

John Thurman on what happened to Darts

I've tried to keep out of the Ringing as a Sport debate for a while. However, I am going to repost something here which I have spent some time adding as a comment on a friend's personal status as I think there are some things that ringing could learn from another activity which was, at one time, perceived as a similar type of activity.

In the early '90s darts was perceived as a pub game played by heavy drinkers and smokers, and the BBC/ITV televised portrayal of a small number of tournaments did nothing to change that image. The governing body, the BDO, didn't see any kind of problem and were happy to continue as they were, with the majority of even top-level players being semi-pros who needed to hold down regular jobs as the prize income from tournaments was nothing special - often no more than covering the costs of getting there etc.

Along came Barry Hearn, who launched the PDC which now features fully professional players playing in front of audiences of 10000 in arenas, with massive TV coverage on various channels, and players who are household names and not for their drinking ability.

Unfortunately, darts currently has two governing bodies and two World Championships as the BDO are still sticking to their guns. You only need to look at the TV coverage of the BDO and then compare it with that of the PDC to see which organisation is the more vibrant. It is my belief that, sooner or later, there will end up being only one governing body, once a few belligerents are out of the way. Basically, in my view ringing could learn a lot from another activity which was once perceived as a fat old man's game

Darts is actually a game which requires a lot of skill and mental agility and takes years of dedicated practice to get to a decent standard, is very frustrating when you can't do it very well but rewarding when you do. It can also be played by anyone of any age in a variety of venues for very little cost, regardless of physical fitness, income, education, political views or whether your Dad sent you to the right school. Does this sound familiar to anyone?.