

SPORTING LEGENDS: PHIL TAYLOR

SPORT: DARTS

COMPETITIVE ERA: 1988 - PRESENT

Philip Douglas "Phil" Taylor (born 13 August 1960) is an English darts player, and is generally considered the greatest player of all time. Nicknamed **The Power**, he has won 52 major tournaments, which includes 14 world championships, more than any other player in the history of the sport.



He has been ranked World Number One since June 2008 and has had eight different spells at Number One, a record fifty-six months overall. To date, he has won over 130 pro tournaments, over twice as many as anyone else in the history of the game.

It was his playing in the pubs of Stoke-on-Trent that brought him to the attention of Eric Bristow, one of the most popular and well known figures in the game in the 1980s. Bristow decided to sponsor Phil to the tune of £10,000 on the condition that it had to be repaid. With this money Taylor could practise full-time and enter low-level tournaments.

By 1990, he qualified to play in the World Championships for the first time - and beat Russell Stewart, Dennis Hickling, Ronnie Sharp and Cliff Lazarenko on his way to the final. In the final he met his mentor Bristow and beat him 6 sets to 1 to claim the first of his world titles at odds of 125/1.

The defence of his title in 1991 ended at the quarter-final stage to Dennis Priestley who went on to win his first world title and that would be the first of many clashes between the two players. Taylor went on to win the other major in the game - the Winmau World Masters in 1990 to become only the third player to hold both titles at the same time.

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Taylor loves nothing more than proving to the crowd who's best!

His 7-6 defeat to van Barneveld at the 2007 World Championship Final came after losing a sudden-death tie-break. Taylor had many opportunities to win this match having led 3-0, 4-2 and 5-3. After the tournament, Taylor believed that he lacked the stamina necessary for him to have won and began a new health and fitness regime.

2007 proved to be Taylor's most barren run for major title success. Having lost his World Championship title on New Year's Day, he also suffered defeats at the IDL and WDT in Holland, the UK Open in Bolton, Las Vegas Desert Classic, World Matchplay in Blackpool, and the World Grand Prix in Dublin.

A heavy 4-11 loss in Bolton to van Barneveld and shock defeats by Mark Dudbridge in Las Vegas and then to Gray in Dublin led to Taylor saying that he would have to "think about his career", before later vowing he would continue until 2012.

He ended 2007 without holding any of the five Sky televised major trophies for the first time since the PDC started in 1994 - although he did clinch two of the biggest tournaments and pay cheques of the year by clinching the 2007 Premier League in May and the inaugural Grand Slam of Darts in November. He also won the US Open and the Emperors Palace South African Masters.

Taylor went out of the 2008 World Championships at the quarter-final stage to Mardle, which is the first time since the inauguration of the PDC World Darts Championship that he had not reached the final stage.

In 2008 Taylor achieved another record, earning £547,368 in a calendar year, the most ever by a darts player. Over these 12 months he won 23 tournaments out of 31.

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Another day, another trophy for Taylor!

He enlisted the help of a new set of darts to begin his "comeback". Despite a poor start to his Premier League Darts campaign, with 3 defeats in his first four matches, Taylor finished top of the Premier League table with a string of some of the finest play of his career.

In October 2008, he retained his Emperors Palace South African Masters darts title by defeating Part in the final by 5 legs to 2. Taylor also won his eighth World Grand Prix final in October with a 6-2 victory over van Barneveld.

On 1 November, in a second round match of the 2008 European Darts Championship, Taylor recorded the second-highest three-dart average in the history of televised darts. In the 9-3 win over Mervyn King, Taylor recorded an average of 113.92 with fifteen 100s, ten 140s and five maximums.

Taylor went on to record a similar average of 113.33 against Robert Thornton in the semi-finals of the tournament, before defeating Lewis in the final by 11 legs to 5, to become the inaugural winner of the European Darts Championship. Later that month he successfully defended his Grand Slam of Darts title. Despite an early setback with a group stage defeat to Andy Jenkins, Taylor progressed to the final, where he defeated Terry Jenkins by 18 legs to 9.

Taylor won back the World Championship title for the first time in three years by beating van Barneveld 7-1 in the final on 4 January. His 110.94 three-dart average is the highest ever recorded in a PDC final. His average over the course of the tournament was also above 105.

He won his third UK Open title on June 7. This is his first win at this tournament since 2005. In the final he beat Colin Osborne 11-6. His tournament average was 106,66. On July 5th Phil Taylor won the Las Vegas Desert Classic for the 5th time. In the final he defeated Raymond van Barneveld with 13-11.

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His nickname says it allö +The Power!+

On July 26th he won the PDC World Matchplay for a staggering 10th time by defeating Terry Jenkins with 18-4 in the final. During the tournament he had 4 matches with an average of over 106, dropping just 20 legs in the process.

Use of a new black dart from sponsors Unicorn improved his 180 scoring, and he destroyed a quality field. Taylor has won fifteen tournaments, out of 18, as of July 26th: the World Championship, the Matchplay, the UK Open, the Las Vegas Desert Classic, the inaugural Players Championship Finals and ten PDC Pro Tour events; in Gibraltar (x2), Gladbeck (x2), Brentwood (2x), Coventry, Nuland (2x) and Taunton.

Since March 2008 Phil has won 38 tournaments out of 48.

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Scott Burton's Final Thought

Is Phil Taylor the greatest player to ever throw darts?
I would say so, most definitely.

It's not just the numerous titles he has won, but it's the way in which he has won them. He has proven time after time that he can win from the front, or from behind.

He can handle the pressures of the modern game, and is a worthy successor to the great Eric Bristow.

The playing standards today are extremely high, and for Taylor to still be at the top of the tree after all these years speaks volumes about the man's ability.

He is the best because he eats, sleeps, drinks nothing but darts. Being the best is an obsession for him. He has transformed the sport into an art-form, and it will take another 25 years (at least) before any other player can amass more titles than him.

That, in my opinion, makes Phil Taylor more than just The Power of Darts; it makes him the best, bar none.



Phil Taylor is the greatest darts player of all-time.