

Clash Of The Tungsten

By

Michael Pudney

I turned up not knowing who or what to expect, but was sure of one thing, win four matches of darts and the trophy was mine. With two previous maximum scores achieved in my 438 appearances, this was my tournament, this was my night. I sipped my cider then turned to my lovely ladies, Estelle, Chanelle and Belle, each one as identical as the next; 100% tungsten and ready to soar into the sacred treble twenty. They had cost nearly \$20 and I would have paid more. I weighed up my opponent. He gave me a friendly smile, I almost laughed, he didn't think I was that stupid did he? I knew what he was trying to do, even when he was buying me a drink, he was trying to get in my head, reverse psychology, a fake friendship, a frenemy. I wasn't going to get sucked into his mind games and so refused to smile back, even if it was my dad. I stared at him, cider to my lips and took a final look around before blocking out everything except the target. There was an audience of six, not including the local drunk, at the bar, watching reruns of *Married At First Sight*. This was considered a good turn-out, and I couldn't let them

down. I turned to the board. Game on. I threw my first darts. Estelle split the air, then Chanelle soared through the wind, and finally Belle gracefully landed in the board. "Seven" called the umpire. Damn it. It was the enemy's go and he scored 100. It cut deep.

As the match wore on, my darts had improved. It was probably something to do with the fact that I was getting increasingly pissed. I always played better when I was drunk, it relaxed the arm. However, there was a fine line between in-the-zone drunk and on-the-floor drunk, and I usually accomplished the latter, therefore never reaching the final, even if I had wanted to.

After the hustle and tussle of dart-throwing, stare outs and beer drinking, we had come to the final game. Whoever won would go through to the next round, otherwise known as round two. I threw first, Estelle and Chanelle let me down with low scores, but my wondrous Belle saved me at the last dart. The enemy had his turn, it was level pegging. All I needed was a double 16 to take my winning streak of one game a step closer to the prize. I kissed my trusty Belle, my lucky dart of the night. I lined her up. I felt like I had the power, the power of He-Man. I was Mr Ali, I was Mr Bradman, I was Mr Laver. I was Mr Schwarzenegger. I held my breath and threw my dart. The crowd

gulped. I had missed. I was Mr Bean. But alas, with two more darts in-hand, victory could be salvaged from the jaws of defeat. I went through the motions again. I kissed Estelle for luck, though it didn't work as she flew wide...of the board. It was all down to Chanelle. I pressed my fingers against her tungsten shaft, before whispering a little prayer into her non-existent ear. I threw. I heard gasps and then cheers from the crowd as Chanelle pounded into the board. I had missed my target, I had lost. My enemy's lover, who was also my mother, ran to him in cheery celebration as I looked down at my cider, my only friend. I bent down to take in my defeat and felt a hand on my shoulder. I looked up. It was the fourth woman in my life - after my tungsten babes - my wife of seven years and involuntarily my biggest fan. I looked up at her kind, smiling face. I hoped she was going to say something profound, something to get me through yet another disastrous first-round defeat. Finally, among the cheers in the background, my wife stood there, with an empty glass, and whispered, 'it's your round, and don't forget to get your dad one too.'