

EXPERT ADVICE

# How to Throw a Dart

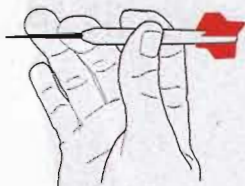
PROFESSIONAL PLAYER MARK DUDBRIDGE'S TIPS FOR MASTERING THE BOARD



THE DANGERS OF DARTS ARE APPARENT: IT'S a game of throwing sharp, tiny objects that's mostly played by — let's be frank here — folks in bars. Few of us know much more about it, but Mark Dudbridge, 38, makes his living by the dart. (His biggest single-tournament take: \$47,000.) The World Mas-

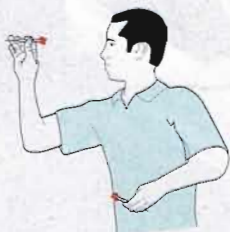
ters Champion, Ireland Open Champion, and World Championship Finalist, who hails from Bristol, England, says that with just a few tweaks to your grip and throwing motion — along with some gear upgrades for an added edge — you can enhance your game dramatically, whether you're playing at home or away. Even so, we'd recommend keeping the day job. —ERIC BUTTERMAN

THE BASICS



**GRIP IT LIGHTLY**

For control, put your thumb and first finger on the back of the dart while resting the middle finger on the point. "Fewer fingers means less chance of something going wrong," says Dudbridge.



**POINT YOUR TOE AT THE TARGET**

Make your hand follow a straight line from toe to eye, with your biceps horizontal and forearm perpendicular. "You can lean over the line, as long as you're stable," he says.



**HAVE A STRONG FOLLOW-THROUGH**

"Your arm should accelerate and stay straight, with a release point about two-thirds of the way into the throw," Dudbridge says. Your hand should finish pointing directly at the target.

GEAR



**THE BOARD**

Cheap boards have thick, round wires, which is why Dudbridge's favorite dartboard — the one he uses on tour — is the Unicorn Eclipse Pro: "It has very thin wires, causing fewer bounce-outs" (\$47; [madondarts.co.uk](http://madondarts.co.uk)).

**THE DART**

Dudbridge recommends the Harrows Atlantis 95 percent Tungsten, 25 gram. Its exaggerated wings add stability and make for a straighter flight (\$45; [the-darts-store.co.uk](http://the-darts-store.co.uk)).

## New Game to Play: Legs

**PLAYERS**

Two to infinity

**GOAL**

Hit a higher score than the player who threw before you

**MAKE IT INTERESTING**

Everyone coughs up \$3; winner gets the pot

**HOW IT'S PLAYED**

(1) The game begins with each player "splashing" — throwing two darts simultaneously at the board — and adding up the scores. The player with the highest two-dart splash goes first, and so on. (2) Once order is determined, the names are written down, and each person gets three "legs": Ill. (3) When the first player throws, the minimum score to retain one's leg is established: If Player 1 hits 40 points, Player 2 must surpass 40 with his three darts. If Player 2's total is 39 or lower, he loses one leg (down to 1!); Player 3 has to beat only Player 2's score with his subsequent throws. If there's a tie, the player has the option of sacrificing a leg or adding a dollar to the pot to retain all three legs. Once all three legs are lost, you're out; the last player standing collects the cash.

## Take Aim at the Big Leagues

To figure out if you're ready to graduate from casual barroom contests, calculate your points-per-dart average over the course of a few games of 501. If you average 15 points, you're good enough for the city league; 20, you're ready to hustle; 25, you're a contender for small pro tournaments, which pay out about \$350 in the U.S. In England, it's a different story. Fifteen-time world champ Phil "The Power" Taylor, who averages 34 points, takes home as much as \$315,000 for a major tournament.

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