

WORLD MASTERS 2007

Off again to Bridlington, where the 2008 World Masters will be held at Leisure World once again while The Spa is being renovated.

After the 15 hours spent getting to London's Heathrow airport from Las Vegas, I met up with my American teammates to take the 5 hour long drive in the coach. Amazing what some people, such as myself, will do to attend a World Masters.

Arriving at the Edelweiss Bed and Breakfast, owners Gary and Ann greeted us as if we were family. Since there was 16 people in our group this year, everyone split up and dashed off in different directions to explore the area, find the venue, get a bite to eat, or, as I choose to do, just have a drink and relax.

The next morning would arrive all too soon and we would be going toe to oche in an attempt to qualify into the World Embassy Championships to be held at Lakeside in January—a prestigious event indeed. I had the pleasure of qualifying into the 2002 Embassy and it was quite an experience.

Rising early to a wonderful English breakfast everyone made their way over to the venue. The only person not competing today would be our youth champion, William “TJ” Jacques. There is no youth event in the Embassy – yet.

This year we had 5 women and 6 men competing. Joining me was Marilyn Popp, Joyce Hamilton, Doreen Berry and Brenda Roush. The men's team consisted of Steve Brown, Chris Helms, Joe Chaney, Jerry Van Loan, Todd Bunch, and Jim Widmayer. We all found the venue, found our first matches and proceeded to play. Popp had a tough first draw as did Berry and Hamilton. My first round was a BYE so I was 'safe' for awhile. Roush got through a couple of rounds but fell 3-1 to England's Viv Dundon. After my Bye, I played Apylee Jones of England and won 4-1. My next round against No. Ireland's Denise Cassidy would not end so well with Denise beating me 3-0. This concluded the American women's quest to play in the Embassy. My only hope here is that someday the women will be permitted to play sets instead of games.

The men would fare a bit better but still not quite good enough. One by one our men were eliminated until only one still stood. It was the British transplant, Steve Brown. Brown was like the Energizer Bunny.....he just kept going and going! Finally, just 1 match short of qualifying, Steve was finally bested in a match that would not only go down to the tie-breaker, but would be decided after BOTH players had numerous shots at the match. It was a thriller, indeed, but at this point, we could only look forward to the next day's Masters' matches.

The next morning we were off to the venue once again to try to make a darts statement. In my opinion, the Masters' is probably one of the toughest tournaments in the WDF. Everyone in attendance is a champion of some sort. Confidence is abundant but

regardless of how well everyone plays, there will still be only one winner from each match that will proceed to the next round in the event.

While the men have a longer format, best of 3 games, best of 5 sets as opposed to the Women's best of 7 games, they also have some very talented competition with which to contend. Widmayer played well, but his opponent played just a bit better. The same can be said for Bunch and Van Loan. While not taking anything away from his darts, Chaney baffled his opponents with, not only his talent (he hit a 170 out!) but also with his creative finishes such as 78 – Triple 20, double 9 ! And he had 3 darts in hand!

Steve Brown drew Steve McDonnell of Ireland. To wonderful players had to face off in the first round. Perhaps a bit tired from his performance the day before, Brown went out this round in a very close match. Today's award for longevity goes to Chris Helms who got several rounds into the competition before falling in his 4th round, no doubt also very tired. The Men's second day matches went like this:

MEN'S QUARTER FINALS

Martin Adams	1 - 3	Robert Thorton	Tony O'Shea	1 - 3	John Walton
Ted Hankey	2 - 3	Martin Atkins	Darryl Fitton	3 - 0	Simon Whitlock

MEN'S SEMI FINALS

Robert Thorton	6 - 1	Martin Atkins	John Walton	5 - 6	Darryl Fitton
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MEN'S FINALS

Robert Thorton 7 - 5 Darryl Fitton

The ladies were to fare no better. While all played well, the draws proved too tough for the Americans. I had a late match and first played at 2:00 PM. I was to play the winner of the Gaynor Williams/Rilana Erades match. At 2:00, it was Erades I was to play. She started the match strong taking the first two games, but then I fired back taking the next two. Trading games again, we went to the 7th and tie-breaking game. Erades got the start which ended up costing me the match since I was on 60 while she finished 56, never allowing me a throw at my finish. Such is life and the game of darts. Erades made it to the Final 4 competitors so my loss to her was not in vain. Popp went out first round to Apylee Jones in a score of 4-2. A tough draw indeed for Popp, but again, the loss was not in vain since Jones continued on several rounds to the final 8 players. Hamilton went out in a tough match to Karen Littler, who also made it to the final 8. Marika Juhola bested Berry and Roush fell at the hands of Benita Gobel by a close score of 3-4.

With the winners over Popp, Hamilton and me in the final 8 I can honestly say we did indeed have tough draws. From the final 8 players, only Erades made it through to the

final four who would play on stage for the Championship. Joining her would be No. 3 seed, England's Trina Gulliver, Karin Lawman of England, and my personal favorite of the remaining women, Holland's Karin Krappin. Not only is she my good friend, but, I believe, the best woman in the world playing the game right now. In fact, this weekend she proved this by winning the Winmau Women's World Masters' title. This was the way the Women's final matches went:

WOMEN'S QUARTER FINALS

Rilana Erades 4 - 1 Lisa Ashton Trina Gulliver 4 - 3 Carina Ekberg
Karen Littler 3 - 4 Karen Lawman Apylee Jones 0 - 4 Karin Krappin

WOMEN'S SEMI FINALS

Rilana Erades 3 - 4 Karin Lawman Trina Gulliver 2 - 4 Karin Krappin

WOMEN'S FINALS

Karen Lawman 3 - 4 Karin Krappin

With all the American Men and Women out of the competition, we all jumped on the "TJ" Jacques bandwagon and followed our youth Superstar's progress. While "TJ" himself is a quite sort of lad, his cheering section was anything but quiet. Berry was on a mission to show the world just how supportive Americans can be of their countrymen. I wish I could really tell the world how well this young man played. And he carried himself like a champion all the while. He was in Group 2 of four groups. In his first round, he beat Patrick Meany by a score of 4-3. His next match was against Germany's Alexander Glatthorn. This match he won 4-3. The next match would be to win his board and make it to the staged Semi Finals. To win this honor he would have to beat England's Shaun Griffiths. Griffiths came prepared to play and took Jacques out in a 4-1 match. At this point I would like to mention that Griffiths has been playing since he could walk and TJ has about 3 years of playing behind him, but TJ was our Champion this day! On Sunday in the Semi Finals, Griffiths would cruise past David Coyne of the Republic of Ireland by a score of 4-1 and then whitewash fellow Countryman Michael Smith 4-1. I am happy to say that the future of darts is alive and well and continuing to flourish in Bridlington.

YOUTH SEMI FINALS

David Coyne 1 - 4 Shaun Griffiths Oskar Lukasiak 2 - 4 Michael Smith

YOUTH FINALS

Shaun Griffiths 4 - 0 Michael Smith