

A steady eye and a sure hand work together to propel the dart to its proper place on the target. Tony Mariecki is enveloped in the concentration that belongs to a good dartsman as he watches his throw on the way to its resting spot.

Staff photos by Harry Mauthe

## A fine eye, a good dart make for a skillful game

By LOUISE OKRUTSKY

Three men huddled in a corner of Farmington's Old Village Inn each evening as a sortment of pointed metal missiles which lay on the table.

"Let's play murder," suggested Babe McDonald. "I'll be the murderer," suggested Babe McDonald. "I'll be the murderer," suggested Babe McDonald.

Sidently, owner John Cowley ambled over to the chalkboard hanging next to the dart board and scribbled out a scorecard.

Greg Cowley, Babe McDonald and Mark seek lined up for another evening of darts and beers.

"It's a fun game," John said. "Anyone can play."

"Murder" is a contest in which each player tries to hit a predetermined combination of numbers. Score is kept by subtracting points from 301. To finish the winner has to reach zero.

If a player wagers his score down to eight points, he can finish by throwing his dart into the outer ring next to the four point wedge, doubling his score.

Landing a dart in the third ring will earn triple the wedge's points. The bullseye is worth 50 points; the ring around it is valued at 25 points.

PLAYERS STAND EIGHT FEET away from a board set six feet above the floor. The inn's management has carefully marked the boundaries in chalk.

There are about 25 games in progress on a dart board. "I'd say so," Greg explained.

"Anyone can play," Greg said. "I've been put to shame by women," he said, shaking his head.

A dart board promises a better atmosphere in a bar and brings out the competitive spirit in its patrons, said Greg.

"I hate to go into a bar and drink, drink, drink," he said. "With a dart board, it's different."

Long associated with the Irish, the game is gaining popularity in America.

"I had bar, so I had a lot of darts," Greg said. "And people are telling me that darts are popular in California."

People are imaginative. I've shown it to 20 people from Michigan. But they never come back," he said.

The inn's dart players belong to the World Wide Dart Association, a traveling league headquartered at the Ranch Bar in Redford.

"PEOPLE FROM THE WEST SIDE of the Detroit area did want to drive to the east side," John said. "So we formed a west side league."

He plans to set up a tournament between the Inn's players and a club in Ireland by November.

"It's not about statistics for the phone company," John explained. "Each team has a pub, and we keep score over the phone."

Between tournaments, players keep in practice through informal sessions.

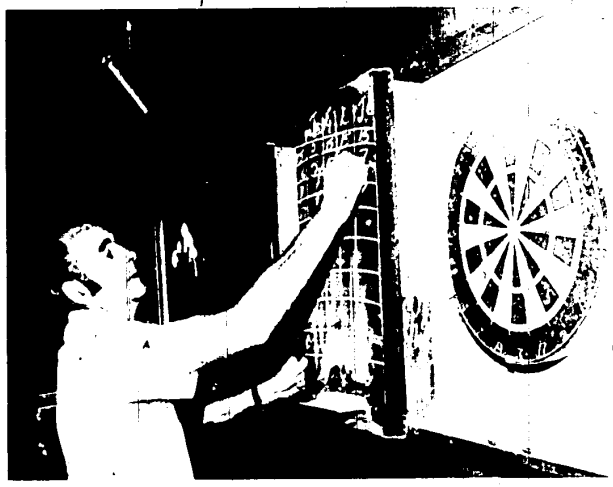
"We're just going off," John explained. "Mark and I had the chalk line before throwing."

"You've got to stay behind the line," McDonald reminded from the sidelines.

Mark also sings at the inn on week ends, managed to replace his team's score to take points.

"Be glad to get a dartsome now," John chuckled. "It's hard to get a dartsome. It's a happy number."

Well, he here, all night. He managed to be bartender for much of night of beer.



John Cowley keeps score for the dart players at his Old Village Inn, Farmington. He installed the dart boards three years ago. "It make's for a friendlier atmosphere," he said.



Greg Cowley, 19, removes his darts from the Inn's pigskin board after a series of good throws. Although he's been playing the game but a few months, the Inn displays one of his trophies.



A dart player needs a steady hand and a comfortable set of darts to play the game well. The missiles are manufactured in sizes of 22-26 ounces.



From left, Babe McDonald, John Cowley, Tony Mariecki and Louise Okrutsky debate a fine point of the game of darts.

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