

## Point of Fewer Returns?

In the second of my two July blogs discussing RDs (Rejected Darts, the PDC-approved term for bounceouts) I said that I would only write about Unicorn's new patent-applied-for Volute points when I better understood one particular statistic, the subjectively rather low chance of roughly 1 in 2000 recorded in PDC events for first dart RDs.

AVAILABLE IN SILVER OR BLACK



PLAIN OR FINGER GROOVED

Since then yet more analysis of RDs has been undertaken by the PDC stats guru Chris Kempf (aka Ochepedia) and, as you can guess from the fact that I'm writing this blog, the situation has become somewhat clearer, even though incorporating Chris's latest data does not change the numbers greatly, the overall RD rates staying around the same with the first dart rate being a little higher at around 1 in 1700.



Incidentally, if you want an explanation for that small increase in the first dart rate, maybe ever-improving accuracy has resulted in more treble/double/bull wire impacts for first darts whereas the on-going debate about RDs has increased the use of textured points and aim point switching by players, both of which may mitigate the effect of better grouping and hence potentially more dart-on-dart impacts.

Whether that's the case or not, although 1 in 1700 may seem only marginally more credible than 1 in 2000, I am now happy with the figure, partly because it's supported by even more data and partly because I've decided that my subjective opinion on first dart RDs was formed from a biased sample. Some players are much more likely to get RDs than others and their games will be the most memorable RD-wise. Moreover, casual observation is not that likely to notice whether an RD was the first dart thrown or not.



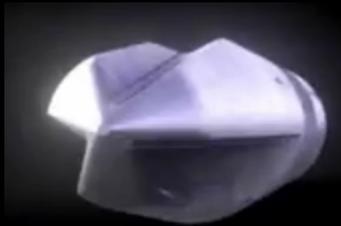
So stats credibility issue dealt with, let's move on! As I said in my "Board to Tears" blog, "even the most diligent manufacturer may produce the odd sub-standard board, or maybe just one that becomes so after storage". Despite that, the new data confirms that the overall RD rate for top-quality boards is generally somewhere between 3 and 4 in 1000. Of course, on seeing this, the Big Boss immediately declared "Get this down to 2.5!". The severity of which task can be shown by the fact that, even if first dart RDs are eliminated, the current rate is still around 3.2.

Furthermore, if we take the first dart RD rate of 1 in 1700 as indicative of the chance of an RD caused by wires as opposed to dart-on-dart impacts, removing the chance of those altogether would only take the overall RD rate down to around 2.9 in 1000. The answer to achieving 2.5 must therefore lay in how to increase the chances of a dart which has hit a previous dart sticking in.



Which, in addition to research into improving board structure, is where Volute points come in!

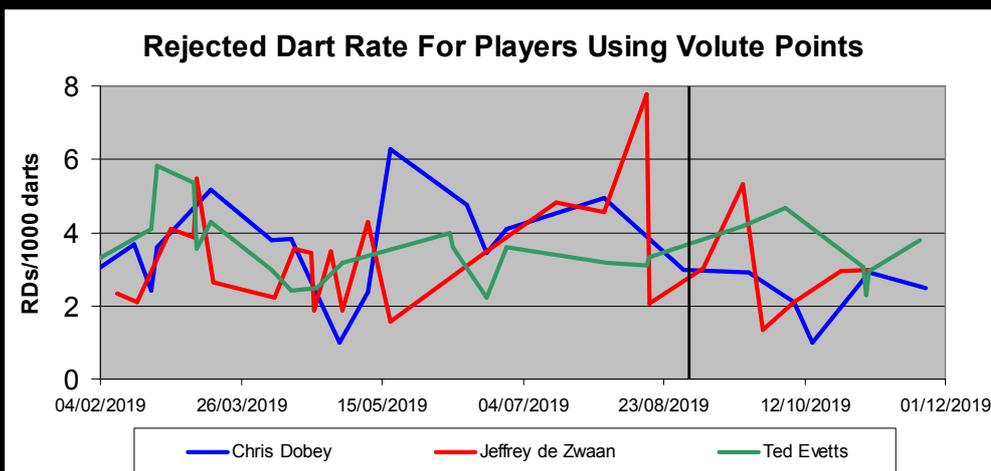
The previous page should have given the observant a pretty good idea of what “Volute” actually means. It’s the Latin for scroll and is used for objects with a scroll-like spiral appearance. As for why this name is appropriate for a dart point, I see no reason to type something when I can just cut-and-paste what Unicorn say!



“Unicorn’s new 36mm Volute™ points incorporate a revolutionary CNC helix design, amplifying sisal hold and minimising sisal separation and displacement.....resulting in less resistance upon entering the dartboard when compared to standard dart points. Once the Volute™ point is embedded in the sisal, it utilises the properties of the sisal and, united with the helix design, grips more effectively reducing fall-outs”.

In fact the geometry of these points isn’t strictly a helix at all, which should help quieten calls for right and left-hand twist versions to suit players who spin their darts accordingly! As it is, they work whichever way the dart is spun. Nonetheless, I reckon Volute is still not a bad name for them as they are definitely a bit spirally and there’s also a nice link to “volare”, Latin for “to fly”.

So do Volutes succeed in preventing “fall-outs” whilst minimising board damage? Well, the latter is reportedly the case compared to more conventional textured or aggressive points - I suggest especially if the Volutes are removed from the board by pulling straight out without twisting. As for them resulting in fewer darts with a return ticket, some Team Unicorn players are using them consistently, so let’s take a look at a graph of their RDs in PDC tournaments over the past year, with the vertical line on 1st September showing around when I’m told they started using Volutes.



Well, from this graph maybe they haven’t made that much difference for Ted Evetts, for whom RDs don’t seem to have been that much of a problem anyway, but Chris Dobey and Jeffrey de Zwaan do seem to have benefited (the data actually shows their average RD rate is 30% lower after 1st Sept).

Interestingly, I’m also told Michael Smith tried Volutes in the World Matchplay in July and I note his RD rate in that, while still on the high side at 3.9, was around 30% lower than his year average.

Of course the effect of any points on RDs will be limited as some don’t reach the board at all after hitting a preceding dart. Still, if Volutes can help some players reduce their RD rate by 30% without causing sisal mayhem, that’s got to be good!

With that, here’s wishing you a Happy Festive Season – enjoy the World Champs!

