

## ***From Lake Cowichan to Bridlington, All for Darts***

***By Clint Clarkson***

In 2002 I hopped in a car with a couple of friends and drove from Victoria to Lake Cowichan, BC (a little town 90km north of Victoria – population 2,948). We were on our way to compete in the Riverside Open; my first ever darts tournament. The setup was 10 portable boards (5 on each side) lined down the centre of the pubs dining area. I finished joint third in the men's singles (there were probably only about 15 players) and, if I remember correctly, I won \$30.

A little less than 7 years later I walked into “The Spa” in Bridlington, England to compete in the 32<sup>nd</sup> Winmau World Masters. When I competed in the Riverside Open, I can honestly say I didn't even know what the World Masters was and the only professional player I'd ever heard of was Eric Bristow. Since then, I've learned a lot about this game and had the opportunity to meet and play against some incredible people.

The World Masters is an absolutely amazing event and traveling overseas to compete in it only makes it that much more exciting. The probability of playing only one match discourages many North American players from competing in it – but playing in “The Masters” is about much more than the match: it's the hours of practice in the weeks/months prior to going, it's the long journey to Bridlington, it's sitting in the B&B chatting with players from around the world, it's having fish n' chips sitting by the English Channel, and (most of all) it's getting to play in one of the world's grandest tournaments.

Darts, like all sports, has the ability to bring people with similar interests together. The World Masters is a dramatic example of this, as amateur and professional players from around the world come together to compete in one of the world's most prestigious darts events. Certainly, every player who enters The Spa Bridlington dreams of winning, but ultimately, it's the experience and the people that bring them back year after year.

Having the benefit of working for an airline, I've been able to travel all over Canada and meet many of our countries top players. I really believe that we have players capable of being competitive at or even winning an event like the World Masters (on both or men's and ladies' sides). With the addition of 3 world ranked tournaments to the NDFC tournament schedule, Canada can qualify as many as 11 men and 8 women to compete in the event on an annual basis. Perhaps, with the ability to send more of our elite players to England each year, we'll find more of the success that players like Bob Sinnaeve and Allan Hogg found 20 and 30 years ago.

I am very thankful for having the opportunity to play in the 2009 Winmau World Masters. Reaching this event was only possible for me through the support of some fantastic organizations, including: the Edmonton City Dart League (who hosted the Klondike Open through which I qualified for the masters), the NDFC and Darts Alberta. Each of these organizations and their respective sponsors played a role in helping me reach Bridlington and I want to express my sincere thanks to each of them.



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*“Man is only truly great when he acts from his passions.” Benjamin Disraeli*