

Dear County Officials

For some time now the Board of the BDO have in our opinion failed in many areas. It is our belief that significant change is needed to the direction of the BDO; subsequently we have offered our nominations to be elected as board members at the forthcoming BDO AGM.

We have structured a proposed document which outlines our belief in how the organisation should proceed in the future, a copy of which I have attached.

Yours in the Sport of Darts

Martin Adams Chairman IDPA – World Professional Champion

Sue Getty BICC Premier Division Director – Wales Youth Officer

Barry Gilbey Chairman Essex CDO – International Darts Referee

Derek Weston Chairman Scottish Youth Darts – Chairman

Wayne Williams Secretary Welsh Darts Organisation – Chairman
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BASE OUTLINE ON THE FUTURE OF THE BRITISH DARTS ORGANISATION

This document will provide the basis for the direction of the British Darts Organisation (BDO) for the foreseeable future. The outline will be categorised and in some part detailed, however this is only intended as a framework and as such not a definitive document.

The categories listed below are in no particular order, nor does its listing provide a specific prioritisation. Similarly until all funds are made apparent the speed in which this framework could be implemented is under question.

The categories under review are not limited to those below however we believe these categories will provide the main structure for any evolution within the organisation.

British Counties and Countries

Youth

Ladies

Tournaments

BICC

Sponsorship

World Rankings

Venues

Media

Equipment

Marketing

Officials

Website

WDF

Professional Players

IDPA

PDC

BRITISH COUNTIES AND COUNTRIES

There has to be a closer bond between the Counties, Countries and the Board of the BDO. The counties we believe need to feel that the Board of Directors are working for them, that the system works for them and that they are an integral part of the system. To that end there is a need for the system to be looked at and improved. Whether it be the way paperwork is distributed and handled, to the way meetings are conducted a complete inspection of the system is needed.

Furthermore the way in which the BDO deal with the Countries is another aspect which also requires looking at. The communication between the BDO, England, Scotland and Wales is something which needs urgently looking at. Each Country has its own agenda and pace which at times neither fits neatly into the BDO nor the way it works. To this end the BDO needs to understand each countries requirements and with that will come a united approach. To that extent the Board needs to sit down with the various Countries and include them in the framework for the future.

YOUTH

This is an area which has been long in need of a defined structure. The current regime has continually neglected this area, throwing together a few competitions and claiming it is looking after the future of tomorrow.

The system in place at the moment is fundamentally driven by individual counties under the auspice of the Northern and Southern Inter County Youth Leagues. Few individual counties have specific structures, such as a Youth Superleague or an Academy.

Where academies have been set up by individuals, or groups of individuals, rather than as a County system, they have in the main been either sponsored or part sponsored by Unicorn the main board manufacturer of the PDC. Subsequently the PDC have now claimed these Academies are their own.

The introduction of the PDC World Youth Championship in 2010 was quite rightly hailed as a success. Following this tournament the PDC has now introduced a Youth Circuit which is going to produce a new breed of young player no longer in need of the BDO system.

Therefore it is essential a structure is placed into the BDO system for the youth. The structure must be inclusive of all, and not as is currently within the PDC focused on the elite players. However the elite youth players must be recognised and nurtured ensuring they have both short and long term goals which should help them stay within the BDO system.

To provide this system the BDO must have a Director who is both experienced within the setting up of youth systems (Academies), and has the drive and passion to develop not only a system, but also a network of regional and area centres and representatives which will develop the player, referee and official of tomorrow.

It will be down to this Director to initially establish a system and framework which will benefit the BDO and the youth. This framework must include development of the current Child Protection System which at the moment has little leadership nor direction. It is also essential that individual counties take a greater responsibility for their Youth system. Currently there are several counties who have youth teams but do not interact with either their youth committee or indeed the players who represent their county.

Ultimately the new system will incorporate the huge potential darts can play within the education process, a source currently untapped within the BDO system. In conjunction with this the top players within the BDO system should be encouraged to attend and heighten their profiles within these academies.

LADIES

The Ladies game has been the most disappointing aspect within the system. To restore the game to where it was five years ago in the terms of Ladies participating at tournaments will take several years. The number of Ladies participating within the BICC does not appear to have diminished, so the answer must lay elsewhere.

The general standard of the game appears, with the exception of the top five or six Ladies, to have slipped. The averages within the BICC five years ago would have seen

most teams in the top division averaging over 20, now however the norm is around 19. Whilst this only equates to around a point per match it is normally being held up by individual players having 23+ averages, thus the general standard of play within the team has diminished.

I believe that in the long term the youth project will restore the numbers back into the sport; however this is obviously not a short term and maybe not even a mid term fix. I believe to find the solution will take several influential figures within the sport to debate within the system as to the reasons why numbers have reduced.

If you ask the top players you will not find the answer because they still attend tournaments all over Europe on a weekly basis. It is the average Lady playing within the BICC where the questions must be asked. To do this a set of questions need to be set down whereby at the end of the assessment there is not only a general idea of why the numbers have diminished, but also some thoughts and ideas as to how the Ladies game can be resurrected.

TOURNAMENTS

We believe this subject needs to be split up into several mini headings although some topics will overlap from one heading to another. The headings being, Opens, Members Only, Television Events, Tournament Structure and Prize Money.

OPENS

BDO organised Open events tend to be well supported; although the argument would be; do the events support the need of the member? At present there are just three open tournaments catered for in this country, together with the Torremolinos Open in Spain.

The three events in this Country are the British Open, International Open and British Classic. I have not included the Camber Sands Festival as this is at present both an unknown quantity and also must have a doubt as to whether it will in fact get off the ground in 2012.

The British Open five years ago was a flourishing competition. The introduction of Setanta Sports to televise the latter stages had several effects. The first was that the singles event was moved from the Sunday to the Saturday; this ensured higher viewing figures for the TV and also, because of the TV coverage, raised the numbers entering the singles. However it lowered the numbers entering the Pairs, as many players took the opportunity to make their return journey during the day on the Sunday. Since Setanta folded the decision was taken to leave the Singles on the Saturday. Over the past couple of years numbers have dwindled in both the Mens and the Ladies. We believe this is partly because the event is on the Saturday; Bridlington the venue for the Open, being on the North East Coastline makes it difficult to get to and from. Therefore some people do

not want to travel in the rush hour on a Friday evening and feel that just to enter the singles is a waste of their time and money.

If the pairs was reintroduced to the Saturday and the singles Sunday this we believe would have an immediate uplift in numbers. A further reason why the numbers have dropped in the pairs is that the monies are not taken until the Sunday morning, thus no pre entries. This has the effect that if a player cant be bothered on a Sunday morning then they just won't enter and it hasn't cost them anything. Furthermore the Friday money in money out competition, if it is to be continued, has to reorganise itself so that it costs less to enter the building that enter the competition.

The International Open is the type of event which typifies the BDO and its ability to cater for all standards of player, both on the playing front, and also on the atmosphere and friendly environment front which is created during this weekend. The weekend gives an opportunity for the local pub player and his family to have a weekend of darts whilst at the same time as mixing with the stars. Given the current uncertainty with Pontins and the direction its buyers are going, if the facility at Brean Sands was to disappear then we believe it is essential that a similar facility be found to cater for this weekend.

The British Classic has for many years failed to find an identity within the calendar. Its placement within the calendar together with the fact it only has a singles competition makes it difficult to gather the amount of playing competitors usually associated with BDO competitions. The change in venue from Kettering to Braintree had two effects. The first was it was noticeable in that the entries declined. This would mainly be due to two things, one a move away from the centre of the country, the second was that it was a new venue and this always has an effect. If you throw in the fact it was and still remains on a Saturday the entry numbers will deteriorate as individuals will not take the day off work just for one day of darts. The return to Kettering is a massive backward step in regard of the venue. The venue at Braintree had the ability to cope with any size of tournament, from the 300-400 players through to over a 1000 players with a stage and venue which had the ability to cater for an audience and unlimited TV resources. Kettering in the meantime has proven to be unsatisfactory for both large numbers of competitors and also TV. This tournament has to be looked at with regards to its identity and viability on the current calendar date.

The Torremolinos Open has been on a fast track decline for the past three or four years. This tournament had for many years, been an ideal opportunity for darts in the Sun as the BDO advertised it. During the 80's, 90's and the early part of the 21st Century this tournament was unique in that the family could go on holiday to Southern Spain and incorporate a week of darts. Several issues have materialised over the past decade, none of which have been addressed by the current administration. The issues which include the change in climate, the introduction of the Euro as the local currency, together with the poor playing venue, an increase in the cost of the holiday and the fact the same prize money is on offer now as was on offer 20 years ago. With all of these factors coming into

account, this is a tournament which needs serious consideration on either its viability or structure.

MEMBERS ONLY

Currently there are definitively just two member's only competitions the Gold Cup and the British Masters. The Gold Cup as with the British Masters provides a small window of opportunity for the local Superleague player to fast track themselves into the spotlight.

Both competitions, especially the British Masters require a rethink into how they are organised both initially and at the finals stage.

TELEVISION EVENTS

Currently just two events are televised, the Winmau World Masters and the Lakeside World Professional Championship. Prior to that Setanta Sports had televised four other events, however this only lasted one year. Previously there had been no British televised events, outside of the two majors, for several years. With the advent of many sports channels, together with the likes of ITV4 showing major sporting events it is an area which has significant potential. The introduction of ESPN into the game of darts and specifically the BDO can only be a major positive injection; however their introduction comes at a cost which is the loss of the BBC to the World Masters. The overall cost will only be identified in real terms once the event has taken place. However the fact that the event is televised at all gives the BDO hope for the future. The World Masters however is another competition which is in danger of losing its identity, over the past 12 months a new points table was introduced so it was easier for all to track the World Masters rankings, with a now regular switch from the latter end of the year to September and back again means the competition has once again thrown up players being able to get two sets of points for one tournament or none at all depending on the date. It is essential the competition finds a stable date in the calendar.

The World Professional Championships is a week long event in which the BBC has several programmes and several hours which are needed to be filled. If this is continued with its afternoon programme then the BDO must take the opportunity to establish a five minute spot each day to promote the Organisation and its benefits.

TOURNAMENT STRUCTURE

The words structure and tournament have not been put together before within BDO tournaments. The attitude previously has been to put a tournament together and then decide what the format is going to be. Several issues need to be determined before any formal planning on this subject can be implemented; however a simple proforma would be to increase the length of matches at certain points within tournaments. The higher the category of the tournament the longer the latter stages should be. As such it might be that the final of a category 'A' tournament would be a minimum of the best of five sets five legs to a set, however a category 'C' tournament might just be the minimum of the best of

nine legs. Furthermore the categorisation in respect of the numbers entering a competition should be based on the previous year's numbers not the current years.

PRIZE MONEY

Several years ago it was introduced that the category of a tournament had to have a minimum first prize. This was supported by the number of entries into that competition. The current categorisation is dependant on the prize fund rather than the first prize; however there is no determination as to how the prize fund is distributed. We believe that each category should be dependant on both the first prize and also how the fund is distributed.

BICC

The BICC has since its inception been the flagship of the BDO. The function that on any one weekend in the region of 2300 dart players can represent their County and travel all over England, Scotland and Wales gives this competition huge potential for sponsorship and support. However the lack of any innovative ideas from the current board together with a consistent lack of sponsorship has degraded this competition enormously. The ability for counties to continue to produce teams and sufficient finance for those teams to continue within the BICC is rapidly diminishing. The current climate means that sponsors are no longer willing to part with their money as readily as in previous years. Therefore it is the onus of the board of the BDO to provide as much assistance as possible. In 2008 it was agreed to increase the money which counties put into the BICC in order to fund the points for the 'B' teams. Whilst we believe that the current funding going into the BICC from the Counties is sufficient, the amount returned to the counties in the way of prize money is not. The BDO has cut its costs for the BICC year on year because of the introduction and implementation of the email system and then with the utilisation of DFW. However none of these savings have been passed onto the Counties.

The current income for the BICC from counties is approximately £41,000 and if the Superleague levy is included this takes it well over £50,000. With the outgoings in prize monies approximately £35,000 this leaves a minimum of a £15,000 shortfall. Whilst it is acknowledged that there is a significant amount of time and work put into the BICC we find it somewhat difficult to believe the cost of running the BICC comes close to £15,000.

Therefore we believe two things can happen almost immediately, the first is to reassess the financial structure of the BICC and the second is to restructure the prize monies given to the counties. Furthermore there has been a long overdue need for the BICC to be given a facelift. Many competitions, outside of darts, over the past two decades have been revamped in order to provide long term sustainability. In order for the BICC to move forward a major review on the competition is essential. A working party made up of the current BICC Directors together with nominated representatives from each division, including Scotland will be given the opportunity to sit down and recommend a pathway forward for the BICC.

SPONSORSHIP

For several years now, sponsorship for the BDO has been limited to just a few companies. With Lakeside and Winmau the two main sponsors a few other companies such as East Yorkshire Events, John Smiths, Jackpot Joy and Pontins have made up the remaining sponsors. The recent introduction of Rileys was according to the board going to bring significant new income to the counties. Unfortunately this has not been forthcoming, and where Counties have received income it is not a sustainable long term answer. Therefore it is essential that the BDO in its movement forward identifies new areas for sponsorship as well as enhancing relationships with the current loyal group. It will be the responsibility of one individual to undertake the role of maintaining the current relationships and also developing new clients. The current board have also failed in any bid they may have undertaken to identify minor sponsors. These are the type of companies such as water manufacturers to sponsor the water placed on the stage. Another area maybe to sponsor individual boards at tournaments, if 32 boards were sponsored at £100 per board this money for instance would go a long way to paying for the accommodation for officials. The person who undertakes the role of obtaining sponsorship will be given the opportunity to develop a new strategy in obtaining and maintaining clients.

WORLD RANKINGS

The current systems in use for the World Rankings are at best complicated and at worst unmanageable. The timings of competitions together with the many other criteria set down means that it is almost impossible to maintain accurate and current tables. Later in this document it will be outlined how to identify individual players, which currently seems to be an almost impossible task. This current year I am aware of at least four occasions where players have had their name either put in twice or put against the wrong player. Therefore a working party of new board members together with board members of the WDF will sit down and discuss a new pathway forward. Furthermore as outlined in the prize money section of open tournaments a review of how tournaments are graded will also be a part of any discussion

VENUES

This topic will be included in several other subject matters when identifying new pathways. However it is obvious that on too many occasions over the past few years many venues currently in use are either too small or not suitable for purpose. With the introduction of technology certain criteria must be laid down prior to the approval of any venue. An example would be the televising of the British Classic by Setanta Sports. The venue used for the stage finals was woefully inadequate. It discouraged the audience and the TV commentators could be heard from the stage.

MEDIA

Currently the BDO is in a mixed position and lacking direction when it comes to the media. Robert Holmes who is employed by the BDO as a PR consultant also has the responsibility of media relations. The main areas of the media are Television, Radio and the written press. With regards to Television I believe the board have either failed to use Robert, or he has failed to gain the BDO suitable air time at the two major championships hosted by the BDO. Either way the BDO have failed to gain airtime to publicise the

company, its assets and strategies. Radio and in particular local radio can be a useful tool in the promotion of individual counties, however it appears few counties utilise this tool. The written media are all too often falling on one side of the divide or the other; however the BDO cannot expect to gain vast coverage in the national press because of the current lack of major tournaments. It was muted in many circles that following the take over of Darts World the BDO would lose its main source of media. However at the moment the coverage attained within the magazine is fair and proper, that being said unless there is a direction and strategy with regards to media coverage this may change.

EQUIPMENT

This is another area which has been totally neglected by the current board of directors. Much of the equipment utilised by the company is both outdated and not fit for purpose. The stands and cubicles utilised where the multi-board system is used are a disgrace. They look tired and worn and are extremely difficult and time consuming to assemble. Much of the electronic equipment used to update the scores once matches reach the stage has also seen better days and is also outdated. Subsequently this is another area where a strategy urgently needs to be put into place to upgrade and where necessary replace the equipment currently being used.

MARKETING

The BDO during its inception had carte blanche of the darting world when it came to marketing; however this is another area in which the company has failed to move forward. The Open and Televised Events where marketing is set up and run is usually profitable and a worthwhile exercise, however as described in earlier sections these only amount to six events covering some 25 days of the year.

The inability of the board to see the enormous potential in this field has meant that many companies have emerged and in some cases their business is so strong that they employ several members of staff. The BDO has to form a strategy to find a place in this market and with that creating sustainable income which at present is going untapped.

OFFICIALS

The current system of providing officials is unmanageable. Too often at Open Events the control table is not only undermanned but also frequented by the same officials. At the end of the tournament those same officials have to perform duties on the stage, whether it is score recording, refereeing, marshalling players or just general duties. When it comes to the televised tournaments different officials then attend thus at times providing a skill shortage. A system has got to be introduced by where there are sufficient officials at all events to ensure that those present are not having to do either too many or conflicting jobs. Furthermore the Televised Events are the showcase events for the BDO. All those officiating at these events should have not only attended some or all of the Opens but excelled in their position. Therefore a strategy needs to be implemented by where County Officials are both encouraged and given the opportunity to find their niche at Open Tournaments. Having identified those people excelling in key areas, they should be the ones given the opportunity to replicate this at the Televised Events.

WEBSITE

This is another area whereby the current Board of Directors has failed its members. The members gave the board a mandate to bring in a professional company to build and maintain its website. The company, namely Net Sports, by its own admission were naïve in the sport of darts; however they had run many other sites and were looking to test the types of systems which were successful in those other sports. The current Board of Directors however have failed in several areas. Whilst Net Sports built the website it has failed to provide several areas which are either desirable or essential to the sport of darts. Areas such as the previous history which was on the old website, links to other organisations, or an archive area are both examples of this. The front page is disjointed, has a poor impact and gives little reason for any new user to stay. Couple this with the poor speed of updates to major competitions the new site has not been managed by those responsible. Therefore it is essential for the BDO to utilise the skills of a member in conjunction with the Board and Net Sports to move the website in a positive forward direction.

WDF/EDC

The BDO have several areas within which both the WDF (World Darts Federation) and the EDC (European Darts Council) have responsibility and also interests. Because of these parallel interests and the stature of the BDO there are currently members of the BDO board sitting on both the WDF and EDC boards. Previously it has been identified where working with the WDF is an essential part of the progress required. There are several other areas of interest where all parties could be working together in a far more proactive manner to promote and improve the sport as a whole.

THE PROFESSIONAL GAME

If the BDO is to survive in its current format then the Professional, or top end, of the sport must be approached in a far more professional manner by the BDO. Ever since the inception of the PDC many players have just utilised the BDO as a stepping stone before moving across the divide.

This does not mean that millions of pounds need to be invested into the top end of the sport; moreover a direction needs to be found whereby players striving to get to the top of the game look towards the BDO as their focus rather than the PDC. It does mean that more money is required within tournaments it also means that players who go onto reach the latter stages of major tournaments are felt to be wanted at other events.

IDPA

The IDPA has for many years claimed to be the player's voice within the BDO, despite there being a Players Director sitting on the Board. The current Board of Directors have over several years consulted with the IDPA when initiating new ideas, or when problems have arisen. The IDPA have themselves either introduced or tried to introduce strategies, initiatives or ventures into the system. Currently the IDPA appears to have little impact on the sport. Their membership does not fully represent the top end of the game, which is where they see their role to exist. Subsequently it will be necessary to develop an association with the IDPA which provides a basis and substance for both their existence and their role within the sport.

PDC

Since its inception the PDC have set their own agenda, rules, regulations and guidelines all of which have been either directed at expanding their own side of the business or looking after their own players. In the meantime the BDO have failed to identify where the PDC sit within their system. The PDC has since its inception targeted the top end, be it the player or official, within the sport of darts. Several players have decided to play within the PDC system having previously played within the BDO system. The PDC has as earlier stated, provided their own rules, regulations and guidelines for these players. In the meantime the BDO since the Tomlin Order has failed to provide any adequate safeguarding for either its member counties or the playing members within its own system. Therefore a structure by which everybody has an identifiable position is essential. This might be on the one extreme that any member of the PDC is not allowed entrance into a venue controlled by the BDO, to any member of the PDC can play in every single event controlled by the BDO. The PDC currently has just 128 playing members, so to provide a defined structure within which those members can or cannot participate within the BDO system is long overdue.

IN CONCLUSION

The Board of Directors of the BDO have appeared for several years to rest on their laurels created from the darting hey day of the 1970's and 1980's. They seemed to be in cruise control through the 1990's and then looked like they were taking their foot off the pedal at the turn of the century. This has created a massive void whereby other companies, organisations or associations have undertaken roles which were previously exclusive to the BDO.

In order to re-establish the BDO as the controlling body of the game, whereby everyone looks up to the organisation will take several years. However a failure to act at this point in time will only act as putting a further nail in the coffin of the BDO. The Board of Directors must establish a working agenda and suitable timeline in which this work will be established.

At present the BDO has just one man for one job, which is fine until that one man is unable to do his job. When the job becomes vacant there is nobody who is able to pass on sufficient information to allow the work to be completed seamlessly. This has been

highlighted by the website, the rights and the ability to place items onto the site rest with just one man. When he is unavailable the system does not work. The BDO must start to restructure itself whereby several people have the ability to continue the work of others. In the normal workplace where somebody takes leave or is missing for other reasons the company, or a significant portion of the company doesn't just stop.

The Board of Directors must also implement several new strategies. The structuring of a Youth system, the restructuring of the BICC and the structuring of tournament play within the system must all be at the forefront of the new plans.

The introduction of online registrations for tournaments, together with dedicated membership numbers are other areas which need to be explored.

The current rules of darts need to be addressed with this being an instance where a group of senior members on both the playing and officiating front could work in unison.

In short following the AGM it is time for the board of the BDO to once again start working for its members, come up with a plan of action, inform its members of the plan and then implement the said plan.

This will almost certainly include some individuals who represent their counties taking a greater responsibility, similarly it will mean more individuals having to put their name to the plate and share the jobs around. It is time for the system to start working together which if it does will see significant rewards not only financial but also in just gratification for everyone.