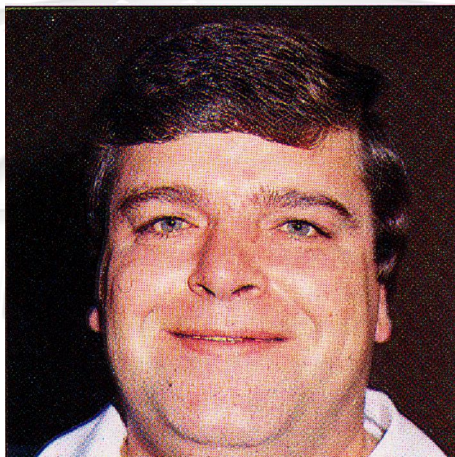


SPORTING LEGENDS: JOCKY WILSON

SPORT: DARTS

COMPETITIVE ERA: 1978 - 1995

Top sportsmen can come in all shapes and sizes, and nobody proves that more than darts star Jocky Wilson. At 5ft 4ins and around 16 stone, he has shown that you don't necessarily need the body of Hercules to become a world-beater.



Born as one of 11 children in the Scottish town of Kirkcaldy, Jocky's working life began as a coal miner. It is a measure of his success that at the end of the 1970s he was on the dole, but five years later was earning more than £100,000 a year around the pubs and clubs circuit of professional darts.

Jocky was quite a late starter in the game. "I did not even look at a dartboard until I was in my early twenties", he admits. "My first real competitive match was because someone had to drop out".

Wilson got thrashed in that game, and it stung him into buying a board of his own and practising for hours on end. "I was not going to let myself get humiliated again", he says.

When Jocky is on the oche it is his distinctive throwing style which sets him apart from many of his contemporaries. Because of his lack of height he has to look up to the board and throw from the shoulder, rather than the elbow.

SPORTING LEGENDS: JOCKY WILSON



Jocky Wilson was from the old-school, and fully deserved his two World Titles.

He is the first to admit that this was once a problem. %dended to snatch one or two, but that does not happen much any more+, he says. %ust the odd throw ends up in the treble one instead of striking the twenty!+

While darts may not quite have the traditional appeal of football or cricket, Jocky has his own vociferous fan club which started supporting him during his most successful season -1982 - when he became British and World Champion. %fans find it easy to identify with the stars of the game+, he says. %All the big names are very approachable. I have always got plenty of time for my fans - a lot of them are good friends of mine+

Wilson admits that he was once a big drinker, but says that the new image that is being promoted for darts has helped him cut back on his habit. With on stage smoking and drinking banned, he has to rely on cough sweets to keep him calm.

In 1988 he captured his fourth British Professional Championship and then teamed up with Ritchie Gardner to win the World pairs. But the following year proved to be one of his best when he powered through to the final of the World Championship at Frimley Green, and went on to take the title by defeating his great rival Eric Bristow.

Jocky Wilson defied all the critics when he regained his world title after seven years in the doldrums. It was a magnificent victory for the battling Scotsman, who had come back from the brink of quitting to capture the title of world number one.

This was to be the Scot's last taste of success in a major event although the odd final appearance still came over the next few years.

Wilson joined the other top professionals who split away from the ruling British Darts Organisation in 1993 to form the WDC (now Professional Darts Corporation) and remained a competitor in televised events until the mid 1990s when he withdrew from the professional scene. His name still occasionally crops up in one of Sid Waddell's darts commentary pieces on Sky Sports.

SPORTING LEGENDS: JOCKY WILSON



Scott Burton's Final Thought

I used to love watching Jocky Wilson play darts at his peak throughout the 1980s. During that particular era, both darts and snooker were full of characters that were seemingly at the best when consuming large quantities of alcohol!

Jocky was one of these characters. He was always a great player, but when the booze was flowing - he would become almost unbeatable.

I remember watching the 1989 World Championship Final, where his form was absolutely scintillating. Playing Eric Bristow, his greatest rival, Jocky stormed into a 5-0 lead in sets and was in the greatest form of his life. He only needed one more set for a whitewash victory.

At that time he seemed to tighten up, and Bristow could sense it. Bristow turned on the style and played some unbelievable darts to bring the score back to 5-4, and the crowd were loving it. However, it was to be Jocky's day and he took the next set (to his great relief) along with the World Title. He was a great character for the sport of darts, and a symbol of pride for Scottish fans.



Jocky at the ocheo launching another dart with deadly accuracy!