

Check This Out—Part 1

"Instead of starting to count when you reach 150 or so, the brain should be activated closer to 300."

Some of you out there know the old saying, "Treat every day as your last, and one day you'll be right." Well, my darts philosophy is a variation on that: "Treat every shot as your last..." That's what this series is all about.

Just as there are strategies in cricket, there are strategies in '01—particularly when it comes to finishing. Obviously, the top boys know their outs and how to set them up, but there are many, many players who struggle in this department.

Darters worldwide look to the British as the best in the game. We are good, but I believe that, ability-wise, exists little difference between the Brits, Americans, Canadians, or anyone else for that matter. It comes down to two things: experience and playing the correct shots.

In recent years, a whole new way of thinking on outshot setups has evolved in the U.K. Instead of starting to count when you reach 150 or so, the brain should be activated closer to 300.

Okay, I can hear you guys saying, "Hey, I'm only a league shooter. This doesn't apply to me!" Sure it does. You're exactly the kind of player this is aimed at.

The objective here is to give you more opportunities to win a game. The more opportunities you have, the more games you are going to win. It's a simple concept, actually.

Over the next few months, I'll be discussing ways to leave a finish, particular combinations to leave a better finish, and the outs themselves. Naturally, it's impossible to go into every option of every shot, but the large majority of one, two, and three dart options will be discussed.

First, there are a few points which you need to remember:

- Don't worry if people say you are trying to make your opponent look small. You're not.

- Don't worry when you're sitting on tops (D-20) and the enemy finishes 92 with SB, S17, DB! Take it as a compliment.
- Don't worry about throwing at one of your least favorite doubles—they're all the same size.
- Don't be afraid to follow your instincts.
- Don't, however, let your instincts force you into reckless shots.

Outshots can be divided into three categories:

- 1) **Must shots**
- 2) **Advisable shots**
- 3) **Let's-give-it-a-thought shots**

All these apply when your opponent is on a double, or any number that can be finished. (Remember, treat every shot...)

To illustrate, I'll recall for you the Keith Deller vs. Eric Bristow final of the 1983 World Championship. The match was tied at 5 sets all, and Deller was up 2-1 in the final set (a 3-1 score would win the match). Bristow was looking at 121, Deller at 138. Bristow shoots S20, T17, and now has 50 left with one dart to throw. Now, perhaps Bristow was thinking, *Keith's back on 138 – I should get another throw*, and Bristow tossed S18 to leave D16. Deller stepped up, and three darts later (namely T20, T18, D12), it was all over.

Let's look at some other examples. Back at the Budweiser Easy Money Open, Chad Sylvan and I had reached the top eight of the '01 doubles. We were on a double, and Jim Coakley (a great player, incidentally) stood on the oche facing 90. The first dart for T18 missed and went fat. The second dart for T12 also went fat. S20 set up D20 for their next handful, but there was no next handful.

The shot should have been S20, S20, DB—just a simple single, single, double. No triple required, but a T20 first arrow gives you two shots at D15. It matters not that you love D18...if you don't have a dart at it. Make sure you give yourself a dart at a double, and hopefully, it will be the only one you need.

There's a happy ending to that tale. The following week at the Lucky Strike Filters Blueberry Hill Open,

Coakley got his revenge on yours truly. It went 2-zip in the top four of the singles. Nice one, Jim!

Now to the second example—the semi-final of the 1990 Swiss Open. I was up against another top Brit, Paul Reynolds, and he was nicely poised to take the first leg. It was my shot. Needing 132, I threw DB, DB, D16, thank you very much.



Steve Brown has become a familiar face on the American darts tour, as well as worldwide. At the top of his list, he is a two-time winner of the Nodor North American Open singles and a Lucky Lights Challenge of Champions finalist. He was ranked World No. 3 in 1989 and has had several wins across the board. In 1990, Brown finished at No. 7 on the U.S. money tour, having pocketed more than \$15,000 in winnings. He was the highest placed non-American player listed. Since his early days on the American Tour, Steve Brown has represented America on numerous occasions, placed in the top 10 of the ADO rankings for several years, and is currently the Area VI Manager for the ADO. Brown first penned his thoughts on *Out Shot Strategies* for Bull's-Eye News back in 1991, but his logic and strategy still applies to today's game. These first articles appeared in the June 1991 and July 1991 issues of Bull's-Eye News. Brown, formerly of Surrey, England, has now made America his home and is based in Cahokia, Illinois. His tour schedule includes tournaments all over the United States and some in Canada.

I figured that Reynolds wouldn't give me another turn, so to play the percentages, the first dart had to be at the cork. Double bull leaves 82, and if there is enough room, it makes sense to stay there. If you only pick off a single on your first dart, 107 is still possible with two darts. Anywhere else on the board with your first one, and you need two triples and a double, instead of single, triple, double.

Finally, a midgame situation: You've shot two darts, and you're now sitting on 188. T20 is fine, but S20—yuck! A 168 requires more than three darts to finish. Switch to 18's, and the triple works, but a single still leaves a finish. I hear you again, "You don't expect me to take out 170." Maybe not, but you've got a darn sight more chance on 170 than on 168!

I went through this with a guy who reckoned he had more chance of hitting T20 with his last dart (and 128 out), than checking the 170. Looking a turn farther, a player thinking that probably wouldn't choose the correct shot for 128 (S18, T20, DB—more details in a later issue), assuming he found T20.

Therefore, he would need four perfect darts (T20, T20, T20, D4), whereas a S18 means that only three darts out of the four need be perfect (S18, T20, T20, DB). Think about it.

Check This Out—Part 2

"The main points to remember here are a) work on percentages, and b) don't go where you can bust (if you can avoid it)."

Now we'll look at shot options on some of the lower checkouts.

The most important finishes are those of 60 and below. They are the ones that are left most frequently, and fouled up most frequently. Of course, fat singles should pose no problem, but we all know how "unlucky" they can be, especially under pressure.

You can reduce your pressure by allowing room for error (i.e., shooting for fatter areas).

As far as percentages are concerned, some of these shots may seem contradictory. For instance, I advise you to shoot S9 with 17 left (even though the triple will bust), but not the S9 with 25 left.

Without wishing to sound too scientific, every player's throw has its own characteristics. Every darter has their own style and action, and consequently, every dart reacts differently. It can help if you know exactly how your dart behaves.

Most players have a tendency to "push" the dart when aiming at a fat single at the top of the board, which often results in the dart slipping sideways into the next segment. Therefore, a S9 can seem easier than a S1 (on certain shots). That may sound confusing, so I'll try to clarify that with statistics (and you can try this at home if you like).

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Trish Grzesiek and Shawn Brenneman won the Mixed Doubles Cricket.

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Sam Stout, Christina Medina and Scott Cummings combined to win the Mixed Triples and the \$3,000 first-place prize.

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Steve Brown's Check This Out! continued from page 25.

Take 100 turns trying to take out 17 and shooting your first dart at the S1. Then take 100 turns trying to take out 17 but shooting your first dart at S9. You will probably find that you bust more going for the S1. Likewise, try that routine with 25 left, shooting at S9 and then S5 first. See what happens.

The main points to remember here are a) work on percentages, and b) don't go where you can bust (if you can avoid it).

By the way, the fact that I prefer tops (D20) to D16 is totally irrelevant here. Obviously, it's up to the individual to decide which shot feels most comfortable. We are inclined to shoot the way we were taught, like T16-D20 is the only way for 88, but without necessarily condemning these as the wrong shots, there is nothing wrong with searching out alternatives. Particularly with the lower finishes, I am just providing a list of alternatives, percentage alternatives, and I believe in many cases, better alternatives.

We start then, at five. Never be afraid of S3-D1, instead of S1-D2. D2 can be awfully intimidating at this stage, and more often than not, the second dart will land in the S2, forcing you to switch again. S3 gives you two darts at the same double.

Skipping past a few numbers (the obvious ones), we arrive at...

15: S7-D4 or S3-D6 can be risky, with biggies either side of the single. Try S11-D2, or S13-D1. A S4, S13, or S6 doesn't hurt too bad, and you can pull the dart for S11 down into the 8 and still leave a shot.

17: I don't understand why so many darters find S1 - D8 the best way. With 20s on one side and the 18s on the other, you're asking for it. So, S9 - D4, or even S13-D2, is a safer call. If you stay clear of the 20, S5-D6 will also work, and T5 doesn't result in a bust.

19: Most decide on S3-D8, but some occasionally find S19 (bust), or S17 (to leave D1). Again, don't be too concerned about leaving D1, but you may feel more comfortable with S11-D4, or possibly S13-D2.

21: The same as 17, the 20 bed can be a bit close for comfort. How about S13-D4?

We'll skip 23 (plenty of alternatives on the 7-19-3-17 area), and come straight to my personal favorite...

25: If you fancy S17-D4, you must avoid both the double (34) and triple (51). If you shoot for S9, the triple will bust you. That's why I always go for S5-D10. T5 still leaves a double (and there's nothing wrong with D5).

27: Perhaps S11-D8, or one down at the bottom at 7-19-3.

29: Slightly unconventional, but S9-D10, as the triple, does no real damage.

31: Fifteen is the obvious dart, but as with 27, the 7-19-3 pick is a possibility. I'd look at S11-D10, which is slightly preferential to S15-D8, as a double (22) does not bust.

41: S1, S5, or S9. For the novice, the bottom of the board (between 7 and 17) would be fine.

43: T19 may seem a problem, but you can drift either side of the single (S7-D18 or S3-D20) and leave a double. There is always S11-D16 to consider.

45: Plenty of alternatives here: S13, S5, or S9.

47: Not critical either. You can go S15-D16, S11-D18, or S7-D20. Once more, the seven gives the added luxury of wandering next door (19) and still having a dart to chuck at a double.

48: Obvious really, on 8's or 16's, but spare a thought for the S12-D18 option.

49: S13 (leaving D18) or S9 (leaving D20) should get the nod over S17-D16. Either way, if you hit the triple (T13-D5 or T9-D11), it's still no problem. It's the same with...

50: How many times have you picked T18 instead of the single? More times than you care to remember, no doubt. Therefore, S10-D20, or S14-D18.

51: S19-D16 can cause problems, so S11-D20, or S15-D18.

52: S12-D20 is better than S20-D16, but S16-D18 is also worth a try.

53: S17-D18 and no real harm from the triple. A slip over to 3 still leaves DB. S13-D20 can also work.

54: This can be an awkward one. 18's can be risky, but with only two darts in your hand, it's a good shot. Pull down into the 4 and you've got a dart at the cork. Normally though, S14 would be the target for your first dart.

55: S15-D20 just edges out S19-D18, purely because of the bust possibility.

56: Same here. S16-D20 is ahead of S20-D16.

57: This is pretty clearcut with S17-D20, although a few players have a liking for S8-D16. That's okay, but DB leaves you a nasty little 7.

58 & 59: These are obvious as is...

60: I know you shouldn't go where you can bust, but 60 is the one finish with no suitable alternative.

That's it for this issue. Next time we'll run through some tricky numbers in the 60's, 70's and 80's. Shoot well.