. You will have all the materials you need to complete a one year program of dart improvement.

Our basic "Dart Improvement Program" was developed so you could systematically record your progress and study your game for one year. Darts is, however, a lifetime sport. If you apply our Personal Skills Development Model and systematic practice schedule beyond the first year, your skills will continue to develop. Nevertheless, our program was primarily designed to be used for a year.

We suggest you complete the program with a partner, a friend, or family member who is also interested in darts. Following the program with another person sometimes increases your motivation to practice daily. Also, you may need feedback from someone else about your game so you can change and improve your level of skill. If you find your play is different in league competition, it may be helpful to gain feedback about skills you can practice to improve your level of competitive play.

How much you practice and how you practice are two important variables in throwing **Good Darts**. Establish clear personal goals for your level of play.

# PSYCHOLOGICAL AND SELF-MASTERY SKILLS

## INTRODUCTION

The major focus of our **Good Darts** book and "Dart Improvement Program" is on specific skills you can learn and practice to improve your game. As psychologists, we are interested in skills we can use to systematically change problem behaviors that interfere or detract from our ability to throw **Good Darts**. In this section we present the essential psychological skills necessary for you to develop self-control and self-mastery of thoughts, feelings, and behaviors as you play darts.

If you ask top dart players how they developed their skills, they will tell you they practiced for years and worked on their mental game. Few can tell you how to do this because it was a personal trial and error process for them. They really do not know how to tell you what to do. Our book and program are initial attempts to share a model and process you can use to develop your own skills in ways comfortable and suitable for you.

As you begin reading this section, you should again assume the viewpoint of a "personal scientist." Accordingly, you must become a willing and serious student of your own game of darts. If playing **Good Darts** is a meaningful, personal goal for you, you deserve the opportunity of learning how to accomplish this goal. This requires time, systematic practice, and a consistent approach to your dart play.

Darts involve thinking, feeling, and action behaviors. When talking about human beings, psychologists refer to cognitive, affective, and behavioral dimensions of performance. The extent to which we can exercise positive control over our thoughts, feelings, and behaviors is directly related to specific skills involved in managing such aspects of our performance as we play darts.

Some people may be more advanced in their development of these skills than others. The more advanced people may have a long history of competitive sports play that carries over to their ability to play darts. Thus, these people may have previously mastered high levels of competitive sports performance.

A beginning dart player who has played basketball and successfully hit free throws to win crucial games, who has played pool and matched skill with all comers, or who has bowled on a competitive team in match play, already has a successful history of competition and performance under stress and pressure. These skills transfer to darts, and "natural" athletes can sometimes quickly adapt to the sport of darts. As soon as the fundamental and technical skills of darts are mastered, these people may be ready for high levels of competitive play. Natural athletes are usually persons with long histories of successful performance in competitive sports.

For some people, darts is a first attempt at competitive or team play. The skills we present can be learned and practiced to increase self-confidence and emotional self-control. As you learn to apply these skills, your level of play will improve. Your personal satisfaction with your dart game will increase rapidly. Experienced players will find the skills helpful for changing and refining aspects of their play that have become problems or blocks in successful performance.

Although related, each skill we present can stand alone as a specific behavior or set of behaviors to improve your game. If you are a beginning player, you may want to give yourself as much as six months to practice the fundamental and technical skills of stance, grip, throw and release, follow-through, and counting. You can achieve consistency and self-confidence by beginning with regular practice and fun play.

Our basic 30 minute daily practice session builds accuracy and **consistency** while you master the fundamentals. The audio tape included is designed for use with the first six months of the "Dart Improvement Program."

We recommend you follow our skills development model in using this section of the book. Before you begin seriously practicing any of the psychological and self-mastery skills, complete a brief assessment of your current level of play to determine the skills that will help your game the most. Follow the personal skills development model we presented earlier.

This is a process you will repeat many times as you continually improve your game through systematic and self-monitored practice. So, get familiar with each step and the process involved. Make it a regular part of your game and your overall approach to darts.

When we first began playing darts in 1983, we looked for books and information to read and study so we could improve our level of play. Most of the books did not provide specific guidelines for improving skills. All the books said practice was the key to improvement and that the mental aspects of the game were most important. The books did not say much about how to practice and said little or nothing about how to develop skills in the mental or psychological aspects of playing darts.

As psychologists who like to play darts, we could not help but observe our own behavior and the behaviors of other dart players. What we needed to improve our game was to develop a systematic and objective approach for practice and competitive play. In the process of our own self-development, we created the **Good Darts Program** so others could learn to develop specific skills to improve their games.

Psychological and self-mastery skills are specific behaviors that can be identified, measured, learned and practiced to improve personal, academic, or career performance. As psychologists and researchers, we spent over fifteen years in developing a skills model for individuals and organizations. This same model can also be applied to improving sports performance. As a game or sport, darts is a pure example of applied skills development. We have based **our Good Darts Program** on a specific skills development model that can be learned and developed through systematic practice.

Because our program has been developed for beginning and experienced players who want to improve their game, we have emphasized the ten most basic and relevant psychological and self-mastery skills involved in playing **Good Darts**. Once developed and refined through systematic practice, these skills will bring you many years of enjoyment and satisfying play.

Darts is one of the few skill games having a measurable outcome for perfection. A perfect game of darts is achievable, and therefore, an attainable goal to guide our development. Most of us will approach perfection, rather than actually achieve perfection.

Most dart players can remember their first 810 or their first perfect 101 game, as well as the feelings of achievement and satisfaction that followed. World class players have achieved perfect 301, 501, and Cricket games in tournament play. As we develop our skills, we will approach perfect performance but actually rarely achieve it.

The specific psychological and self-mastery skills we have emphasized in the **Good Darts Program** are: (1) self-assessment, (2) self-monitoring, (3) personal goal setting, (4) positive self-efficacy, (5) positive self-talk, (6) focusing/concentration, (7) positive imagery, (8) anger control, (9) anxiety management, and (10) relaxation and mental training. We describe each skill and provide examples and applications for improving dart performance. Each skill is presented so it can be learned and practiced. Each skill is reinforced in the audio tape and in the systematic practice sessions of the "Dart Improvement Program."

## GOOD DARTS: TEN PSYCHOLOGICAL AND SELF-MASTERY SKILLS

Psychological Enabling Skills	Improves Your Dart Game By:	Learn and Apply By:
1. Self-Assessment	Identifying strengths and weaknesses of current play.	Using Dart Improvement Chart & completing 30 minute daily practice session.
2. Self-Monitoring	Specific knowledge of progress and improvement.	Recording, summarizing, and studying results of daily practice sessions.
3. Personal Goal Setting	Focused practice on specific behaviors to improve dart play.	Using regular goal setting procedures on a short and long-term basis.
4. Positive Self- Efficacy	Increased self-confidence and belief in your ability.	Recording highlights and building specific success in the 30 minute practice sessions.
5. Positive Self- Talk	Removing self-critical and self-defeating thoughts and attitudes.	Studying Section III and using Audio Tape.

6. Focusing	Improving concentration and minimizing errors and distractions.	Studying Section III and using Audio Tape.
7. Positive Imagery	Increased accuracy of throws in critical situations.	Studying Section III and using Audio Tape.
8. Anger Control	Increasing performance level through emotional self-control.	Studying Section III and using Audio Tape.
9. Anxiety Management	Increasing performance by moderating emotional intensity and using stress management.	Studying Section III and using Audio Tape.
10. Relaxation and Mental Training	Increasing level of competitive play with correct balance of intensity & relaxation.	Studying Section III and using Audio Tape.

## PSYCHOLOGICAL SKILL #1: SELF-ASSESSMENT

Throughout the **Good Darts** book and the "Dart Improvement Program," we emphasize self-assessment as the first and most fundamental skill for improving performance in darts. Self-assessment means objectively observing and studying your current level of play. Through self-assessment, you clearly identify the strong points of your game and constantly change weak points into strengths.

Self-assessment is the basis for the year-long "Dart Improvement Program." The self-assessment skill is easy to use to improve your dart game. All you have to do is practice and record your results on the charts provided for you. The Ten Dart Charts in Section V provide a means for you to record and study your progress in terms of actual performance. Unless you develop the skill of accurate self-assessment, you tend to focus too much on what is wrong with your game and lose touch with all the things you are doing well.

In our work as professional psychologists, positive self-assessment is the basis for our Personal Skills Development Model. We feel this skill is the key to improving any type of performance behavior. This is especially true for those behaviors related directly to your dart game.

## PSYCHOLOGICAL SKILL #2: SELF-MONITORING

The second most basic skill to learn and practice is self-monitoring. Throughout the book we pointed out the importance of adapting the viewpoint of a "personal scientist" as you work to learn and improve the specific skills involved in throwing **Good Darts**. A "personal scientist" systematically observes and records the occurrence of good behaviors s/he wants to increase. Then, a "personal scientist" continually sets specific personal goals for improvement and change to meet those behaviors.

Self-monitoring means you observe and record specific darting behaviors essential to good performance. Once you know what behaviors need improvement and practice, you can set goals to improve your performance level. You can learn self-monitoring by following our 30 minute daily practice session and recording your results on the Dart Improvement Chart.

After months of daily practice, you will have a lot of specific information about your game. You will know what technical skills need more attention. You will also know other aspects of your game that need to be strengthened. In other words, you will know exactly what to do to continually improve your game because you monitored your practice and competitive play performance.

Self-monitoring is a skill you will want and need to practice applying continually as you improve your game. For this reason, we included self-monitoring practice charts for one year in our "Dart Improvement Program." The only way we know to achieve consistency in darts is through systematic practice and continual application of self-monitoring and personal goal setting skills.

### **PSYCHOLOGICAL SKILL #3: PERSONAL GOAL SETTING**

If you are a beginning or experienced player committed to improving your game of darts, it is essential you know the value and "how-to" of goal setting. Without specific goals, your game will not improve consistently. You will begin encountering situations where your actual levels of performance are far lower than your mental expectations. In other words, you will begin feeling out of balance in terms of what you think you should be able to do and what you actually can do consistently.

We found it very helpful to establish personal goals in line with our desired level of play. For continued improvement in darts, practicing realistic goal setting is essential in extending your comfort zone and performance level.

A beginning player who attends an ADO sanctioned tournament may draw a world class player in the first round. If you are clear about your goals and realistic about how you expect yourself to perform, this can be a very satisfying and enjoyable experience.

Darts is one of the few games where you are allowed to test your skills against the very best. If the goals you set are designed to raise your skill level to achieve satisfying results in competitive major tournament play, be prepared to experience a lot of defeats. As your skill level progresses, your mental attitude and commitment to systematic practice are essential elements in achieving satisfying competitive play.

As you think about your personal goals in darting, it may be helpful for you to conceptualize different levels of play. Then you can set specific goals for the level you are working to achieve. Read and study the eight levels of dart play outlined on the next page. Decide where you are now and think about the level you want to achieve. Each level of play requires learning, refining, and practicing specific skills.

## LEVELS OF PLAY IN DARTS

Level 1: Beginning Player	Little or no knowledge or experience with game.
Level 2: Part Time/Fun Player	Buys a set of darts, plays for fun and social reasons only.
Level 3: Regular Player	Plays once or twice a week competitively. May play on team in local league.
Level 4: Experienced Player	Regular league player, weekly practice.
Level 5: Competitive Player (good darts level)	Among best of local players. Systematically works on game improvements. A-1 league player.
Level 6: Tournament Player	Begins competitive play in area, state, and national tournaments. Competes well.
Level 7: Skilled Competitor	Regularly plays ADO tournaments and achieves top levels of competition (final 16+).
Level 8: World Class	Consistently wins or places in major tournaments. Participates and competes well in international competitive play.

As you review the levels of play, decide where you are now and your general goals for dart play (where you want to be). Your goals may be oriented toward fun and social motivations for playing darts with no emphasis on competitive play (Levels I - 3). If you desire a level of play involving keen competition (Levels 4 - 7), our **Good Darts Program will guide** you through those levels.

Once you decide the level of play you want to work toward, you are ready to set initial goals for play and practice. Remember, you can change your goals, your level of desired play, and your time and practice schedule. In improving your skills, you choose and control how and at what level you want to perform successfully.

In life, career, family, and darts, personal goal setting is an essential skill. As a "personal scientist," set goals that meet specific criteria. When setting personal goals for performance achievement, you must affirmatively answer the following five sets of questions:

- |                                       |   |
|---------------------------------------|---|
| 1. Is the goal personally meaningful? | Do I really want to do it?  |
| 2. Is the goal specific?              | Do I know exactly what behaviors or performance level I want to achieve?  |
| 3. Is my goal achievable?             | Am I capable of performing the behaviors required to successfully complete the goal? If I set a "stretch" goal to improve my current performance, do I know what skills I need to develop? Is the goal realistic? |
| 4. Is my goal measurable?             | How will I know whether I have accomplished the goal? What results or outcomes will I use to measure my skill development?  |

5. Is my goal time specific? Do I have a target date (specific time) to complete my goal? Have I planned my activities and scheduled them so my time frame is realistic?

These criteria and questions should be considered in setting your goals to improve your level of play. Choose the level of play you desire and set your goals for practice.

Our "Dart Improvement Program" will help you achieve or increase your level of play through Level 7 (Skilled Competitor). If your personal goals involve skills of play beyond Level 4 (Experienced Player), you must establish a daily practice schedule and set up a home practice board. By using the **Good Darts Program** and completing the suggested daily practice sessions, your game will improve dramatically in a one year period.

One year of systematic practice and personal skills development will bring your game up to the level of experienced players who have spent years in random practice and who have not worked on systematically improving their game. Remember, your goals need to be personally meaningful. Establish some initial goals you want to achieve. Do this by setting specific goals on a desired level of play before beginning the "Dart Improvement Program."

#### PSYCHOLOGICAL SKILL #4: POSITIVE SELF-EFFICACY

In psychology, self-esteem refers to a person's private evaluation of self-worth and value. Positive self-esteem is a major factor in high achievement and performance, and it means you see yourself as a valuable and competent person. In darts, self-esteem is closely related to self-confidence and how you feel about your ability to play the game.

It is important to be able to separate your feelings and evaluations of yourself as a person (self-esteem) from your performance in darts. When we perform well and throw good darts, our confidence in our ability to **throw Good Darts** increases. When we are off our game and not performing up to our potential, it is easy to become overly critical of ourselves. Uncontrolled anger and self-critical statements tend to hinder and diminish actual performance. Lower self-esteem is the result of this type of thinking and behaving.

You can observe this process in action at almost any dart match. A player will throw a dreaded 3 or a T20 will bounce or drop out of the board. The player becomes critical of him/herself, and you can almost see self-confidence and self-control disappearing.

If you want to feel good about yourself and your dart game, you need to learn and practice the psychological skill we call positive self-efficacy. Positive self-efficacy means you have confidence in your ability to successfully perform a specific task or behavior. You can learn and develop positive self-efficacy in relation to your dart game through consistent and systematic practice. By practicing and experiencing success in the key elements essential to high performance games, you are learning and developing self-confidence in your ability.

For the beginning and experienced player who want to improve their game, positive self-efficacy can be developed in our 30 minute basic daily practice session. This practice session is structured so you can build your confidence in performing essential behaviors necessary in throwing good darts.

It is important to remember that playing darts with confidence requires many specific skills ...hitting a crucial single, setting up a good out, hitting a bull when you really need it, scoring a triple or combination of triples, and finishing quickly by throwing a double. By completing our suggested 30 minute daily practice session, you will develop more and more confidence in each of these crucial aspects of a dart game.

We have provided charts so you can record and study your practice results each day. You will see the specific numbers you need to work on in extra practice sessions. You will also learn different throwing adjustments you will need to make to hit certain numbers and outs. Each day of practice will add to your confidence and skill. Through studying and reviewing your self-monitoring charts, you will constantly know what behaviors you must work on to further improve your game.

Positive self-efficacy developed through systematic daily practice is a required essential skill in throwing **Good Darts**. For this reason, we recommend you spend at least six months completing and recording your results on the 30 minute basic daily practice session. This will build the needed self-confidence and essential skills.

Building positive self-efficacy in your systematic practice sessions is the focus of the first six months of our "Dart Improvement Program." Once you have mastered the technical skills of stance, grip, throw and release, follow-through, and counting, you will be more confident in your ability to throw **Good Darts**.

Playing with confidence in competitive matches requires applying those skills developed in practice to a new situation. For this reason, we developed the Competitive Play Feedback Chart. You can monitor your performance in competitive situations, and then, compare your level of play in both practice and competitive situations.

Self-confidence in your ability to throw **Good Darts** increases as you experience success at different levels of play. When we first began playing darts, our goals included playing on an A-1 (top) league team and winning our city championship. As we accomplished these goals, our self-esteem and self-confidence were high. Our current goals include tournament competition and will require long periods of systematic practice and many defeats at the hands of top players. Any "stretch" goal involves failing many times and continually adjusting your practice sessions to meet your goal.

Playing well and to the best of your current ability provides satisfaction and good feelings. Winning is a by-product of developing specific skills. When you begin to feel unsure of your game and your darts are off, it is time to become that "personal scientist." Study your game and be a good student. Identify what behaviors need changing and adjust your practice efforts to get back on track.

If you follow our skills development model and learning process, you will achieve consistently good results. If you are unable or unwilling to practice systematically, do not con yourself that your darts will remain good. If you burn out and lose your enthusiasm, it might be that you expect yourself to play at a level not supported or indicated by your practice commitment.

If your life becomes complicated and throwing **Good Darts** drops on your goal priority list, change your expectations and adjust your level of play accordingly. Remember, you are important as a person, and playing darts is something you do in order to have fun and enjoy good feelings. Bad feelings, frustration, and anger are indications you need to make changes. These changes involve altering your belief system or learning new skills that enable you to find joy in what you do ...regardless of whether it is daily living, working, or playing darts.

## PSYCHOLOGICAL SKILL #5: POSITIVE SELF-TALK

Self-talk is exactly what it sounds like. It basically involves how you talk to yourself inside your head. You may have a friendly relationship with yourself and your self-talk and your thoughts may be very positive. You may be on negative terms with yourself and carry a small and hidden enemy with you on every trip to the line.

Self-talk is an internal and private conversation with yourself as you play darts. Based on our observations of ourselves and others playing darts, it is obvious most self-talk is negative and at times downright destructive to a good game of darts.

In dart games, you hear a lot of negative self-talk because it seems to become public at stressful or crucial points of play. Muttering, yelling obscenities, making negative statements, cursing the quality of darts, questioning the family heritage of teammates, and berating our good friends in England for ever creating the game of darts, demonstrate the external events that correspond to negative self-talk.

It should be said that self-anger can be constructive at times when we use it to motivate and intensify our efforts to play well. However, for the most part, negative self-talk and self-anger lead to strong emotional reactions that hinder and diminish our ability to play or perform at our best. As we work to improve our game, we want to begin replacing negative self-talk and criticism with positive self-talk and corrective strategies.

Since positive self-talk is a psychological skill most of us have to learn and develop through practice, we cannot simply decide to get "off our own backs" and become good friends with ourselves. We have to practice, and we have to have new words to say to ourselves when we are under stress. Trying to throw a dart exactly where you want to is stressful, as there is no room for error. Being close does not count unless you take up horseshoes, pitching at the line, or country-western dancing.

Just for fun, we have developed a set of do's and don'ts as initial guidelines in learning positive self-talk as applied to darts.

## NEGATIVE SELF-TALK

### Don't

Curse yourself when you throw crazy darts or your arm feels like a dead frog.

Curse teammates when they are performing badly.

Tell your partner you have only been throwing a week and won't be much help.

Say outloud or to yourself you cannot or never have hit double 1.

Say you do not want to play 301 because you cannot throw doubles.

Say I will not chalk because I cannot do math in my head.

Tell a good player you will be an easy game.

## POSITIVE SELF-TALK

### Do

Tell yourself what you need to do to avoid throwing another 1 or wallshot.

Tell your teammates something encouraging or something to do to correct what they are doing wrong.

Let your partner know your level of play and ask for help with outs or strategy.

Focus on the feel of throwing the double 1 successfully and throw one dart at a time. Aim high.

Say you will play a few games of 301 so you can work on starting and finishing doubles.

Say I will chalk but you need to help me in recording and determining your score.

Wish a top player good darts and focus on your game and not on his/hers.

## Don't

Criticize yourself after a game with negative statements.

Focus your self-talk on words like stupid, idiot, and dumb.

Keep telling yourself how you let the team down by not hitting the finishing out.

## Do

Claim your darts were not good but you are working to develop your skills.

Use self-talk involving words like focus, concentrate, and adjust.

Claim you gave it your best shot and you are working on outs.

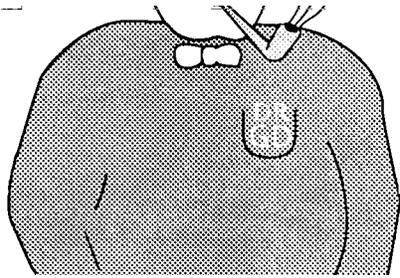
# SELF-TALK

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DR. GOOD DARTS

CHOKER: Hey Doc! This positive self-talk is easy stuff. I can really hit what I need when the pressure is on. I just walk to the line and say, "I can do it" over and over.

KILLER: I've got \$10 that says you can't hit a fatbull in three darts.

CHOKER: Ah, cough. Killer, you know I can't play for money.

DOC: Choker, you may need to work out a variety of helpful self-statements to use in specific situations that are difficult for you.

Learn and practice positive self-talk before going to the other psychological and self-mastery skills we have presented. You can better apply these additional skills when you have reduced self-defeating thoughts and negative self-statements during play. You will find it easier to build other skills on a solid foundation of positive self-talk.

Positive self-talk is much more than positive thinking. You actually have to say positive things to yourself at crucial points of play. Thoughts create feelings, and your statements can label your thoughts as negative or positive. Negative thoughts are normal, and we can reduce their effects by changing how we talk to ourselves.

One of the inevitable things that happens when you play darts is having to throw at double 1 to finish a crucial game. You will not like it; you will not plan it; but you will end up doing it many times. It is in this type of situation that you will need positive self-talk.

Facing a double 1 out is a difficult and stressful situation. You will have to throw for it as there is no other option. Your self-statements need to be realistic and helpful. You might say to yourself, "This is a challenging and difficult shot. I need to concentrate and make sure my first throw is close, and it is better high than low. I have made this shot before, and I can make it now." If you miss, refocus and prepare yourself again. Anticipate the opportunity to throw again and hope you get another chance.

An important concept in practicing positive self-talk is learning to change how you think when under stress and, therefore, how you feel when playing under stress. If you do not learn to identify and change self-defeating and negative self-talk, your strong emotional reactions will detract from and diminish your performance.

In practice, develop your own realistic and positive statements. Rehearse using them in situations when you are under stress and playing competitively. Again, systematic practice is a key. If you systematically

practice throwing doubles around the board, you will build memories about the type of throw you need to make for success. You will have positive statements you can use to encourage yourself during actual play. Just remember to be analytical and not critical.

## PSYCHOLOGICAL SKILL #6: FOCUSING AND CONCENTRATION

Dart games are usually played in environments filled with distractions and all kinds of interruptions. An essential self-mastery skill is focusing, or the ability to concentrate on the task you are about to perform. Focusing and concentration skills are supported by the other psychological and self-mastery skills. By using positive self-statements based on past successes, you have a good supportive skill to help you focus and concentrate.

In order to focus and concentrate, you must have a clear mental picture of your expected performance on each trip to the line. You must be clear on exactly what you have to do before you attempt to do it. In some situations, this means you will have to refocus and adjust your mental strategy after each dart is thrown. Most players are not accustomed to doing this.

If you experience confusion about what to throw or if you go blank, it is better to stop and plan your next shot rather than throwing at some number you think will work. Focusing involves knowing exactly what you want to throw and removing all distractions as you mentally and visually concentrate on the precise area of the board. Targeting each throw is essential to the skills of focusing and concentration.

Each person develops their own rhythm of throwing darts. For some players the rhythm is fast; they throw all three darts rapidly. Other players have a very deliberate and slow rhythm involving separating each throw from the last one. You will arrive at

your own rhythm through practice.

Regardless of your style of play, you will want to build a focus and concentration procedure into your game. In your practice sessions, study and develop a rhythm of throwing that is comfortable for you. Practice dealing with interruptions and distractions. What events interfere with your ability to focus or concentrate? Loud noises, people talking, or crowded spaces may be situations you identify as personal distractors.

Some players are badly distracted by bounce backs off the wires or darts falling from the board. If you require a ton (100) to finish and your first dart settles in the triple 20 for a moment and then drops to the floor, you will need the ability to refocus and concentrate on throwing the second dart right back at the same spot. Develop focusing and concentration skills for these situations and practice dealing with the distractors.

The best procedure for developing focusing and concentration skills involves identifying specific situations that are difficult for you to handle. We call this procedure "Identifying Personal Distractors." Some of the most common distractors that dart players deal with are outlined on the following page along with focusing techniques to use for each distractor.

## FOCUSING/CONCENTRATION

Distractor	Corrective Thoughts/ Actions	Helpful Focusing Responses
TENSE approaching the line.	Preparatory Calming, Relaxation Training.	Check body for tension, breathe easily, relax stance.
Dart bouncing back from wire.	Refocus on target, not on fallen dart.	Visualize target. Use self-talk i.e. "Right back at it" or "One more time."
Noisy people in crowded throwing area.	Positive self-talk, focusing on funda- mental skills.	"The height of the board & the throw distance are the same." Selectively focus on the playing area and the board.
High level of tension on the finishing out.	Positive self-talk. "This is what I have worked for. A chance to win."	"Now is the time for my best darts. "Focus and concentrate." "I will use the extra tension to help my accuracy."

Distractor	Corrective Thoughts/ Actions	Helpful Focusing Responses
Dart brushing your face on your release or the dart slipping as you throw.	Check fundamentals. Refocus for next throw.	Reposition stance. Remind yourself that you need just one good dart to get back on track.
1 st dart breaks down preferred double out. D18 needed and you throw a fat 18 or, D 10 needed and you throw a 6.	Calculate and target your next throw. "I can clean this up and take it out."	Visualize the new target. "Now I'll go directly at the number."

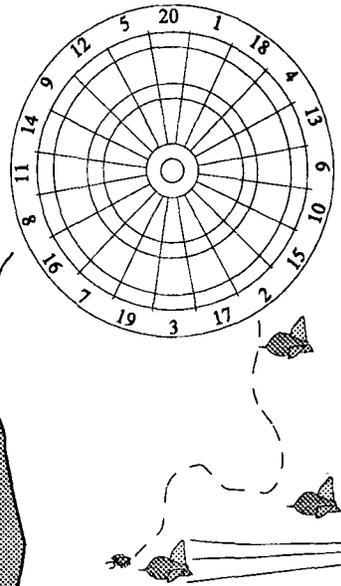
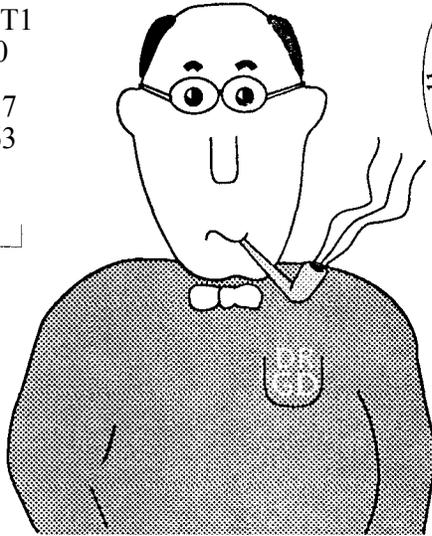
Note: You can add to this list by including other special distractions and corrective thoughts/actions, and helpful focusing responses. Rehearse the skill of focusing/concentration as you practice and as you play in competitive situations. Anticipate using this skill in difficult situations. You will find that focusing/concentration is a valuable skill to develop and practice.

## FOCUSING/CONCENTRATION

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DR. GOOD DARTS

BEAR: We're down to 48 remaining. All Killer has to do is throw a S 16, D 16 for tile match.

DOC: Just relax, concentrate, and throw it out.

SPEEDY: Look! A roach on the wall!

KILLER: Get it! Get it! Get it!

DOC: (Sigh), practicing self-mastery skills can be quite challenging on this team.

## THE INNER GAME OF DARTS

As we play darts at any level, in essence we are playing two games: an inner game and an outer game. As you learn, practice, and apply the psychological and self-mastery skills, you are using your inner game to positively influence and improve your observable performance in your outer game. The inner game is the game you are playing inside your own head (mental game). The outer game includes playing an opponent and striving to accomplish or reach a personal achievement or performance goal.

The inner game is played against opponents such as lack of self-confidence and concentration, negative self-talk, anger, and nervousness (anxiety or fear). The psychological skills of positive self-efficacy, positive self-talk, positive imagery, focusing and concentration, anger control, and anxiety management are friendly allies in controlling the opponents in the inner game.

The two selves within us are present at each trip to the line. The inner self is the director, and the outer self is the performer or doer. The director says "triple 20, triple 19, double bull, calm, relax, focus." The outer self does what is possible to accomplish the directive. The relationship and interaction between the two selves determine the quality and level of your dart game. After fundamental and technical skills are mastered, it is the inner self (the director) that is the key to good performance.

Gallwey in his book, **The Inner Game of Tennis**, makes important observations that have applications for playing **Good Darts**. In any sport or game of skill, we must have the two selves together to observe and learn to trust ourselves. In our program, learning from models and developing positive self-efficacy through systematic and self-monitored practice are two effective methods to accomplish this integration.

Another key point discussed by Gallwey is learning to see non-judgmentally. In other words, the ability to see what is happening rather than how well or

**how badly you think** it is happening. In darts this is the phenomenon of "trying too hard" or "forcing your throws." If our inner self labels our throws as "good" or "bad," it is difficult to see clearly and non judgmentally. This interrupts our learning as the outer self performs.

The key to success and mastery of the inner game is concentration. Contrary to what you have learned in the past, concentration is not staring at something hard or trying to concentrate. Concentration is not thinking hard about something. Good concentration is effortless and relaxed, not tense and purposeful.

What you want to achieve as you play darts is a state of relaxed concentration, smooth movements, and constant shifts of heightened focus. In order to achieve and maintain this state, sometimes you need to trick your mind to avoid distractions, mind chatter, and disrupting thoughts. You can help yourself learn this skill by attaching your inner self to the outer self as it performs. Use inner words or self-talk like grip, release, and follow-through along with the images and sounds of the darts flight and impact with the board. Using these behaviors deepens concentration and relaxation as you play. Dart players describe this process as finding and being "in the groove."

All of our psychological and self-mastery skills contribute to self-control and self-mastery of the inner game (the mental aspects of darts). Although briefly described, the skills and approaches you can develop for improving your ability to focus (see) and concentrate (relax) are among the most important of the psychological skills involved in playing **Good Darts**.

Another skill to help you further develop your ability to focus and concentrate is positive imagery. Positive imagery is closely related to focus and concentration. If you are working to eliminate distractors and improve throwing accuracy, imagery skills will definitely help your game.

## PSYCHOLOGICAL SKILL #7: POSITIVE IMAGERY

As you develop your skills and improve your game through self-monitored and systematic practice, you need to learn to apply the self-mastery **skill** of positive imagery. The benefits of positive mental imagery are well substantiated by research. It is a skill designed to improve your performance in competitive play. The value of learning and using positive mental imagery is immense. It is extremely difficult (if not impossible) to achieve a goal in reality if you cannot imagine and vividly picture yourself accomplishing this goal in your mind's eye (imagination).

Research and scientific evidence clearly supports the importance of using positive mental imagery to increase personal and sports performance. World class and olympic athletes use positive imagery skills to visualize themselves setting world records as well as mentally refining and improving every aspect of their performance. Positive imagery is much more than imagining yourself being able to do something. You must experience, apply, and practice positive imagery as a skill so the benefits you gain will transfer to improve your performance.

Many people are skeptical about the benefits of using imagery to improve sports performance. They think there is no direct relationship between the ability to create vivid visual images and actual performance. As a "personal scientist," we ask you to experiment with developing positive imagery skills and objectively compare your actual performance before and after using positive imagery. You can do this by determining your current level of skill as recorded on the Dart Improvement Chart. Experience, learn, and apply positive imagery skills in the next month of daily practice sessions. See how much your game improves.

In learning to use visual imagery, it is important to remember that people differ in their initial capacity to create vivid images. Some of you will have to practice more than others in creating vivid step-by-step, sequential images of the performance behaviors you are working to improve.

Self-directed imagery is a skill that gives you more and more control over structured images. You can learn to use positive imagery to improve your stance, release, and follow-through as well as finishing doubles.

Try to visualize yourself at the line, comfortable, and throwing smoothly at the triple 20. Chances are you will not have a vivid image of yourself on the first few attempts. You may need to observe a model, a top player who demonstrates good form similar to what you are working to achieve for yourself. With your eyes closed, picture yourself completing each required step and watching your dart settle in the center of the triple 20.

In practicing and applying positive imagery skills, you need to follow the five-step process outlined in the next illustration, step-by-step-by-step. This process should be followed regardless of the specific performance you are attempting to improve.

## POSITIVE IMAGERY SKILLS A 5-STEP PROCESS

### Sequential Process:

### Examples:

Step 1: Make a list of specific situations that have been difficult, upsetting, frustrating, or tension producing.

Nervous on finishing outs.  
Freezing up on Bulls. Confused about what to throw next. Choking up on D 16.  
Going to pieces on D1.

Step 2: Create and picture the desired performance behavior. Picture exactly what you want to achieve.

Approaching the finishing D16 with confidence and making an accurate throw. Visualize yourself at the line, comfortable, and focused, smoothly releasing the dart on a visual line into the D 16.

Step 3: Identify any feelings of tension or awkwardness related to the visualization of throwing the finishing D16. Relax. While relaxing, visualize the accurate throw.

Upon noticing tension, pause and relax. Take a few breaths and relax. Practice the visualization of throwing the D16 when relaxed.

Step 4: Go to the board in your mind's eye and throw D16. Practice building success. Check your feelings. Relax and visualize your successful performance any time you feel tension or awkwardness.

See the image clearly. Practice the positive imagery of you successfully throwing the finishing D16. Make the image clear and vivid. Relax and throw. Relax and throw.

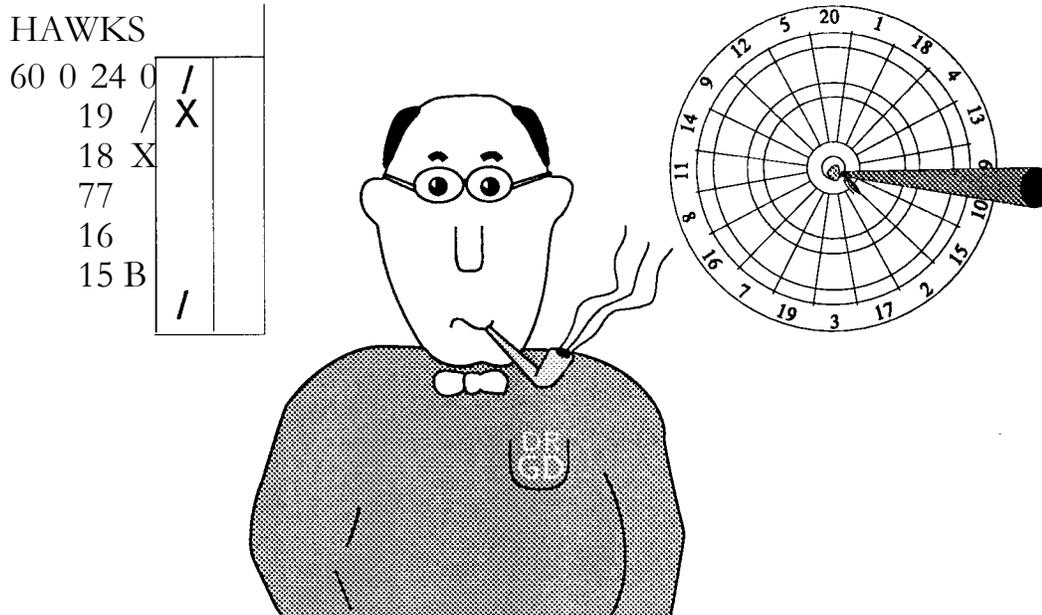
Step 5: If you have difficulty visualizing the successful finish on D 16, break down the process into smaller steps. Approach the line, get comfortable, focus on D 16, prepare to throw, check your stance, grip, release, and followthrough.

Practice building comfort and success with D16 on your home practice board and in games with friends. Practice feeling the difference between a relaxed, focused throw and the erratic throw. Practice the success model.

Once you have selected a specific performance to improve, use the step-by-step process to visualize and practice successful personal performances. It is important to remember you cannot perform at a level beyond your current capacity to that performance. For example, a beginning player may visualize throwing an 8T0 in league play. However, the ability to throw 3 darts in a close group and the ability to be consistent require systematic practice and highly developed prerequisite skills.

It is helpful to visualize perfect performances that are within the skill range of the player. A perfect 301 game accomplished with 6 darts is possible, but infinitely difficult to achieve and beyond the skill level of most players. A perfect 501 game of 9 darts is so rare that video tapes of such a performance are best sellers, and replays are needed to convince some viewers that the feat was actually accomplished.

## POSITIVE IMAGERY



DR. GOOD DARTS

**KILLER:** Hey Doc! This positive imagery is real spooky; every time I close my eyes to visualize good darts, I see myself as a warrior on the hunt and my darts are my weapons.

**DOC:** That is not a good sign, Killer. Perhaps you and I should talk privately and deal with some deeper issues.

As you approach higher and higher levels of play, it is important to visualize just beyond your current skill level in order to consistently improve. If you follow our 30 minute daily practice session and begin to experience success at perfect 101 games and 2-dart finishing outs, your confidence will rapidly improve. Then you can progress to 3-dart finishes and develop a competitive 301 game.

By this time you can see why vague goals like, "I want to throw **Good Darts,**" **are** difficult, if not impossible, to achieve. You must be specific about the achievement or performance you desire to accomplish. You must target a realistic goal just above your current level of actual performance. You must observe models and practice visualizations that clearly let you see yourself accomplishing the behaviors you want to achieve. You must apply your imagery skills in practice and competition. You must experience the good feelings and positive feedback from teammates when you perform successfully.

These are the essential steps in building self-mastery, and the results are called self-confidence. Self-confidence is a skill that is built and developed. It is not something that some people just have and others do not. Some people develop self-confidence while others never find out how. Positive and self-directed imagery is a "how-to." Add it to your repertoire of skills and use it to improve your game as well as your feelings about yourself.

The related skills of positive self-talk, focusing and concentration, and mental training and relaxation are explained further on the audio tape. Play the tape as you practice on your home board as a reminder to continually study your game. Practice relaxation using pleasant images to calm yourself and to improve performance in all aspects of your game.

By using imagery techniques you can also improve your ability to clearly focus on a crucial throw. During a fun match with a friend, one of the authors was asked about a specific problem. The friend was an excellent player of considerable experience, and he consistently threw two darts in or

very close to the triple 20. His third dart was consistently off and into the one or five. We asked him about his thoughts and visualizations before the third dart. The friend said that he became upset and bothered by the crowding of the first two darts and that he could not see the triple 20 band. He would hurry his third throw, and he felt there was little chance to fit another dart in the triple 20. This was continually reinforced by wide throws, high speed bounce-offs, or ricochets off the other darts.

A suggestion was made to use an imagery technique every time the first two darts were in or close to the triple 20. Before throwing the third dart, visually remove the flights blocking your view of the triple 20, impose the triple 20 band over the darts in place, and throw straight into the image of the triple 20 with plenty of room for the last dart.

The friend smiled and began applying the imagery technique as he encountered the situation in play. His performance improved rapidly and his consistency in scoring 8TOs improved dramatically. Evidently **he is still** using the technique because he soundly beat one of the authors in a recent league match and will receive another 8TO patch as a result of his performance.

We included this personal example because it illustrates a key point. Sometimes improvement occurs rapidly when you make a minor refinement or change in your approach. Several things could have worked to improve our friend's performance other than the suggested imagery technique. The most important thing was he was willing to experiment with a new idea and try it out. All of us can benefit from feedback from others because they can see what we are doing at times when we cannot.

Asking for feedback about your game is a very important factor in improving your level of play. Many times friends and teammates **will not** tell you what they see you doing because they do not want to confuse or distract you. Tell friends and teammates what kind of feedback you want and tell them how and when to talk to you. No one will know how to help

you unless you tell them specifically how they can help. We will discuss this aspect in more detail in Section IV on team and competitive play.

## PSYCHOLOGICAL SKILL #8: ANGER CONTROL

Anger is a normal and necessary human emotion. We cannot get rid of it completely, but we can learn to express it constructively. What is harmful to our dart game, as well as our physical health, is experiencing anger too intensely and for too long. You cannot feel anger and think clearly or systematically at the same time. If we do not develop skills to control the intensity of our anger, our dart games go to pieces along with our relationships with ourself and others.

Moderate degrees of anger may be helpful. Performance can be improved at times when we experience moderate and constructive levels of anger. We get mad at ourselves and get our game back on track. However, intense levels of anger diminish performance, and uncontrolled anger can cost you many dart games ...as well as friends and dart partners.

Let us give you an example of the negative effects of anger in dart competition. One of us was keeping score in a tournament while two world class players were squaring off in the final eight. In throwing for the cork, each player threw four consecutive single bulls then matched one another on double bulls. On the sixth throw at the bull to determine start, both players were outside the bull, but one was slightly closer. One player, the loser of the cork, became extremely angry at himself. His anger increased with every throw, and he was beaten in short order.

All of us have experienced the emotion of anger during dart play. We have seen angry darts slung in frustration at the board and have witnessed the kicking of walls. At times, all of us have questioned the quality of our darts, the frailty of our flights, and arrived a little to the right of mad on an anger chart. The destructive aspect of this human situation is that some players

give up on themselves and decide that darts make them angry.

Bad darts do not make us angry. Teammates do not make us angry. We create our own anger by our thoughts, our beliefs about what we should be able to do, and by our expectations of our performance.

If you want to control the intensity of your anger, you must first be aware that you create feelings of anger by thought processes in your brain. Once you accept responsibility for creating your own anger, you can make rational decisions about it. Then you can learn to choose how you want to express the feeling and to control how long and how intensely you feel the anger.

Anger is a conditioned emotional response that we have learned to feel in certain situations. The anger response is an automatic one from the old brain, and it can occur in a split second. For those of us who learned anger responses to threat and stress situations, we have to overcome and change behavioral patterns that have been around for years. Again, this means regular and consistent practice to develop anger control skills.

When you are aware of being or becoming angry, you should take this feeling as a clue to go through a rapid mental process in order to exercise control and choice over the intensity and expression of the anger. The mental process that we suggest is outlined on the following page.

This sequential mental process will decrease anger and make the feeling manageable. Even in a dart game, you can take some time to calm down. No one will make you throw a dart every ten seconds.

If you are really steamed and getting out of control, you can always excuse yourself to go to the toilet. Hardly anyone will deny you this basic courtesy, and you will calm down as you walk around and gather your thoughts.

## SEQUENTIAL STEPS OF MENTAL PROCESS FOR ANGER CONTROL

- Step 1: Acknowledge your anger to yourself mentally by saying to yourself: I AM ANGRY.
- Step 2: Accept responsibility for your own emotion of anger by saying to yourself: I AM CREATING MY ANGER, AND I ACCEPT RESPONSIBILITY FOR IT.
- Step 3: Decrease the level or intensity of the angry feeling by taking a few breaths and giving yourself a message to calm down and relax. Close your eyes for a few seconds and focus on a pleasant image.
- Step 4: Decide how to express your anger constructively by asking yourself: HOW DO I WANT TO HANDLE THIS ANGER? Do I need to do something, say something, or just calm myself down?
- Step 5: Ask yourself if you need help from someone while you take a brief time out (physically leave the situation for a short time to calm down).

The key to anger control is staying one step away from your angry feelings or quickly pulling yourself out of the anger before you get stuck in it. What usually happens in high stress situations is an escalation and intensification of anger because most people do not have the mental process or the skills to manage and control strong feelings. Good emotional self-control is an essential aspect of good darts.

We have watched dart matches turn into a whole mess of bad feelings for everyone because anger was not managed or controlled. The game of darts requires focus and concentration at any level of play, and no one can pull that off when angry feelings are being dumped around.

Because darts is a game of skill and requires precise and consistent execution, emotions are an expected consequence of competitive play. Emotional intensity increases in importance as your fundamental skills become more routine and automatic. A beginning player might not feel much emotion when they miss a ton out. A competitive and experienced player may feel a lot of emotion after throwing triple 20 with the first dart and then missing double top with the last 2 darts. That is especially true when he turns around to see a smiling opponent poised to throw at D16. Again, thoughts, beliefs, and expectations in our brain create strong emotions.

If you do not have problems with anger as you play darts, you might skim over the sections that follow. If anger is a problem and you need more skills in dealing with this aspect of your game, read on and prepare to practice the presented skills for at least two months. If you really know how to do anger, it took years for you to learn how to do it so well. Be patient and kind to yourself and take a few months to change the pattern.

One of the best anger control skills to learn and practice is "thought changing." Psychologists call this skill "cognitive restructuring." That is a bit much for a book on darts, so we will focus on how to change thoughts and feelings in relation to stressful events.

## IDENTIFYING PERSONAL STRESSORS

When any stressful event occurs, (ending up on double 1), our old brain has two automatic options; fight (anger) and flight (fear, anxiety, and tension). Angry people are in the first group. Scared and nervous people are in the second group, and we deal with that using the skill of anxiety management.

Now, let's deal with anger. A first step in controlling anger is knowing what specific situations become your personal stressors and your anger buttons. You have learned to respond with anger when these events occur. You will now begin changing this automatic old brain emotional response by coming up with something better to do instead ...thoughts that improve your dart game rather than sabotaging it.

List situations that always seem to make you mad and angry. Each of us has our own. They will not be the same for any two people. Some examples are provided to help you come up with your own list. Once you can identify your personal stressors, you can select the most destructive one to change first to improve your dart game.

## EXAMPLES OF PERSONAL STRESSORS

Personal Stressor	Negative/ Irrational Thought	Emotional Consequence
Double 1 to finish.	Good players never leave that (be perfect).	Anger
You have thrown a roaring 3.	No one else has done that (be perfect).	Anger
Triple 20 falls out.	All my darts should stick (be perfect).	Anger
Team member says: "Why did you throw a 17 on your last dart? A 19 would have left you D16."	S/he wouldn't say things like that if we were friends (everyone should love me all the time).	Anger
Captain says: "I'm not playing you in singles tonight - your darts are terrible."	"I chose this team so I could be ridiculed?" (everyone should love me all the time).	Anger
Scorekeeper moves head after every throw like a turkey pecking over a log.	"If scorekeepers had any sense they would not do that (people should always be polite and correct)."	Anger

List your own personal stressors:

Now that you have identified personal stressors that lead to negative or unhelpful thinking which somehow results in the emotion of anger, let's try to apply the skill of Anger Control. First of all, it is essential to understand that the stressor event does not cause your anger. Anger is the result of faulty thinking and invalid beliefs. Think of anger and angry behavior as an A->B->C->D sequential process. In this process, A represents the personal stressor; B represents thoughts and beliefs; C represents the emotional response (Anger); and D represents angry behavior.

In our model, anger (C) is not caused by the stressor event (A), but rather by the thought or belief that you have about the event and what it means (B). If you want to change the emotional feeling (C) to the stressor event, you will need to change the thoughts first. In other words A (stressor event) leads to B (thoughts or beliefs about the event), which leads to C (emotion of anger), and C leads to D (behavior driven by the emotion of anger).

Remember that this model is sequential: A-> B-> C-> D. Therefore A (the stressor event) does not cause C (the emotion of anger). The key to controlling anger is to practice the skills involved in B (thoughts or beliefs about the stressor event).

Since you cannot control the situation or the stressor event, the best place to start is with your thoughts and beliefs. To change the thought, you first have to identify what your thoughts are and decide whether the thought is rational (makes sense, is reasonable) or irrational (perfectionistic, is absolute). You then have to challenge the irrational thought by deciding on a more rational option and changing how you think about the stressor event. In other words, you substitute rational thoughts for irrational thoughts so the intensity of the emotional consequence is weakened. When you learn to challenge irrational thoughts with rational thoughts, you begin to limit the future negative effects of anger (i.e. angry and destructive behavior).

Now that you understand the process, you can anticipate the stressor event happening again in your mind's eye. This time, rather than getting really angry and upset, ask yourself how you want to feel. Being irritated or frustrated may be justified. Rehearse the new thought you have created to handle the situation. Relax and calm yourself. Now create the situation in imagery, hear yourself saying the new thought and watch yourself handle the situation in a way that improves your game.

We have provided you with a guide for this step-by-step process by using the example of the moving scorekeeper. Follow it through and use the process to improve your reactions to old anger buttons. When you disconnect the buttons, your anger level goes down to a manageable level. The illustration on the next page shows what seems to automatically happen when anger escalates.

## THE ONSET OF NEGATIVE ANGER

A(Personal Stressor)	B(Thought)	C(Emotion)
After every dart thrown the scorekeeper moves head to see where the darts lands.	If the scorekeeper had any sense or respect for me, she/he would not bother me by moving.	Anger

Now, let's zero in on the B process. When your thoughts and beliefs (B) are not rational or 100% true, you can use Thought Changing to reduce the intensity of the emotion. Remember that the scorekeeper moving is not creating your anger, you are creating it by your thoughts about the behavior. B creates C; A does not create C. In the example, is the thought in B rational, realistic, and 100% true? No, the scorekeeper may just be nervous, have bad eyesight, or not know proper scoring etiquette. Substitute this thought and think through the situation to decrease your anger.

The next illustration is provided to give you some practice using Thought Changing to reduce the harmful effects of anger. Use a skilled approach in dealing with anger and reverse the old patterns of anger

# THOUGHT CHANGING: A STEP-BY-STEP PROCESS FOR APPLYING THE SKILL OF THOUGHT CHANGING TO IMPROVE YOUR DART GAME

The Step-By-Step Process: Complete each step.

Step 1: Identify the personal stressor:

Step 2: Identify your thoughts and beliefs in relation to the stressor:

Step 3: Describe, clarify, and assess your emotional reaction to the stressor;

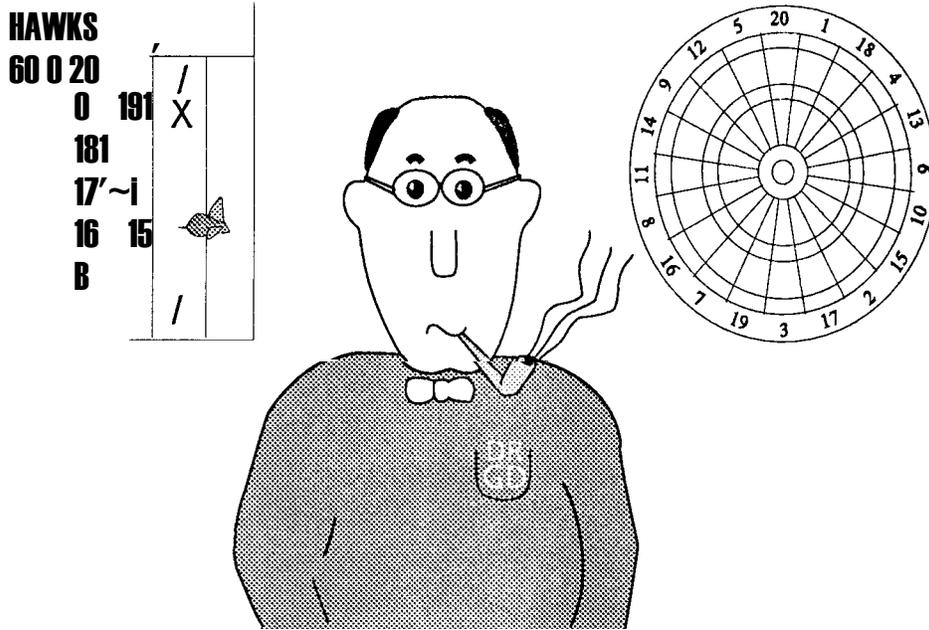
Step 4: Identify, dispute, and challenge irrational beliefs: Check for catastrophic thinking and negative self-talk. Develop rational thoughts.

In **the** case of **the** moving scorekeeper, you can actually ask the scorekeeper to remain still and look at the board while you are throwing. You can ask in a way that decreases anger rather than escalates it. Yelling out an obscenity or throwing a dart at the scorekeeper are probably bad options that would further disturb your game as well as possibly leading to a 911 call.

Ask yourself how do you want to handle this situation so that you can concentrate on throwing **Good Darts**. You could walk over and let him/her know that you are bothered by head and eye movements and ask him/her to be still until you throw all three darts. If the scorekeeper says "I am not willing to do that because I like to bother people and upset their concentration," ask for another scorekeeper so you can control your game and play without unnecessary distractions.

If the emotion of anger is a problem for you and your dart game, read this section over and over and over until you get it right or the scorekeeper is no longer in danger. Review the Sequential Steps of Mental Process for Anger Control, Identifying Personal Stressors, Onset of Negative Anger, and Thought Changing Strategies. Remember that Anger Control is a selfmastery skill that can be practiced to improve your dart game... as well as other life situations.

# ANGER CONTROL



DR. GOOD DARTS

**KILLER:** Hey Doc! No disrespect intended but if that scorekeeper moves one more time, I am going to dart his animated butt to the wall.

**DOC:** Remember Killer, darts are not weapons. They are important tools in a game of skill. How about asking him to stand still until after you throw?

**BEAR:** Who's got that damn book? Killer needs to review Section III again quick!

## PSYCHOLOGICAL SKILL #9: ANXIETY MANAGEMENT

For the purposes of this book and for specific applications to dart improvement, we believe anxiety management is one of the ten major psychological and self-mastery skills to learn and practice. Throwing darts, more than most games of skill, requires well developed self-control of emotional states. Variations in the intensity of your emotions can either improve or hinder your performance at any given moment.

Before emphasizing specific approaches to managing anxiety as you play darts, it is important to understand the more general concept of stress management. The words stress and anxiety are descriptors of the emotion of fear. When fear reaches a psychological state, most people refer to their feeling of fear as stress, anxiety, uptightness, choking, or tension. You may have your own personal descriptor. What is essential is the proper identification and labeling of the emotion as fear. You cannot control your fear and make it work to improve your darts until you can accurately identify and label the emotion whenever you are experiencing it.

Because stress management is an essential life skill that can bring you many benefits, we are going to give this skill a more in-depth treatment so you can learn and apply positive stress management in many real-life situations. Research in psychology and behavioral medicine clearly indicates the importance and value of positive stress management in your physical and mental health, and general well-being.

When you learn and practice positive stress management skills in your daily life, you can then use these skills when playing darts to greatly improve your performance. In other words, learn and apply the skill first as a person who wants to increase his/her physical and mental health, and then practice transferring the skill to darts. The transfer will be more automatic and comfortable if you take the time to learn the skill of stress management and apply it to daily life, before you apply it to managing anxiety while playing darts.

Stress management and relaxation skills are not merely gimmicks or techniques to use in order to gain an edge in dart matches. When you learn these skills and use them daily, you develop an almost automatic ability to replace anxiety with relaxation. This is the precise skill and ability you need to apply when your emotional intensity begins to interfere with your dart performance. One situation observed at a recent dart tournament may help illustrate this important point.

One of the authors was playing in the final sixteen of a ADO sanctioned tournament. The competition was keen and full of high anxiety. The author's opponent would constantly move and adjust his grip and position at the line while taking deep breaths and refocusing after each throw. His movements rapidly increased as he tried harder and harder to control his anxiety. What was happening was his attempts to control his anxiety were moving him farther and farther away from his consistent game. He began shaking his head and talking out loud about how miserably his darts were flying.

Despite the self-agitation and increased level of anxiety, you could see his stress management techniques occasionally work and brilliant darts were the result. He did not have a way to comfortably and consistently elicit a relaxation response and his attempts destroyed the consistency of his performance. As soon as the match was over and he had lost, he turned to the board and threw a 8T0. He was an extremely skilled player, and he could not comfortably relax and focus when he needed to most.

This illustration points out the importance of learning and practicing a specific relaxation skill you can comfortably apply in a high stress situation. The specific stress management skill we recommend for in-depth learning and daily practice is relaxation combined with positive imagery. The relaxation training process is discussed and explained on the audio tape. After listening to the explanations and instructions, begin **practicing daily** relaxation by using the relaxation section of the tape.

The relaxation exercise we have included is brief and can be used before home practice sessions and league play. What you are learning as you listen to the tape is how to elicit the relaxation response and how to remind yourself to relax in any stressful situation. We urge you to complete at least six weeks of daily practice with the training tape. There are many benefits to daily relaxation. Your physical and mental health will benefit along with your dart game.

This simple daily exercise will help you gain more and more control over your thoughts and feelings. We have included several excellent books as suggested reading in the areas of stress management and relaxation. You may want to learn more about the benefits of relaxation training. The suggested books show you how to apply relaxation skills in many areas of living and working.

When a person says they are nervous, anxious, up-tight or worried, they are experiencing the emotion of fear. As we pointed out, the flight (fear) response is an old brain response to stressors, either real or imagined. As with anger, our goal is not to eliminate fear because the emotion can serve useful purposes. Our goal is to manage and exercise self-control over fear so the emotion adds to our performance rather than diminishing or deteriorating our level of play.

Remember, the important thing is to be able to recognize the emotion as fear. Anxiety, tension, and up-tightness are words that describe thoughts. Fear is the emotion that we feel in our body when we are in a stressful situation. A moderate level of fear (anxiety) aids good performance, but intense levels of anxiety get in our way when we need to perform a task under pressure.

Like anger, fear is a conditioned emotional response that occurs automatically when certain situations, events, or thoughts occur. Fear is a learned emotional response, and the intensity of the emotion can be controlled if you learn how to apply the skill of Anxiety Management.

If tension, up-tightness, freezing-up, and choking-up are things that happen to you while playing darts, you are reading the right section. All these situations involve the basic human emotion of fear. Anxiety Management skills are the key to self-mastery and to successfully improving certain aspects of your game.

You have already been introduced to several related skills that will help you effectively deal with negative anxiety. Positive Self-Talk is a way to calm yourself down. Thought Changing is as essential to Anxiety Management as it is to Anger Control.

Can you imagine someone successfully throwing D16 with thoughts like, "I hope I hit the board" or "I can't do outs?" Identify your personal stressors (specific situations in which you experience high levels of anxiety) and apply Positive Self-Talk, Positive Imagery, Thought Changing, or Relaxation Skills to improve your performance. Use the same step-by-step process that we described in dealing with anger.

The key is to recognize the emotion of fear and bring it under your control rather than letting the emotion control or influence the accuracy of your throws. Get the intensity of the emotion down to a moderate level that aids your ability to concentrate and focus on the task at hand.

Anxiety levels immediately go down when you correctly identify and label the specific emotion you are experiencing. Emotions do not occur in a vacuum or "just happen." Our brain creates them (not our heart or guts) with thoughts that are either in or out of our present awareness. When feeling tense or pressured, some helpful questions are: "How am I scaring myself?" or "What disaster am I anticipating or thinking about?" or "What am I thinking that is creating the anxiety?"

"Why am I nervous?" is a less productive question than "How am I making myself tense?" The reason is that the answers to "why" **questions usually include statements** like, "I don't know" or "just **because.**" **Practice**

recognizing the specific thoughts that create anxiety. List them and change them to more realistic and creative thoughts that help you perform successfully.

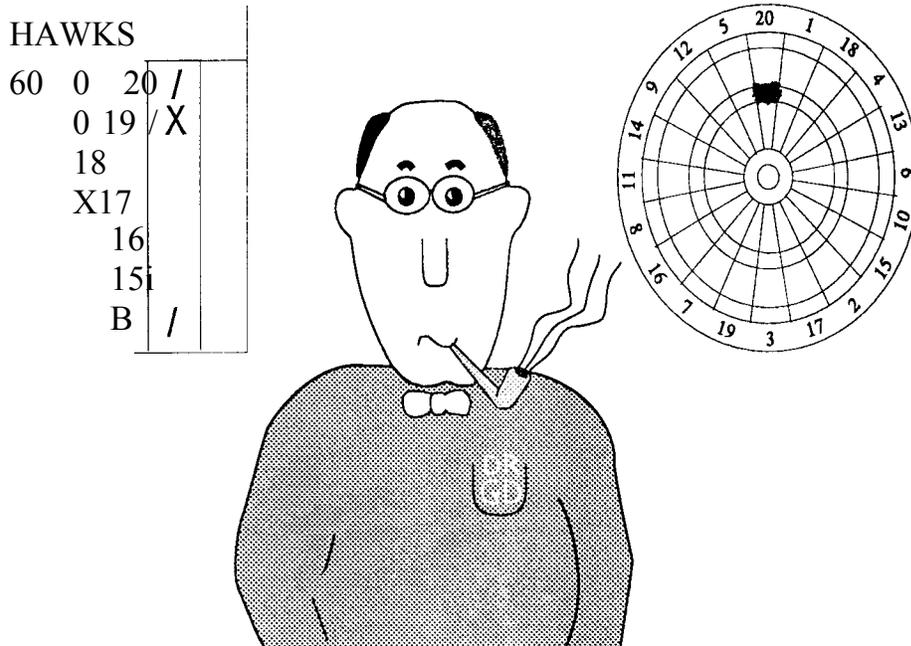
An important point needs to be made. here about how the human brain works. If you tell yourself not to think about something, you cannot stop your brain from thinking about it. For example, don't think about your mother's first name. Could you stop your brain or did it bring the name into your awareness? Telling yourself not to be tense about hitting a finishing double that means winning the match for your team will not work. Telling yourself you are not nervous when you are will help you become more nervous and tense.

When you feel pressured, tense, and up-tight, you have to do something active to control the intensity of the emotion. Breathing works. Positive and pleasant images work. Positive Self-Talk works. Focusing works. Relaxation works. Strong feelings of anxiety (fear) immobilize you and hinder good performance. Apply your skills. Practice reducing the intensity of your emotions to a moderate and manageable level.

Psychological and self-mastery skills allow you to gain more and more self-control of your thinking and feeling states as you play darts. These skills are healthy ways of dealing with stress and allow you to feel good about yourself as a person as well as improve your dart game.

We included a bibliography of dart books. If you read these as we have, you will notice some discussion about the influence of alcohol on performance. Darts are often played in an environment rich in spirit, and many kinds are usually available. Moderate levels of alcohol do not seem to interfere with performance levels in darts. Some authors seem to prescribe alcohol to soothe the nerves. This is a matter for an individual to decide. Stress management skills, relaxation, and mental training approaches are other options. They are also healthier.

# ANXIETY CONTROL



DR. GOOD DARTS

BEAR: Man, Speedy's burning it up! Hitting Trip-20 constantly.

DOC-. Did he spend some time working on his self-mastery skills?

KILLER: Nah, Doe. He's doing dog tranquilizers again.

DOC: Sigh, we've just got to implement a healthy and skilled non-chemical approach in dealing with nerves and anxiety. We do want to play again next season.

## PSYCHOLOGICAL SKILL #10: RELAXATION AND MENTAL TRAINING

The mental training requirements for throwing **Good Darts are evident to most dart** players at every level of play. As a matter of fact, as soon as a player becomes somewhat proficient with fundamental and technical skills of the game, the mental aspects of darts become most important. The psychological and self-mastery skills presented throughout the **Good Darts** book represent our view that mental preparation and skills development are valuable assets to the serious dart player. The skill of relaxation is a complimentary skill to mental training and is a key skill to learn and practice on a regular basis.

In the following pages, we present and illustrate the key elements of mental training and relaxation essential to consistent performance in darts. You will notice that what is presented here is very much related to the other nine psychological and self-mastery skills. However, because of the potential value to individuals really trying to improve their game, we have isolated some of the key elements so you can gain maximum benefit from the cumulative effect of learning and using all of the psychological and self-mastery skills.

### THE BASIC IDEA OF MENTAL TRAINING

The secret to improved performance in difficult and challenging situations (sometimes called "opportunity moments") is early recognition, preparing for skilled responses, and using your skilled responses at the right time. "Opportunity moments" are in every dart game and typically occur during

the three major phases of the game (starting, maintaining scoring consistency, and finishing). These moments provide you with the best chances to assert your skills as an improving player. A key to winning dart games lies in how you respond to the challenge of the moment

Precisely because these situations are difficult, many competitors will falter. Mental training, with an appropriate degree of relaxation, prepares you to give your best effort when it is needed most. Examples of "opportunity moments" are outlined below. Think about them and practice the related skills of Positive Self-Talk, Focusing, and Positive Imagery. It is not necessary or even helpful to just try harder and harder. Simply recognize the opportunity you have and throw one good dart at a time.

During the early stages of a game, it is important to start quickly. Many games start off kind of slow, and the pressure shifts to your opponent when you begin with steady and consistent darts. Think about:

Taking advantage early ...especially when your opponent starts with below standard scores.

Responding to your opponent's good start with a similar good start (answer 60 with 60 or T with T).

Doubling on if required. Just do it.

During the middle stages of a game, it is important to maintain scoring consistency. A good way to accomplish this is to develop a smooth and comfortable throwing rhythm as the game progresses. This helps you to get into "the groove" of throwing steady and consistent darts. Think about:

- Maintaining scoring consistency.

Increasing your comfort zone when you throw good darts. This will really help you keep a lead after a good start; to stay close even if your opponent is throwing well; to stage a comeback if your opponent falters.

Throwing down to a good high dart out number (setting up a ShowOut finish).

During the finishing stages of a game, it is essential to maintain your concentration and develop a type of mental toughness. This means that as you get closer to finishing, you need to practice the key skills in this section and become determined to throw each dart at a specific target. At this stage of the game, you want to give it your best shot with each throw and be determined and confident. Systematic practice and learning the skills in this section will help you. Think about:

Setting up your favorite and best out numbers. This serves two purposes. One, it gives you the best chance to win. Two, it shows your opponent that you have a positive intention to win.

Hitting your outs quickly. Go for your out-shot. Give yourself the message to go directly for the out. When you are successful, you totally avoid many emotionally draining moments ...like throwing a hundred darts at the double 1 or the bullseye.

Using the bullseye to your advantage in both 01 games and Cricket.

## THE REAL VALUE OF MENTAL TRAINING

It is important to know that the complexity of the human brain is one of your best assets...and also one of your biggest potential liabilities. Many waking hours are filled with a seemingly endless stream of thoughts, images, and expectations that are critical, negative, unproductive, and contribute directly to sub-par performance. Even though most of these thoughts occur in the privacy of your own mind and you can't actually see them, almost every dart player has experienced and witnessed the negative consequences of this type of thinking.

Remember, what you privately say to yourself does make a difference in your attitudes and actual behaviors. How and what you think does affect your actual performances and emotions. Thinking processes influence what you feel and how you respond. Faulty thinking and negative self-talk lead to self-defeating behaviors and unskilled responses (i.e., weak darts, nervous darts, wimp darts, bad darts, frog-arm darts, etc.). The Dr. **Good Darts** cartoon series illustrate critical self-talk, invalid or irrational thinking, and underdeveloped skills.

Mental training skills enable you to change negative/critical thoughts and unproductive thinking processes ...especially during "opportunity moment" situations ...to statements that are valid, challenging, helpful, and directly related to performance requirements. Mental training skills improve your ability to do three things:

1. Self-monitoring and becoming more aware of the impact of thought processes. Example: "This is an early 'opportunity moment'; I'm going to throw one solid dart at a time," vs. "I always get started slow; I'll never catch up."
2. Understanding the power and influence that thoughts and beliefs have on your behaviors and emotional attitudes. Example: "I'm calm and focused for my next throw; I know exactly what my target

is for each dart," vs. "I can't throw darts in here; the lighting is bad; the music is too loud; the scorekeeper constantly moves, etc.

3. Learning how to adjust your responses to solve real problems. Example:  
"Take a slow, deep breath; all I have to do is throw three darts to get down to a good out; I'll set myself up with an opportunity to win; it would be a lot of fun to win this game," vs. "What's the use; she's already down to an out; I'm beat; I should have thrown a Ton; but the bounce-out cheated me."

Learning how to use mental training and the other psychological and self-mastery skills will improve your dart game (assuming you also practice your darts). An appropriate state of relaxation also helps your game. Some dart players need to be very relaxed and low-key to throw their best, while others need to be more "pumped up." Practice the relaxation exercise on a regular basis. With systematic practice, you will discover the appropriate degree of relaxation and tension for your best dart play. It may take you several weeks to really be able to benefit from practicing relaxation. Stay with it, and keep a "personal scientist" attitude.

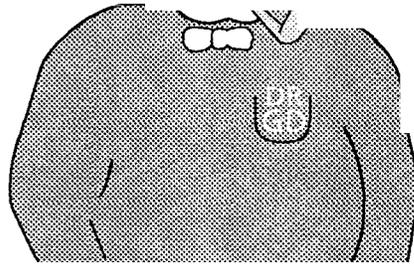
# MENTAL TRAINING

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## DR. GOOD DARTS

**KILLER:** HEY DOC! You're a really big help to the team! Speedy's so into that relaxation bunk that his darts ain't even reachin' the board, and he's taking over 5 minutes a throw.

**DOC:** Speedy is an all or none kind of fellow. I guess we need to review that part again about keeping up enough tension to improve performance.

**SPEEDY:** Whatever! Just hurry up. This relaxation stuff takes too damn long. I need help NOW!

**DOC:** Yes, Speedy. The skill of relaxation does take a lot of practice, but it is worth the effort, and so are you.

## A FINAL NOTE ON MENTAL TRAINING

The skills of mental training and relaxation will pay their biggest dividend in "opportunity moment" situations. With consistent practice, they will improve your competitive spirit and performance. It is easy to learn mental training skills, but they take considerable practice. There is a delicate balance between being prepared, determined, and mentally tough, and actually throwing your best darts under pressure... and being too relaxed and not caring enough about whether you throw well or you don't. Remember, the key is to throw your best darts, especially during the critical stages of each game. To successfully finish a game and win, you will have to throw directly at your outs. This means you must be willing to miss in order to hit your double-out. The main objective is you want to throw each dart with courage, determination, and skill (technical and psychological).

Keep this thought in mind: you literally have to train your mind to practice and use mental skills in specific situations. Be a good student and an even better "personal scientist."

## RECOGNIZING AND CHANGING PROBLEM BEHAVIORS

Many of the behaviors, emotions, and attitudes that interfere or block our performance have been with us for a long time. If you change a problem behavior (how you handle anger), you need a new behavior to replace the old one. The new behavior must work for you, and it must fit the criterion of being more valuable and productive as you play darts.

It is important to give yourself time to practice the psychological skills just as you practice throwing the T20. In the flow chart from our suggested "Dart Improvement Program" we allowed one month for each major psychological and self-mastery skill. Like Speedy, you may say, "What can I do now, tonight, that will help my game?" The answer is: "Changing or improving just one of the major blocks to your game can result in major game improvement as well as good feelings about yourself as you play."

When we do not perform well at darts, it has nothing to do with how good or valuable we are as a person. Poor performance means we need to focus on our game and how we think and feel as we play. We encourage you to think about changing or improving one behavior at a time. Select the psychological and self-mastery skill that will help you most. Learn and apply this skill as you practice and play darts. You may need information from other people, additional books as you work to develop a skill, and coaching. As a "personal scientist," follow the step-by-step process we have suggested for changing problem behaviors and blocks to your game. The next illustration provides a step-by-step approach to change a problem behavior into a more productive one. Write your ideas and notes in the space provided (in the What I Can Do column).

## A STEP-BY-STEP PROCESS FOR CHANGING A PROBLEM BEHAVIOR

Change Steps

What I Can Do

Step 1: Identify the specific behavior that is a problem in your dart game.

Step 2: Ask yourself: Is this behavior one that I really want to change? Then ask: Am I willing to change this behavior and devote the time and energy to learn and practice new skills? If your answer is YES, go to the next step. If your answer is NO, rethink your level of commitment to change.

Step 3: State the change that you want to make in specific terms. What I want to change specifically is HOW

I HANDLE MY ANGER WHEN I  
BEGIN TO MISS THE 20s AND HIT 1s.

- Step 4: Identify the internal event (thoughts in your mind) or the external event (remarks from your teammates) that seem to cause your emotional response (hitting 1 instead of 20).
- Step 5: Identify your thoughts or beliefs in relation to the stressor event. "A good player would never hit a 3." "I should be perfect." "I won't ever be a good player."
- Step 6: Identify and assess your emotional reaction to the stressor. ANGER! Severe level.
- Step 7: Identify, dispute, and challenge irrational thoughts and beliefs. CHECK NEGATIVE SELF-TALK.
- Step 8: Replace irrational thoughts and beliefs with valid ones. "Even great players hit 3s. "I saw Wade McDonald hit a 3." You hit a 3 sometimes because you are close to T20. Develop and practice helpful self-statements.
- Step 9: Go through the process of Thought Changing and learn anger control skills. Set a specific goal to improve your behavior and change the intensity of your emotional response the next time you score 3 ("Yes, you will score a 3 many times if you keep playing darts."). Practice saying, "I want to have the ability to reduce my anger when this happens again."

Step 10: Select a specific skill that will reinforce and strengthen the new behavior (Positive Self-Talk, Anger Control).

If you follow our model in improving your dart game, you will use this step-by-step process hundreds of times as you change and improve your game and refine your skills. You may be thinking like Speedy, "Hey Doe, this is a lot of work." Yes, and you're also worth the effort.

In the book, **Leighton Rees On Darts**, Leighton begins his chapter on preparing for a match by saying, "It's all in the mind." He goes on to say that success in darts is more a matter of mental rather than physical approach to the game. After a brief discussion of Americans' interest in Yoga and transcendental meditation, Leighton says he finds a couple of pints of lager works just as well.

The reason the mental or psychological aspects of **Good Darts** have received little emphasis is that most psychological approaches are not specific enough to provide much help to dart players. We have given our best effort to developing a first step in that direction. Be patient with yourself and us as you work to develop the psychological and self-mastery skills that we have presented. After all, we humans are pretty complicated.

We have suggested specific books for you to read that will be very helpful as you develop the psychological or mental aspects of your dart game. We have only suggested excellent books that teach you how to specifically develop the skills we have emphasized in our **Good Darts** book. We have included a brief bibliography of these books so you will have enough information to select the ones that will help you most.

# DEVELOPING PSYCHOLOGICAL AND SELF-MASTERY SKILLS

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## SECTION IV

### TEAM AND COMPETITIVE PLAY

- Team Play
- Tournament Play
- Competition: Its Value and Use
- Parting Words

## TEAM PLAY

Most people who like the social aspects of playing darts venture out from their home practice boards and find a group of dart players who are involved in team or league play. If you are a beginning player with no team experience, it is important to review your philosophy of darts as well as your personal goals before becoming a member of a team involved in regular league play.

Some teams are "fun" teams and are unconcerned about how well individual players are throwing. Some teams are fiercely competitive and are committed to winning. Check your current philosophy and goals related to your dart game. Choose a team with similar ideas. Most local leagues rate the teams according to ability, so you may want to begin playing with others that approximate your current level of skill and experience. If you want added support and incentive in developing your game quickly, you may choose to become a member of a team made up of more experienced players who are willing to help you develop your skills.

If your goal is to play **Good Darts**, you must be committed to regular play and systematic practice. Competitive team play can be an experience that will sharpen your game as well as provide a lot of fun. It is important to know that competitive team play requires a different attitude. As in any interpersonal, social, or job situation, competitive play offers satisfactions and disappointments. Dart teams are social groups, and problems and conflicts are inevitable. It is important to know the type of team you would enjoy being a part of and what kind of team environment is most comfortable for you.

In order to select a team that will enhance your enjoyment and skill, you have to know your own philosophy and goals for playing darts. A "good" team is a positive emotional support group that is interested in you as a person as well as your ability to win dart games. Team members tend to become friends. Playing on a team of friends can provide years of fun and

enjoyment. Improving your game of darts can be a lifelong activity. It is good to have people around you who encourage and support you as you develop your darting skills.

We have been playing darts for several years, and our personal goals were similar as beginning players. Although one of us was in Texas and the other in California, we chose our first league teams because of factors that were personally important. We wanted to improve our level of play and be a part of a team that was competitive in local league competition. Our "stretch" goal was to develop our skills to the level of competitive tournament play. Thus, we wanted an opportunity to contribute positively to a team that was in the top division of local league play and that was working toward the goal of winning the local city championship.

Both of us were fortunate, and we accomplished our initial goals. We developed the fundamental skills and played on teams that won city championships in our respective local areas. In the process, we had a lot of fun and kept one another posted on our progress by mail and phone. When there was a possibility for us to live and play darts in the same area (one of us decided to move home to Texas before a major earthquake shortened a promising dart career), we had to review our goals for playing darts.

Like people, goals change. We still wanted to play on an A-1 (top) league team. We also wanted to be able to play on the same team. We wanted to be a part of a team that was supportive and committed to fellowship, fun, and good sportsmanship. We wanted to be on a team where there was an opportunity to play frequently (501 singles, doubles, Cricket, and 601). Because we are lifelong friends, we also wanted the added pleasure of playing doubles together. We like to play more than anything and, after that, we prefer winning to losing. We wanted to play on a team interested in winning and one that could also deal constructively with losing.

Because personal satisfaction depends on your ability to be involved in activities that are personally meaningful to you, it is essential to **have a clear**

idea about what you want from team and competitive play. From time to time your goals will change. You may have to adjust your membership to a team that provides what you need and want while playing darts.

If you are an experienced league player, you may want to think about how you can use your performance in league competition to further improve your level of play. Two additional skills that are important are assertive communication and feedback management. Assertive communication means letting teammates know how and when to help you during play. Feedback management skills involve giving and receiving information in ways that are maximally helpful to improve performance. In other words, you need to give structure to what happens on a team in order to maximally benefit in terms of improved performance.

To facilitate effective communication and feedback, we developed the Competitive Play Feedback Chart. This chart provides a clear example of how to give and receive helpful information during and after team play. Try it out, and modify or improve it to suit your needs.

Here is what you need to do. Ask a teammate to observe your competitive play in terms of specific behaviors and performance indicated on the chart. Offer to do the same for your teammate. The goal is to see what aspects of your game could be refined, changed, and improved. After each round of competition or after the match, review your actual performance with the intent of looking for ways to improve your level of play. What did you do well (score, go out, count)? What specific practice focus would help your

current game the most (focused scoring practice, out practice, triples practice, strategy review)? What psychological or self-mastery skills would help you the most (self-confidence, stress management, positive self-talk, focusing, relaxation, anger control)?

A tremendous benefit of using the Competitive Play Feedback Chart is it serves as a constant reminder that we are playing against ourselves and against a standard of perfection. Good and positive feedback reminds us we

cannot perform perfectly. Our goal is to be a good "personal scientist" who deliberately and objectively studies our game. This process enables us to improve future performance. The Competitive Play Feedback Chart also provides a structured way teammates can encourage us and focus on our strengths and needs.

No one is a good mind reader while playing darts. No one can guess what you need to hear in order to feel supported or encouraged. You have to tell your teammates how or when to help you with your game. The Competitive Play Feedback Chart is one way to give and receive information in a productive and helpful manner. After a few minutes of review, you will know exactly what to work on during the coming week of practice.

Another advantage of the Competitive Play Feedback Chart is it provides a written history of your competitive performance. You can look at the chart at the end of the month to determine your current strengths and weaknesses. We have found it more beneficial to focus on your strengths, the things that you are currently doing well. Be sure to maintain and enhance your strengths. You also want to focus on other aspects of your game that you need to change or improve.

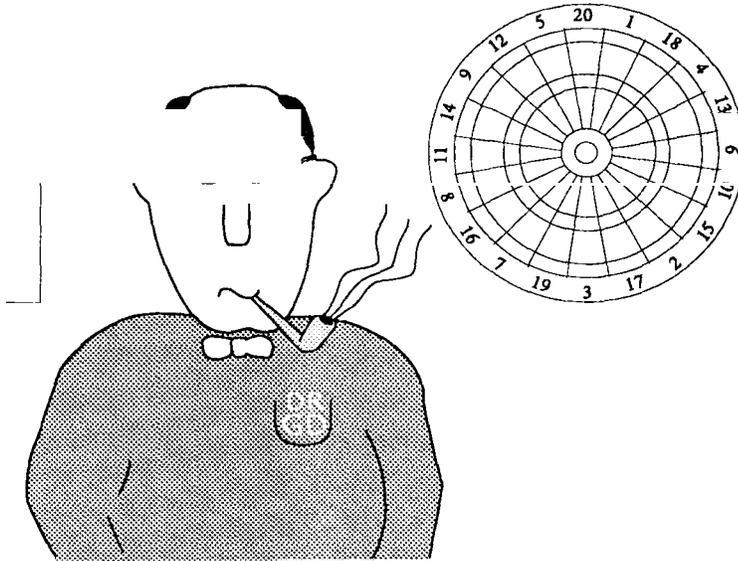
When giving feedback to teammates, be positive and specific. Tell them what you liked about their performance (good stance, relaxed, good strategy). Tell them specifically what you noticed while they played (uncomfortable stance, lack of follow-through, poor choice of outs). Tell them anything you have found helpful in correcting or improving any aspect of your own performance (concentrated doubles practice, relaxation, taking more time between throws). The idea is to be a good teammate and friend in improving both your games.

In our experience as players, variations in your level of play during competition are influenced more by the psychological and self-mastery skills than by fundamental and technical skills. Team play means you are playing before an audience, and your individual performance is important to the cumulative effort and performance of the team. Your ability to hit a crucial finishing double may mean the difference in a team win or loss. Often it may mean a trip to the playoffs or a city championship. These additional stressors place mental demands on you. Good performance will depend on your ability to apply the specific psychological and self-mastery skills we have presented. So, practice these as much as the fundamental and technical skills.

A good team environment can enhance and improve your performance in these critical and stressful situations. How the team communicates support and encouragement can either help or hinder your individual efforts. A good team functions as a group. This type of team can often beat an aggregation of better dart players who really have not developed a true team or group support system.

## TEAM PLAY

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## DR. GOOD DARTS

- DOC: Let's review our current team philosophy before we start the city playoffs.
- KILLER: Throw killer darts!
- SPEEDY: Destroy the competition, 11-0 is the goal!
- CHOKER: Intimidate 'em!
- BEAR: Grizzly darts! Tear 'em up!
- DOC: What happened to the idea of a positive emotional support group that we agreed on at the beginning of the season?

## TOURNAMENT PLAY

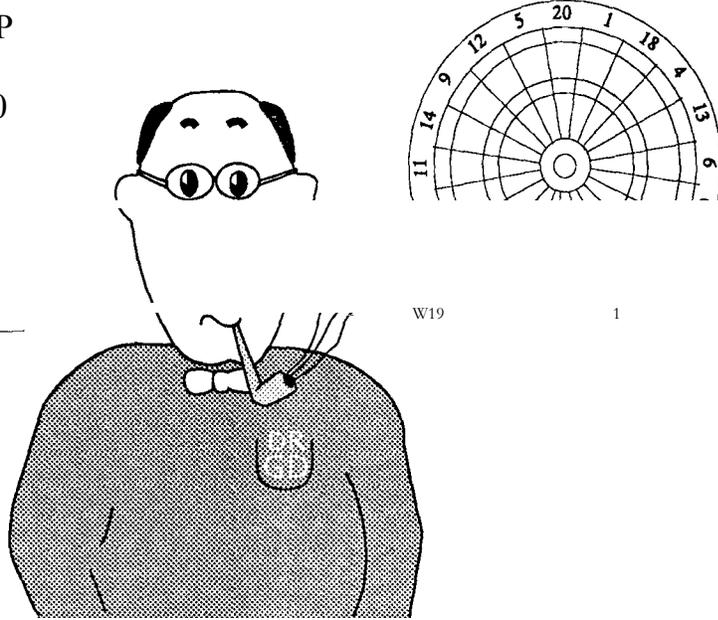
When your game reaches the level where you start thinking about entering an ADO sponsored tournament, you are at an exciting and challenging point in your development as a player. At this level, your personal attitude and philosophy of darts is extremely critical. You will need to be able to apply and use many of the psychological and self-mastery skills to boost your level of play.

Any dart player who has risked an entry fee and listened for names to be called out, knows the excitement and additional stress of tournament play. Most of us can vividly remember our first tournament experience.

In 1985, one of the authors had been practicing for weeks and had played well in helping his team win the local city championship. Filled with confidence and firmly focused on his strengths, he entered open singles and anxiously awaited the call to play the opening round. His opponent's name was not familiar, but several groups of spectators showed up at the board. After throwing an opening Ton, followed by a 4T0, an 80 and a 60, he was proud of the remaining 121 out. Unfortunately for this author, he never had an opportunity to throw again. His opponent finished a 125 to end a fifteen dart 501 game.

# TOURNAMENT PLAY

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DR. GOOD DARTS

**KILLER:** Hey, Doc! Since you got knocked out in the first round, how about chalking for me and the Bear the next few matches?

**BEAR:** Yeah Doc. You don't have anything better to do now that you lost.

**DOC:** Sure, Killer. OK, Bear. Just give me a few minutes to adjust my attitude.

**SPEEDY:** Hey, Guys, where's the book? Doc needs it now!

No one else around seemed to be as impressed or amazed as the author. His opponent calmly won the diddle to start the second leg and smoked off another 16 dart game. While shaking hands at the end of the match, the author thought about the importance of having the first shot and the remarkable level of play required to win in tournament play. He also reminded himself that several more years of practice and experience may be needed before there would be advances to the final eight of a tournament.

If you want to **play Good Darts** and be competitive in ADO tournaments, your mental attitude has to allow plenty of room for "having your doors blown off" by almost anyone that you draw as an opponent. If you are willing to commit yourself to systematic practice and being beaten by better players without emotionally damaging yourself, you can begin to work toward competitive tournament play. At this level, the psychological and self-mastery skills are essential for achieving rewarding performances and good feelings about your game.

## COMPETITION: ITS VALUE AND USE

Without becoming too deeply philosophical or psychological in **our Good Darts** book and "Dart Improvement Program," we have many times emphasized the importance of the philosophy (the why) of your play and the value of clarifying your personal goals for playing darts. Darts as a game of skill teaches us lessons about life in microcosm. Most of us play and compete in ways similar to how we live and approach life.

We were delighted by and appreciative of some of the dart books written by English authors. One writer in particular was expressing his fears and apprehensions about darts becoming more and more internationalized. He was concerned that the high level of play and competition of world class players communicated by television coverage of tournaments would further remove the game of darts from the level of local play and fun. His point was that darts could and should be enjoyed by everyone in environments filled with fun, good spirit, and fellowship with other players.

We agree that the major value of darts is in the enjoyment, fellowship, and good sportsmanship of play. We have also observed many players whose learned competitive instinct has turned their dart games into isolating and stressful experiences for themselves and their teammates. For this reason, we thought it worthwhile to spend a little time and space on a discussion of the value of competition.

Competition is neither good nor bad. Competing is a matter of personal choice. How you handle yourself at different levels of play is influenced by your attitude toward competition and the nature of your personal goals. It is your mental attitude that determines whether competition is a productive or destructive experience for you as a dart player.

Our book and program focus on competition between the inner and outer self with an emphasis on developing self-control and self-mastery skills. These skills can be applied to your darting behavior as well as to your performance in life and work.

We have strived to seek a balance between technical and fundamental skills and psychological and self-mastery skills. A way to bring our two selves together in the harmony of good play was what we intended to communicate.

The value of competition is it allows us the opportunity to overcome our self-imposed obstacles to succeed and achieve high levels of performance. It is the "I" or the "me" (ego) that makes it difficult for us to perform at our best at the time of greatest challenge. As we choose to involve ourselves in higher levels of competition in darts, we are giving ourselves the chance to grow and improve our levels of skill and our quality of performance.

As you work on your darting skills, a natural by-product of this development process is winning more games. When you begin to win more games than you lose, you are well on your way to becoming a good dart player. When you begin to win by large margins, you have achieved a skill level not

matched or equaled by present competition. At this point you must come to terms with an inner self need to continue setting goals at higher levels of play. Remember, your improvement, as indicated in your practice and competitive play charts and in your performance against local opponents, is an indicated need to promote yourself to a higher level of play.

As you promote yourself to a higher level of play, you compete more with your own level of skill, and you focus less on competing with your opponent. This is an important aspect of our book and program. When you redirect, or in our terms, reframe your learned competitive drive in this way, you open yourself to more enjoyment and satisfaction. You also must choose whether to rechallenge yourself and begin the long process of refining and improving your game as you work toward new goals at more difficult levels.

One of the best things that has happened to one of the authors while playing darts was to see a friend go through this process we have just described. The friend was sixteen years old when one of the authors met him in a league match and ended up playing him in singles. The "kid," as he was referred to, struggled for awhile and then won the match in good fashion. He soon began to establish himself as a fine player and progressed to one of the best players in our city.

The "kid" showed up for the ADO Youth Playoffs at an ADO tournament and won the right to represent our region by throwing many 8TOs and brilliant darts. He made it to Las Vegas and clearly won the right to represent the U.S. He took his darts across the water to play in England. His accomplishments were good for him as a person and a source of pride for all of us who had seen him play and encouraged his development. At that age and level of development, B. J. Preston was one of the top players in the world. We hope that our **Good Darts** book and "Dart Improvement Program" will help him in his next level of development.

For us, the value of competition lies in the opportunity it presents to develop ourselves and our game to a level of our choosing. The beautiful thing about darts is there are so many great players. Most of them will play if you ask. With a good attitude toward competition, there is no problem finding constant challenges for yourself as you improve your level of play.

Some suggestions by a world-ranked English player regarding how to pace yourself in goal setting and competitive play may be of value to you. In essence, he suggests giving yourself a full year to play at each level of competition before deciding how proficient you can become at darts. In our country, these levels would be local, city-wide, regional all-stars, successful ADO tournament play, the national team, and international play. If we follow the general guideline of one year at each level we are talking about at least six years of regular practice and play to reach successful performance at high levels of play. Not all of us can or want to do that.

Our program provides guidelines for a one year "Dart Improvement Program." As we have pointed out, you may spend several years developing your skills at your own pace and in a way that is comfortable for you. We are completing our tenth year of play, and we regularly enter ADO tournaments in Texas. We have had some good wins against top competition and many opportunities to gain humility. We continually identify areas of our game to improve and are striving to win in tournament play. **Our Good Darts Program** is an attempt to continue our development and improve our levels of play.

## PARTING WORDS

When we started working on the "Dart Improvement Program," our motivations were self-rising. We wanted to get our own games to the next level by applying psychological and self-mastery skills in a systematic practice process. This was our primary goal for several months.

As we read all the books we could get our hands on and worked to develop our own program, we became more and more excited about the value of the "Dart Improvement Program" and wanted to share it with our friends and fellow dart players. Darts and the people we met while playing had given us a lot of fun and enjoyment. We hope that our book and program will give something back to the thousands of people who are striving to become better players and who truly love the game.

We hope our work will advance the sport of darts and encourage others to play and enjoy the best game in the world. We hope more and more people of all ages will learn and play the game at the level they choose.

Yes, we do have some mixed emotions about sharing our program with others. We are giving up a valuable edge, and we are beaten too frequently now for our liking. There is a small part of us that does not want opponents beating us with our own skills and constantly asking us if we have read our own book and are totally following the "Dart Improvement Program." If we end up playing you, we will try to win. If we do not, we will try to learn from you, and we will wish you luck in the next round. By the way, there is no truth whatsoever to the rumor we loaded the audio tape with subliminal messages and statements like, "**You can beat anyone except Nelson and Low ...You can. beat anyone except Nelson and Low... You can beat anyone except Nelson and Low ...YOU can beat anyone except Nelson and Low.**"

And, yes. We do have a sense of humor.

## SECTION V

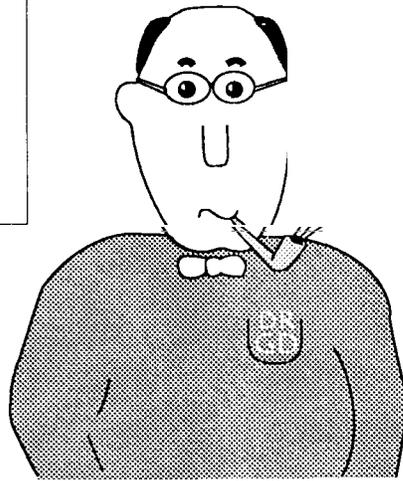
### THE DART IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM

- Beginning the Dart Improvement Program
- How to Use the Audio Tape
  - Side 1: Fundamental and Technical Skills
  - Side 2: Psychological and Self-Mastery Skills
- How to Use the Dart Charts
  - Chart 1: Dart Improvement Chart
  - Chart 2: Competitive Play Feedback Chart
  - Chart 3: Practicing Perfection: 101
  - Chart 4: Target Triple 20: Scoring and Out Practice
  - Chart 5: Target Triple 19: Scoring and Out Practice
  - Chart 6: Target Double Bull: 101
  - Chart 7: Conversion Chart - Chart 8: Monthly Summary Chart - Chart 9: Personal Improvement Graphs - Chart 10: Year's Highlights
- Fun Games to Build Basic Skills
- Flow Chart: A Year Long Program

# DART IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM

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## DR. GOOD DARTS

- KILLER:** Hey Doc! Are you serious about this "DIP" thing?  
Will it really work... if I spend the time on it?
- DOC:** Oh yes. The elimination of peaks and valleys  
game and the achievement of consistency does  
require an individual commitment to regular and  
automatic practice.
- SPEEDY:** Sounds great, Doc. But how about something  
useful... that I can use right now. I'm up next!
- BEAR:** Yeah, and I gotta throw with him in doubles.
- CHOKER:** Yeah, Doc, can ya hypnotize him or somethin' fast  
'cause I'm chalkin' that one.

## BEGINNING THE DART IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM

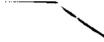
We designed the "Dart Improvement Program" so you could complete it alone as a personalized and self-directed approach to improving levels of play. However, we recommend you begin the program with a close friend, family member, or teammate who is also completing the **Good Darts Program**. The added support and encouragement of another person is extremely helpful as you begin the program.

We have provided daily, weekly, monthly, and annual summary charts for your practice and competitive dart play. These charts are designed so you can study every aspect of your game. Our "Dart Improvement Program" does require you to systematically monitor and record your performance so that you can use the charts as teaching and learning guides.

It is important to remember you can design and use the "Dart Improvement Program" to fit your personal goals. You may add your own individual practice sessions, fun practice games, and shorten or lengthen our suggested daily practice session. The important point in improving your game is you must have a program established that you will actually do every day. You must also have records of your performance so you can determine what you are doing well and what you need to improve or change.

If you are a league player and a member of a regular team, an ideal way to use the "Dart Improvement Program" is to incorporate all or part of it into your regular league play. It is really designed to provide a structure or model for improving individual and team play. Select and use some aspects of our program your team members would be interested in doing.

If your team has weekly meetings or regular practice sessions before league play, this is an ideal time to review your weekly practice results. Take a few minutes to talk and discuss progress and goals for improving your game. All of us can benefit from talking about our game and receiving feedback and help from others. Weekly meetings where practice results are reviewed and



discussed are motivators. They help us stay on the program and complete the daily practice routines.

No matter how much you love darts, you may find it difficult, and at times impossible, to throw darts every day. Our "Dart Improvement Program" was designed to encourage daily and systematic practice and to illustrate specific things you can do to improve your game rapidly. You may decide you are willing to practice three days out of the week, play on league night, and enter local fun tournaments and "pot shoots". You may take much longer than a year to complete the program.

After we purchased and read all the dart books currently available in print, we were amazed at how little of the information provided could actually be used to improve your level of play. Our goal was to design a book and program that dart players could use ...not just read. We wanted to provide skills, learning processes, and procedures that could actually be applied and used as you played darts.

We published the book and program so you would be able to take it and use it wherever you were playing or practicing. Add sections of your own when you find a new game or practice routine that improves your play. We have provided space for you to record notes about helpful hints or strategies you find valuable. Our goal was to create a book and program that all good dart players could add to and help improve through their own experiences.

Another important goal was to provide a means of sharing helpful information within the darting community. Many people have helped us develop and improve our dart games and levels of play. We have worked with and helped beginning players as they struggled with behaviors frustrating and detrimental to their game. For us, this is the spirit of **Good Darts**. Our shared goal is to play the game in a way that is fun and satisfying at the individual level. Only you can decide how you want to play, at what level, and for what purpose.

Another point to remember about the **Good Darts book and "Dart Improvement Program"** is they are truly American in orientation. We love to compete, and we prefer winning to losing; but neither of these intentions are as important as playing darts for fun and enjoyment. Our psychology is American and as such, pragmatic and useful. As psychologists we hold the view that any technique or approach that can be learned and practiced to improve behavior and performance is valuable. We have included the skills that can be learned and practiced, and that related directly to darts. We have omitted thousands of pages that would have only been interesting to us.

Darts is a game that is fun and social. To us this means there are many opportunities to laugh at ourselves and with others along the way. One sage remarked at a recent tournament: "If darts is such a fun game, why is everyone so serious and stressed?" The answer is most people become serious when they pay money to compete. Also, at a dart tournament, there are a bunch of people who can beat you at the drop of a hat or dart. Most people who compete at ADO tournaments are serious unless they are viewing entry as a charitable act.

Most of us will not be going head-to-head with John Lowe or other top flight professionals. Our goal is to play as well as we can at the moment and feel good about the opportunity to play the best players possible.

We have tried to emphasize the importance of a good and healthy sense of humor as we play darts. Our Dr. **Good Darts** cartoon series was our attempt to communicate the fun and humor created around the activity of playing darts. In our local area, we are often referred to as "Doc." Players are always asking us things in order to determine whether or not psychologists have any insight into behaviors that would improve dart play. We think we do, and we rarely have enough time to explain how. This was a major motivation for us in developing our program.

As you begin the "Dart Improvement Program," remember the fun and enjoyment dimensions. The idea of systematic practice is it provides a

guaranteed way to improve your skill. Use the fun games, and enjoy darts as you practice with friends. If you do not vary your practice sessions and enrich them with a lot of fun play, you will begin to tire of the routine and tend not to follow the program. Remember to set goals in line with our suggestions. Change your practice commitment when your goals or time commitments change. The daily practice is a way to feel good, not a way to hassle or bore yourself. Be creative in how you reserve 30 minutes a day to practice darts.

If you are quickly reading through the book and scurrying around to obtain what you need in order to set up a home practice board, or if you already have a home practice board, you are probably addicted to darts. Your addiction can either be positive or negative with regard to your physical and mental health. By way of general definition, a positive addiction is something you feel you cannot do without and something you like to do as often and as much as possible. This term pretty well describes our involvement in darts.

A negative addiction involves behavior or behaviors that are harmful to your body, mind, and/or important relationships. Our goal is to encourage the positive aspects of playing darts. In other words, playing darts is a way to create hours and years of fun, enjoyment, and healthy play. Healthy play is a wonderful thing for adults living in a fast-paced and work-oriented society. This is a major goal of our book and program. We encourage healthy play and laughter about things that are truly fun.

Writing this book and developing this program for ourselves and others has been, and is, the most fun we have experienced in quite a number of years. We have worked seriously as professionals and will continue to do so. We have greatly enjoyed the fun and challenge of beginning to apply our psychological skills model for dart improvement. We hope to continually refine and improve this initial work as we continue to develop ourselves and our darting skills in the years ahead.

Five or ten years from now, we may have the experience and skill to write another book and program called **Great Darts**. If not, maybe some of you will help us do that. For now, learn and apply the skills and methods included in our "Dart Improvement Program." We will be doing the same thing. We hope you reach your personal goals in darts, as we hope this for ourselves as well. Finally, we hope that **Good Darts** is a description of the quality of your dart throwing and not just the title of a new dart book.

Now that you are about ready to begin the "Dart Improvement Program," take a few minutes to review and study the flow chart for the year long program and the ten charts. Examine your philosophy, state your current goals, and use our suggested program as a guide for developing your skills. Remember to design and select activities that fit your own philosophy and goals. Everyone should complete the 30 minute daily practice session and keep records for the first month in order to assess current level of play.

As you implement and complete the program, we welcome recommendations and suggestions for refining and improving any aspect of the program. Write us a letter and include any suggested practice sessions, games, or hints you have found personally helpful in improving your game. We hope to include additional sections as we work to improve our book and program. **Good Darts!**

## HOW TO USE THE AUDIO TAPE

The "Dart Improvement Program" consists of several major elements. To take best advantage of the various elements, you will want to become familiar with each and fully understand how they relate to each other. You will find each element systematically blends with and builds skills to improve your dart performance.

A brief description of the elements and suggestions for using them are provided in the following pages.

The Audio Tape provides the essence of the "Dart Improvement Program." By listening to the tape, you can get a good understanding of the basic concepts and skills of the total program.

Audio Tape Side 1 includes an introduction to the program and provides guidelines on how to best implement the year-long "Dart Improvement Program." This part teaches and carries you through the Fundamental and Technical Skills of **Good Darts**, reviews the Personal Skills Development Model, introduces you to the concept of Self-Mastery Skills, outlines the 30 minute basic practice session using the Dart Improvement Chart 1, and concludes with a discussion on the value of being a "personal scientist".

Audio Tape Side 2 teaches and carries you through the Psychological and Self-Mastery Skills of **Good Darts**. This part helps you to learn the key mental aspects of the game, introduces you to the technique of using relaxation training to improve focusing and concentration skills, provides you with a brief relaxation exercise with positive imagery, and instructs you on extended practice sessions and targeting key doubles, triples, and bullseyes required for competitive play.

# HOW TO USE THE GOOD DARTS CHARTS

## CHART 1: Dart Improvement Chart

The 30 Minute Basic Daily Practice Session is the basic practice routine upon which all other practice sessions and games are built. Instructions for completing the basic practice session, recording and studying scores, and improving your game are provided on the next page. There are 12 monthly Dart Improvement Charts to provide you with everything you need for your own year-long "Dart Improvement Program".

You should record the results of your daily practice during each practice session. At the end of each month you should do the following: circle your highest and lowest scores for each practice number and your two best 301 games for the month. Transfer your highest and lowest scores for each practice number to the Monthly Summary Chart 8. Also transfer your two best 301 games to the same chart.

**SPECIAL NOTE:** You will probably see a lot of variation in your scores for the first few months. Expect the variation and use it as a learning tool to chart future progress. There will be many times when you will not hit any triples or doubles in your prescribed throwing sequence. Remember, it takes time to gain consistency in darts. Experienced players also go through peaks and valleys in their play.

## CHART 2: Competitive Play Feedback Chart

This is a chart to study and give you feedback on your game in competitive situations. League and tournament play provide a different kind of environment and related pressures. Chart 2 will help you objectively look at your performance in competitive situations, and you can compare it with your self-monitored practice performance. You will need the help of another person to complete Chart 2. This person should be someone you trust to give you feedback that will help improve your game. Ideally, this person would be your dart practice partner or a member of your team. This person needs to be supportive of your goal to improve your performance in darts. It would be helpful if this person is one whom you are comfortable in receiving criticism from and are unlikely to harm.

This chart includes space to record scores for each throw (all 3 darts) in a competitive match of 501 or other '01 games. This information will let you study your game consistency in scoring and doubling out. You can compute your average points per throw in competition. At the end of each match, you can calculate your average score per throw by dividing your total score by the number of darts thrown. In winning games of 501, divide 501 by the number of darts thrown and multiply by 3 to get your PPD average. On losing games, divide your total score achieved by the number of darts thrown and multiply by 3. There is also a checklist to record various aspects of your game, including Fundamental and Technical Skills and Psychological and Self-Mastery Skills.

Competitive play is different, and it presents a different challenge for you. Having your actual scores recorded by a partner may be a new experience for you, but it will be a valuable and insightful experience. Dart players seem to develop habits and techniques during competitive games. **Some are** helpful and result in improved play, while others negatively influence your level of play. The Competitive Play Feedback Chart will **help you monitor** your positive habits and techniques as well as identify the **habits and** techniques to change. Good dart players constantly try to get into a "groove"

and stay there. The Competitive Play Feedback Chart is designed to help you find your "groove."

### CHART 3: Practicing Perfection 101

This practice session will improve your comfort level and confidence in throwing at specific numbers. Practicing Perfection 101 lets you study your game while practicing on and off doubles, triples to reach a good double finish, and counting. This game is especially good for doubles practice. During your dart life you will play many 101 games requiring a double to start and a double to finish. This practice routine will help you prepare for all games requiring doubles accuracy and will improve the competitive aspects of your play.

The basic idea of Practicing Perfection 101 is to learn the sequence and skill of throwing three perfect darts to complete the game with a double start and a double finish. You start by throwing 3 darts at each specified box. Then you throw for the linking single or triple number required to reach the double out specified on the chart. When you hit that number (regardless of how many throws it takes), you then throw until you hit the specified double out. When you complete each game, you have thrown 3 perfect darts to finish the 101 game. While this will not occur often, the goal is to throw the 3 perfect darts in one throw.

### CHART 4: Target Triple 20: Scoring and Out Practice

This practice session is for 20 throwers and improves your skill in hitting Triple 20. Target Triple 20 lets you practice throwing for the highest score possible and then practice a sequence of outs around the board with a Triple 20 start. In this practice, you are working on improving scoring consistency with the target being Triple 20 and also working on a variety of finishes around the board. Practice rules and recording instructions are included on the chart.

## CHART 5: Target Triple 19: Scoring and Out Practice

This practice is for 19 throwers and improves your skill in hitting Triple 19. Practicing Target Triple 19 is identical to Target Triple 20 except for the focus on the 19. You practice various outs around the board with a Triple 19 start. In this routine, you are working on scoring consistency first and then working on a variety of finishes around the board. Practice rules and recording instructions are included on the chart.

## CHART 6: Target Double Bull 101

This practice session is designed to develop your bullseye accuracy, especially the Double Bull. Target Double Bull 101 is similar to Practicing Perfection 101 except that you can only start with a Double Bull. When you hit a Double Bull in a throw (all 3 darts), you then use all 3 darts again practicing the 101 outs specified for each throw. The primary goal for the practice session is to improve your bullseye accuracy. You will also be practicing hitting key singles and finishing doubles.

Practicing rules and recording instructions are included on the chart. As you practice and improve your overall game, you will find increasing value for bullseye accuracy. The bullseye is a strategic weapon in both Cricket and '01 games. Developing confidence in your ability to use the bullseye is an important part of improving competitive play.

## CHART 7: Conversion Chart

This chart is used to compute your throwing accuracy percentage from the 30 minute basic daily practice session. The Conversion Chart shows the accuracy percentage for your practice on Singles, Triples, Doubles, and Bullseyes. You can then use this chart to convert your number of **accurate** throws recorded in your Monthly Summary Chart to an accuracy **percentage** for your highest and lowest scores for each practice number **during the entire** month. Then, you transfer this information to the **Personal Improvement**

Graph in the corresponding area for Singles, Triples, Doubles, and Bulls.

#### Chart 8: Monthly Summary Chart

This chart is used to record, plot, and systematically study your game based on the 30 minute daily practice session. Chart 8 lets you see the progress you are making and identify the parts of your game needing more work. After each month of daily practice using your Dart Improvement Chart, you transfer your highest and lowest numbers scored during the entire month to Chart 8. Then you can determine your highest and lowest accuracy percentage using Chart 7 to plot this data on the appropriate Personal Improvement Graph.

Carefully study the information and check your consistency and accuracy in throwing Singles, Doubles, Triples, and Bullseyes. You will be able to determine which numbers you are throwing well and which numbers need improvement. This information will help you set performance and practice goals for the next month as well as let you compare your results on a monthly basis over time.

Expect variations in your play. Remember to assume the attitude of a "personal scientist" and use this method to objectively study the major elements required for throwing **Good Darts**. This information and systematic approach will become more and more valuable to you as you progress to higher levels of play.

#### Chart 9: Personal Improvement Graph

This chart is used to record and monitor your progress on a month by month basis over a complete year. You will be able to see your improvement and change on a monthly basis. Over a period of time, you should see your game get better and more consistent.

This is an excellent procedure for studying the "peaks and valleys" of your

game. As you follow the "Dart Improvement Program," you will see your game improve over time, and at certain points, reach a high performance level (the peaks). During these times you may also see your game become more inconsistent, and you will experience some frustrations with your game (the valleys). During such times, it is important to study your game and determine what is working well for you and to determine what needs more attention. Set goals for improvement and review again the applicable sections in this book. Listen to the audio tape and zero in on specific skills. Use a skilled mental process to renew yourself and your game to consistently reach the **Good Darts** range.

#### Chart 10: Year's Highlights

This is a fun and self-satisfying chart. This chart is used to record your best performances during the year. The Year's Highlights Chart is a success chart for you to review from time to time. You will find it interesting and personally rewarding to keep a record of your achievements and best performances, highlights, and games to remember. Throwing darts is a life-long sports activity, and you can and will achieve many highlights and positive memories. Reviewing these performances and meaningful moments is enjoyable and rewarding. Remembering the good feelings associated with them is a healthy and productive way to build and enhance self confidence, self efficacy, and overall self esteem.





# DART II IMPROVEMENT CHART DAILY PRACTICE

S S S S S S  
 2 1 1 1 1 1  
 0 9 8 7 6 5

1	T	T	T	T	T	T	D	D	D	D	D	D
1	2	1	1	1	1	1	2	1	1	1	1	1
c	0	9	8	7	6	5	0	9	8	7	6	5

BEST 301

2 3  
 4 5  
 6 7  
 8 9  
 10  
 11  
 12  
 13  
 14  
 15  
 16  
 17  
 18  
 19  
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 30  
 31




# DART PVIPRO CHART

## DAILYPRACIICE

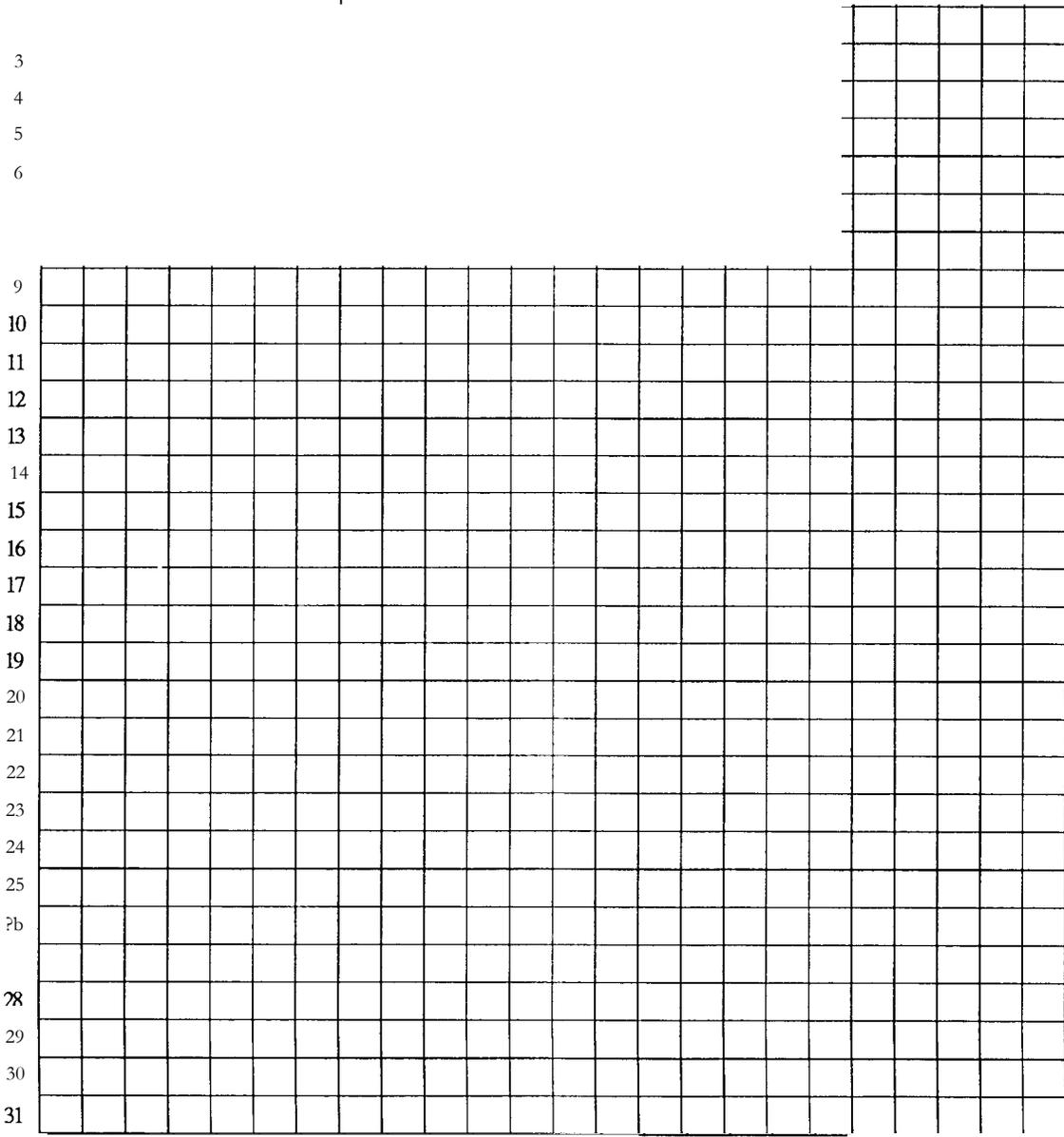
B

SSSSSS  
2 1 1 1 1 1  
0 9 8 7 6 5

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0 9 8 7 6 5





# DART IVIPRO CHART

## DAILY PRACTICE

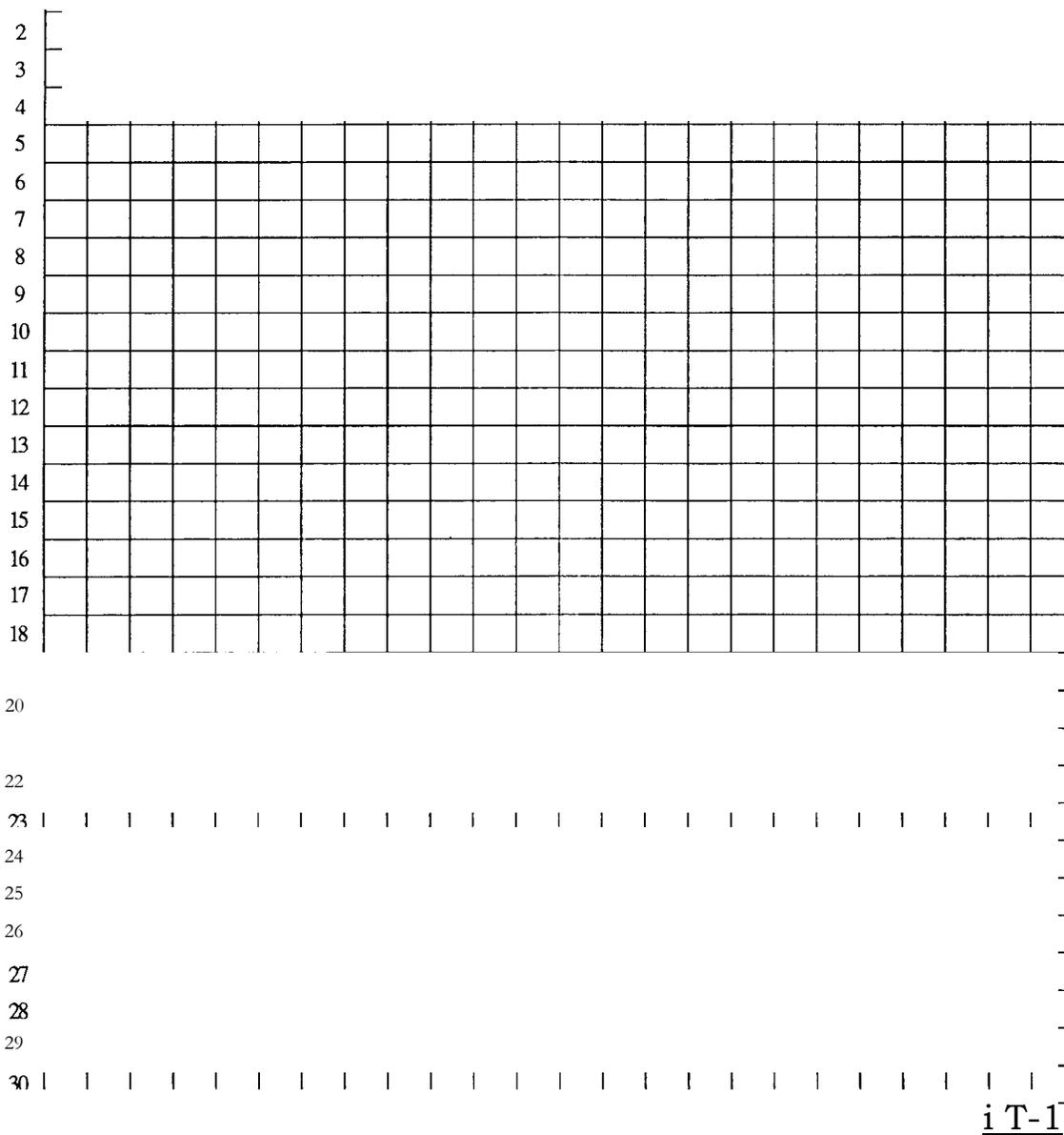
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**B**  
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098765

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211111  
098765

B  
3











# COMPETITIVE PLAY FEEDBACK CHART

## LEAGUE PLAY

T h	Game			Game			Game 3			1 Game			CHECK FOR
	1	2	3	1	2	3	1	2	3	1	2	3	
w'													
1													• Stance
2													• Grip
3													• Throw/Release
4													• Follow-through
5													• Counting
6,													• Concentration
8													• Self-talk
9													• Anger Control
10													• Anxiety Mgmt.
11													• Strategy
12													• Rhythm
13													• Scoring
14													• Attitude
15													• Distractors
16													• Confidence
17													• Doubling Out
18													
19													
20													
	w w w	w w w	w w w	w w w	w w w	w w w	w w w	w w w	w w w	w w w	w w w		
	L L L	L L L	L L L	L L L	L L L	L L L	L L L	L L L	L L L	L L L	L L L		
PPD													
QP													

- Record total score for each throw in the appropriate box for each game.
- Circle "W" for games won and "L" for games lost.
- Record "PPD" (points per dart) average for each game on corresponding line.
- Total up "QP" (quality points[95 or higher per throw]) for each game.
- Record "QP's" on corresponding line for each game.
- Note Hi-ins and Hi-outs for use on Chart 10.

# PRACTICING PERFECTION 101

01994 Low & Nelson

Starting Double -

g of DJ3LS cored

glutnishin g O

DB	D20	D19	D18	D17	D16	D15	D14	D13	D12	D11	D10	D9	D8	D7	D6	D5	D4	D3	D2
51	61	63	65	67	69	71	73	75	77	79	81	83	85	87	89	91	93	95	97
S19	T15	T17	T15	T17	T19	T17	T19	T17	T15	T17	T15	T17	T19	T17	T19	T17	T19	T17	T19
9	5	7	5	7	9	7	9	7	5	7	5	7	9	7	9	7	9	7	9
D16	D8	D6	D10	D8	D6	D10	D8	D12	D16	D14	D1	D1	D2	D18	D16	<b>D2</b>	<b>D18</b>	<b>D19</b>	<b>D2</b>
6		0						2	6	4		6	0	6	0	8	9	9	0

2nd Dart

3rd Dart

# of Darts to Finish

## PRACTICE RULES

- Throw 3 Darts at each starting Double in each box
- Record # of accurate Doubles scored
- For each Double hit, throw the corresponding out
- Complete each 101 game started
- Record the # of Darts required to finish each 101 game
- Study the results and set specific goals to improve game

## SKILLS DEVELOPED

- Confidence on starting Doubles
- Counting
- Practicing 2 Dart finishes
- Out practice

RECORD BEST 101 GAMES  
DATE #OF DARTS

Starting Double- DB D20 D19 D18 D17 D16 D15 D14 D13 D12 D11 D10 D9 D8 D7 D6 D5 D4 D3 D2

g of DBLS cored

pwishing Out

51	61	63	65	67	69	71	73	75	77	79	81	83	85	87	89	91	93	95	97
S19	T15	T17	T15	T17	T19	T17	T19	T17	T15	T17	T15	T17	T19	T17	T19	T17	T19	T17	T19
D16	D8	D6	D10	D8	D6	D10	D8	D12	D16	D14	D1	D1	D2	D18	D16	<b>D2</b>	<b>D18</b>	<b>D19</b>	<b>D2</b>

2nd Dart

3rd Dart

# of Darts to Finish

# TARGET TRIPLE 20 / SCORING and OUT PRACTICE

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20
2	4	6	8	10	12	14	16	18	20	22	24	26	28	30	32	34	36	38	40
D1	D2	D3	D4	D5	D6	D7	D8	D9	D10	D11	D12	D1	D1	D15	D16	D17	D18	D19	D20

Throw #

~Cryl%20's

fpunishin  
g Out

Target #

# Dbls Hit

## PRACTICE RULES

- You have 120 Darts (40 Throws)
- Throw 3 darts at Triple 20 for each box.
- Record the number of T20's scored for each box.

## SKILLS DEVELOPED

- Triple 20 Scoring Consistency
- Learning Outs 2-40
- Doubles Outs Around The Board

• When you score 1 or more Triple 20's during a throw, retrieve your darts, then shoot all 3 darts at the finishing out listed for that box. Record # of accurate Doubles hit for each box.

21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	32	33	34	35	36	37	38	39	40
40	38	36	34	32	30	28	26	24	22	20	18	16	14	12	10	8	6	4	2
D20	D19	D18	D17	D16	D1	D14	D13	D12	D11	D10	D9	D8	D7	D6	D5	D4	D3	D2	DI

Throw #

Triple 20's  
Scored

gushing  
Out

Target #

# Dbls Hit

Number of Triple 20's Hit

Total Number of Designated Doubles Hit

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20
2	4	6	8	10	12	14	16	18	20	22	24	26	28	30	32	34	36	38	40
D	D	D	D	D	D	D	D	D	D	D	D	D	D	D	D	D	D	D	D
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	1	1	15	16	17	18	19	20

Throw #

Triple 19's Scored

Wishing Out

Target #

# Dbls Hit

**PRACTICE RULES**

**SKILLS DEVELOPED**

- You have 120 Darts (40 Throws)
- Throw 3 darts at Triple 19 for each box.
- Record the # of T19's scored for each box.

- Triple 19 Scoring Consistency
- Learning Outs 2-40
- Doubles Outs Around The Board

• When you score one or more Triple 19's during a throw, retrieve your darts, then shoot all 3 darts at the finishing out listed for that box. Record # of accurate Doubles hit for each box.

21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	32	33	34	35	36	37	38	39	40
D20	D19	D18	D17	D16		D14	D13	D12	D11	D10	D9	D8	D7	D6	D5	D4	D3	D2	D1

Throw #

Triple 19's

Wishing Out

Target #

# Dbls Hit

Number of Triple 19's Hit \_\_\_\_\_ Total Number of Designated Doubles Hit \_\_\_\_\_

Special Highlights of Triple 19 Practice (ie: 7 T19's):

# TARGET DOUBLE BULL 101

Throw #	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20
# of DB's																		
Hit	S1	S11	S15	S19	S1	S11	S15	S19	S1	S11	S15	S19	S1	S11	S15	S19	S1	S11
Finishing	DB	D2	D18	D16	DB		2013	16	DB		2013		DDB		D20		DB	D20
Out							18				1813				1318			D18
											16				1316			D16

2nd Dart

3rd Dart

# of Darts  
to Finish

## PRACTICE RULES

- Throw 3 Darts at Double Bull in each box
- Record # of accurate Double Bulls scored
- For each Double Bull hit, throw the corresponding out
- Complete each 101 game started
- Record the # of Darts required to finish each 101 game
- Study the results and set specific goals to improve game

## SKILLS DEVELOPED

- Confidence on Bulls Eyes
- Counting
- 2 Dart finishes
- Accuracy on Outs

## RECORD BEST 101 GAMES

DATE #OF DARTS

Throw #	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20
# of DB's																				
Hit	S1	S11	S15	S19	S1	S11	S15	S19	S1	S11	S15	S19	S1	S11	S15	S19	S1	S11	S15	S19
Finishing	DB		2013		DB		2013		DB	D20		D16	DB	D20		16	DB		<b>1320</b>	
Out			1813				1813			D18				D18					<b>1318</b>	
			16				16												<b>1316</b>	

2nd Dart

3rd Dart

# of Darts  
to Finish

## CONVERSION CHART

Number of Accurate Throws = Percentage of Accuracy

BULLS	SINGLES	DOUBLES	TRIPLES
0-30 = 0%	0-15 = 0%	0-9 = 0%	0-9 = 0%
1-30 = 3%	1-15 = 7%	1-9 = 11%	1-9 = 11%
2-30 = 6%	2-15 = 14%	2-9 = 22%	2-9 = 22%
3-30 = 10%	3-15 = 20%	3-9 = 33%	3-9 = 33%
4-30 = 13%	4-15 = 27%	4-9 = 44%	4-9 = 44%
5-30 = 16%	5-15 = 33%	5-9 = 55%	5-9 = 55%
6-30 = 20%	6-15 = 40%	6-9 = 66%	6-9 = 66%
7-30 = 23%	7-15 = 47%	7-9 = 77%	7-9 = 77%
8-30 = 26%	8-15 = 54%	8-9 = 88%	8-9 = 88%
9-30 = 30%	9-15 = 60%	9-9 = 100%	9-9 = 100%
10-30 = 33	10-15 = 67		
11-30 = 36	11-15 = 74		
12-30 = 40	12-15 = 80		
13-30 = 43	13-15 = 87		
14-30 = 46	14-14 = 94		
15-30 = 50	15-15 = 100		
16-30 = 53			
17-30 = 56			
18-30 = 60			
19-30 = 63			
20-30 = 67			
21-30 = 70			
22-30 = 73			
23-30 = 76			
24-30 = 80			
25-30 = 83			
26-30 = 86			
27-30 = 90			
28-30 = 93			
29-30 = 96			
30-30 = 100%			

*NOTE:*

Convert the number of accurate throws recorded on your **Dart Improvement Chart I** to a percentage of accuracy for the highest and lowest on each number recorded on the **Monthly Summary Chart 8**. Record this information on the appropriate **Personal Improvement Graph (Chart 9)**.



# PERSONAL IMPROVEMENT GRAPH

## SINGLES PRACTICE

01994 Law h Ne6ou

<u>Practice Data</u>	10%	20%	30%	40%	50%	60%	70%	80%	90%	100%
Month 1										
Best # I -of 15										
Worst# ]-of 15										
Month 2										
Best # I -of 15										
Worst# I -of 15										
Month 3										
Best # I -of 15										
Worst# I -of 15										
Month 4										
Best # I -of 15										
Worst# I -of 15										
Month 5							R			
Best # I -of 15										
Worst# I of 15										
Month 6										
Best # I -of 15										
Worst# I -of 15										
Month 7										
Best # I -of 15										
Worst# I -of 15										
Month 8										
Best # I -of 15										
Worst# ]-of 15										
Month 9										
Best # I -of 15										
Worst# I -of 15										
Month 10										
Best # I -of 15										
Worst# I of 15										
Month 11										
Best # I -of 15										
Worst# I -of 15										
Month 12										
Best # I of 15										

In practice data column record your best and worst number for each singles practice number. In practice data column record the number of accurate throws for your best and worst practice numbers. Using conversion chart 7 calculate your % accuracy for your best and worst numbers. Plot % accuracy for best and worst numbers for each month. The % accuracy reflects peaks and valleys

# PERSONAL IMPROVEMENT GRAPH

## BULLSEYE PRACTICE

<u>Practice Data</u>	10%	20%	30%	40%	50%	60%	70%	80%	90%	100%
Month 1										
Best of 30										
Worst of 30										
Month 2										
Best of 30										
Worst of 30										
Month 3										
Best of 30										
Worst of 30										
Month 4										
Best of 30										
Worst of 30				A						
Month 5										
Best of 30										
Worst of 30										
Month 6										
Best of 30										
Worst of 30										
Month 7										
Best of 30										
Worst of 30										
Month 8										
Best of 30										
Worst of 30										
Month 9										
Best of 30										
Worst of 30										
Month 10										
Best of 30										
Worst of 30										
Month 11										
Best of 30										
Worst of 30										
Month 12										
Best of 30										

- In practice data column record the number of accurate throws for your best and worst practice sets.
- Using conversion chart 7 calculate your % accuracy for your best and worst sets.
- Plot % accuracy for best and worst sets for each month. The % accuracy reflects peaks and valleys.

# PERSONAL IMPROVEMENT GRAPH

## TRIPLES PRACTICE

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### Practice Data

10% 20% 30% 40% 50% 60% 70%

80% 90% 100%

Month 1										
Best # I -of 9										
Worst# I -of 9										
Month 2										
Best # I -of 9										
Worst# I -of Month										
3										
Best # I -of 9										
Worst# I of Month										
4										
Best # I -of 9										
Worst# ]-of Month										
5				R						
Best # I -of 9										
Worst# I -of Month										
6										
Best # I -of 9										
Worst# I -of Month										
7										
Best # I -of 9										
Worst# I of Month										
8										
Best # I -of 9										
Worst# I of Month										
9										
Best # I -of 9	i									
Worst# I -of Month										
10										
Best # I -of 9										
Worst# ]-of Month										
11										
Best # I -of 9										
Worst# I -of Month										

- In practice data column record your best and worst number for each triples practice number.
- In practice data column record the number of accurate throws for your best and worst practice numbers.
- Using conversion chart 7 calculate your % accuracy for your best and worst numbers.

Conversion Chart 7: Accuracy Percentage

# PERSONAL IMPROVEMENT GRAPH

## DOUBLES PRACTICE

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Practice Data	10%	20%	30%	40%	50%	60%	70%	80%	90%	100%
Month 1										
Best # I -of 9										
Worst# I -of 9										
Month 2										
Best # I -of 9										
Worst-I of Month 3										
Best # I -of 9										
Worst# I -of Month 4										
4										
Best # I of 9										
Worst# I -of Month 5										
5										
Best # ]-of 9										
Worst# I -of Month 6										
6										
Best # ]-of 9										
Worst# I -of Month 7										
7										
Best # I -of 9										
Worst# I -of Month 8										
8										
Best # I of 9										
Worst# I -of Month 9										
9										
Best # I of 9										
Worst# I -of Month 10										
10										
Best # I -of 9										
Worst# I -of Month 11										
11										
Best # I -of 9										
Worst# I -of Month 12										
12										

- In practice data column record your best and worst number for each doubles practice number.
- In practice data column record the number of accurate throws for your best and worst practice numbers.
- Using conversion chart 7 calculate your % accuracy for your best and worst numbers.

Percentage Conversion Chart: 100% = 10, 90% = 9, 80% = 8, 70% = 7, 60% = 6, 50% = 5, 40% = 4, 30% = 3, 20% = 2, 10% = 1

## YEAR'S HIGHLIGHTS

### Competition

Ton & Above

7T1

8T0

Best 101

Best 301

Best 501

Best Cricket

Best Bulls-eye

Top Opponents

Played

Best Performances

Winning

Best Performances

Losing

## FUN DARTS: GAMES TO BUILD BASIC SKILLS

The "Dart Improvement Program" emphasizes structured and targeted practice sessions to develop the basic skills for throwing **Good Darts**. From time to time, you may want to add fun games to enrich and vary your practice routine as a way to offset boredom. The games that we have included are those that you can play for fun with others.

If you decide to venture out and visit local dart establishments, there is a good chance that you will play one of these games with other dart players. Remember, the skills involved in these games are very specific. If you plan to recover the cost of our book and program with a few "friendly" games with friends, you will do well to include these games in your practice schedule. For each game, we have included general instructions and procedures for scoring and playing. We have also identified the specific skills that you will improve by playing and practicing each game. When you need to improve your game by focusing on specific skills, you may select one of the fun games and enjoy practice with a friend.

### FUN GAMES

### BASIC SKILLS DEVELOPED

Killer	Doubles practice, accuracy under pressure, sense of humor
Half-It	Accuracy under pressure, stress management
Legs	Scoring, throwing accuracy, flexibility in using the entire board area
Around the Clock	Singles, doubles, or triples accuracy
Shanghai	Throwing accuracy, small outs practice, confidence in throwing unusual outs

### Killer: The Game and General Rules of Play

This game may be played by any number of players. Often, to start the game each player will throw with the opposite hand to establish individual numbers and to establish the lineup. The dart closest to bull goes first. Player initials are written on the scoreboard along with their individual number. Three marks (lives) are placed by each player's initials and target number.

The basic strategy that usually evolves is ganging up on the best player and killing him or her first (taking all three lives). Each player in turn tries to become the "killer" by hitting a specific target double (i.e. any other player's number). Once a player hits a double, he/she is designated "killer" by marking a K by his/her initials. A "killer" takes the lives of other players by hitting their respective doubles. Each double scored removes one life. The winner is the last player with a life. If during the course of play, a "killer" accidentally hits his/her own double, he/she loses one life.

### Half-It: The Game and General Rules of Play

This game may be played by any number of players. All players throw at the bullseye to determine throwing order. Each player begins with a predetermined score (i.e. 50 pts.). Then all players in turn throw 3 darts at the numbers 20, 19, any triple, 18, 17, any double, 16, 15, bullseye. The total of each throw (all 3 darts) at the target number is added to that player's score. Any dart that does not hit the specific target number does not count. If any player misses all 3 darts at the target number then that player's score is cut in half (Half-It).

### Legs: The Game and General Rules of Play

This game may be played by any number of players. All players throw at the bullseye to determine throwing order. The only prevailing rule is to throw the highest possible score. The goal is to throw a higher score than

that of the immediately preceding thrower. A throw of the same or a lesser amount gives that player a mark. When a player has received 3 marks he/she is out of the game and his/her initials removed from the scoreboard. The last player surviving wins the game.

#### Around the Clock: The Game and General Rules of Play

This game may be played by any number of players. Players throw at the bullseye to determine throwing order. The starting player throws at the single 1, then single 2, then single 3, and so forth all around the clock to finish with a bullseye. Each player throws in turn, and the first player to go around the clock and finish with a bullseye wins the game. A perfect game requires 21 darts. Depending upon the practice focus, players can elect to score only doubles or triples. Any variation in this game is acceptable as long as all players agree prior to the first dart.

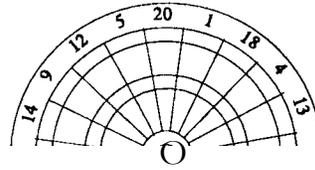
#### Shanghai: The Game and General Rules of Play

This game may be played by any number of players. Players throw at the bullseye to determine throwing order. The numbers 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, and 9 are used in this game. These numbers are targeted in sequence, beginning with 1. The objective is to achieve a single, double, and triple of the number in one throw (all 3 darts). When this is achieved in one throw of 3 darts, this is called a Shanghai. The first person to throw a Shanghai is declared the winner. If a Shanghai is not achieved, each player's score is the actual value of accurate throws at the specific targeted numbers (1 thru 9). Any dart thrown outside the targeted number is not counted. If a Shanghai is not achieved on any of the numbers by any of the players, the player with the highest total score is declared the winner.

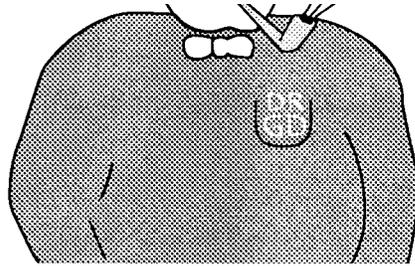
## FUN GAMES

HAWKS

60	0	20	/
	0		X
	19	~	I
	/	18	
X	17		
	1		/



U



19

### DR. GOOD DARTS

- CHOKER: Hey Doc... ya wanna play a few games of Killer Darts with the guys?
- DOC: Sure, why not?
- SPEEDY: OK! Diddle with your off hand, closest and furthest from the Bull are partners for 10 bucks a game.
- BEAR: I'd rather play Half-it blindfolded for beer.
- KILLER: Nah... Let's play Shanghai, and you gotta spin around 3 times and throw for 5 bucks a number, Haha.
- DOC: Sigh... I need to work on my Mental Game. Oh, well. This could be one of those "personal scientist" opportunity moments. Let the games begin. GOOD DARTS!

## CONTENT GUIDE TO THE AUDIO TAPE

SIDE 1: Introduction to the Dart Improvement Program  
Concept of Self Mastery Skills and Darts  
Learning from Models  
    Fundamental and Technical Skills  
    Psychological and Self Mastery Skills  
Fundamental and Technical Skills of Good Darts  
    Skill One: Stance  
    Skill Two: Grip  
    Skill Three: Throw and Release  
    Skill Four: Follow-Through  
    Skill Five: Counting and Counting Strategy  
Six-Step Personal Skills Development Model  
30 Minute Daily Practice Session  
Systematic Practice and Self Monitoring  
    Value of Systematic Practice  
    Value of Recording Results of Systematic Practice  
Self Assessment and Self Monitoring

SIDE 2: Psychological and Self Mastery Skills of Good Darts  
    Skill One: Self Assessment  
    Skill Two: Self Monitoring  
    Skill Three: Personal Goal Setting  
    Skill Four: Self Efficacy  
    Skill Five: Positive and Accurate Self Talk  
    Skill Six: Focusing and Concentration  
    Skill Seven: Positive Visual Imagery  
    Skill Eight: Anger Control  
    Skill Nine: Anxiety Management  
    Skill Ten: Relaxation and Mental Training  
Introduction to Relaxation Training  
Relaxation Exercise with Positive Visual Imagery

# DART IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM

## FLOW CHART

### MONTH LEARNING FOCUS SKILL DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITIES

1. Self-Assessment of current fundamental/technical skills  
Tape side 1. Book sections I, II, IV. Begin 30 min. daily practice. Record results on Chart 1.
2. Self-Monitoring to identify current strengths and weaknesses  
Tape side 1. Book sections II, III. Complete and review Monthly Summary Chart 8. Continue 30 min. daily practice.
3. Personal Goal Setting skills to establish specific goals for improvement  
Tape side 2. Book section III, IV. Continue 30 min. daily practice. Add other practice sessions to develop strengths.
4. Positive Self Efficacy skills to build confidence  
Tape side 2. Book section III. Compare results of Month 1 vs Month 3. Begin using Competitive Play Feedback Chart 2. Add Fun Games.
5. Positive Self Talk skills to change self defeating thoughts  
Tape side 2. Book section III. Continue systematic practice. Complete Charts lthru 9.
6. Focusing/Concentration skills to minimize mental errors  
Tape side 2. Book section III. Apply Focusing Skills. Compare results of Month 3 vs month 6. Set new goals Complete Charts lthru 9.

# DART IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM

## FLOW CHART

### MONTH LEARNING FOCUS SKILL DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITIES

- |     |   |   |
|-----|---|---|
| 7.  | Positive Imagery skills to increase accuracy in critical game situations                          | Tape side 2. Book section III. Begin daily Relaxation Training and Positive Imagery. Record results on Charts 1 thru 9.   |
| 8.  | Anger Control skills to improve performance under stress  | Tape side 2. Book section III. Apply Anger Control skills. Continue Relaxation Training. Record results on Charts 1 thru 9.   |
| 9.  | Anxiety Management skills to improve performance under stress                                     | Tape side 2. Book section III. Apply Anxiety Management skills. Continue Relaxation Training. Record results on Charts 1 thru 9.  |
| 10. | Relaxation and Mental Training skills to improve competitive performance under stress and tension | Tape side 2. Book sections III, IV. Practice Relaxation and Mental Training skills. Add Competitive play practice sessions. Record results on Charts 1 thru 9.          |
|     | Continue Relaxation and Mental Training   | Same as month 10.   |
| 12. | Self Assessment of Progress and Year-end Performance Review                                       | Tape sides 1 and 2. Book sections IV, V. Review results of Charts 1 thru 9. Complete Chart 10, Year's Highlights. Establish new goals and pursue level of play desired. |

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Since becoming positively addicted to throwing darts in the early 1980s, we have done everything possible to understand the game of darts. We have also tried to throw darts as often as possible. We really appreciate the support and encouragement from all our friends and fellow darters in the State of Texas (and Texas is a big state) and throughout the United States. Even some of our friends from the United Kingdom have been most encouraging and quite instructive in actual play.

Since organized darts is such a time-consuming volunteer activity, we wanted to acknowledge some of the people long associated with the Coastal Bend Dart Association ...Ron Fletterman and family, Pam and Bernie Seidman, Mike and Barbara McDonough, Yogi (Bear) Yeager, Anna Louise Clawson, and a host of others. And to our former Night Hawks team and current Liquors team, and to Julie Buhidar of Liquid Town (teammate, captain, partner, and sponsor) and Bud Light for sponsoring our team, THANKS. And to the Eliminators and Outlaws teams that we love to play and compete against, **Good Darts**. To Jimmy Carlock and the folks at Nooner's Club and to Ray "Tennessee" Hundley of Tennessee Darts, thanks for your support and creative ideas for darts. To John and Sherry DiNardo of DiddleSticks in San Antonio, we always enjoy playing there and soaking up the hospitality.

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Gary R. Low

Darwin B. Nelson

P.S. Also to Stuart Jones, who is a great thrower in Texas. For no apparent reason, except he's constantly asking if he's in the book. Chalk up a successful sale to Mr. Jones!

# **GOOD DARTS**

## **Improving Your Game With Psychological & Self-Mastery Skills**

**by:**

**Gary R. Low Ph.D. and Darwin B. Nelson Ph.D.**

Written for experienced as well as new dart players who want to improve their level of competitive play. **GOOD DARTS** was also written for everyone who wants to gain more fun and satisfaction from the most intriguing sport in the world... darts! The 10 Psychological and Self-Mastery skills are presented to improve concentration and deal with the pressures of competitive play. The Dart Improvement Program provides a systematic year long program to practice and develop your game. Enjoy the game that starts and ends with a handshake. **GOOD DARTS!**

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