



THESE GIRLS ARE ON FIRE

The ladies darts renaissance is happening around the world, the country and right in your backyard.

By Gregg Tong, Tavern Players Darts Correspondent

As the popularity of steel tip darts continues to percolate at the local, national and international level, the women's game has skyrocketed in parallel. More and more opportunities for women are emerging, more respect is being afforded to the stars of the ladies game, and a local youth player is showing that New England produces contenders no matter the age or gender.

WHAT'S THE LATEST WITH LADIES DARTS?



THE INTERNATIONAL AND PROFESSIONAL SCENE

Last January, Japanese sensation Mikuru Suzuki shocked the world and took the British Darts Organization (BDO) by storm, dominating the women's world championship with averages on par with the men's division. She has gone on to win several ranking events this year and looks ready to return to England to defend her title. We caught up with the champ during a recent trip to Australia and snapped a pic of her with her new copy of Tavern Players!

Even before Mikuru injected new energy into the game, momentum has been building to help ladies darts achieve the next level of success. A young English phenom by the name of Beau Greaves, at 15 years old, has taken several adult BDO titles throughout the year, achieved a 9-dart perfect game along the way, and is considered a lock for a future world title. Even the Professional Darts Corporation (PDC), the top darts organization in the world, is repeating last year's ladies only qualifier for their world championships this year, making good on their pledge to provide equal opportunities for all levels.





WHAT ABOUT NORTH AMERICA?

In the last few years, ladies darts has grown leaps and bounds, with the best moves possibly on the horizon. In addition to the Ladies State Challenge tours that involves much of New England, the “Tuff-as-Nails” women’s challenge match system established in the southern states and many similar programs, this past summer featured a new organization hoping to send North American women to the PDC world championship qualifiers.

The North American Women’s Dart Association, spearheaded by Peter Tilley, held their first ever qualifier in July to send two women to Germany in November to compete with players from around the world for a spot at the PDC World Championships, where most of the players are men, but the opportunity is to play on the game’s biggest stage. USA’s Deb Ivey and Liz Tynan beat out a field of 39 ladies in Nashville, TN, to win their way to Europe.



GORHAM, MAINE - HOME TO A CHAMPION

New England has its own phenoms in darts and chief among them may be Aaja Jalbert. The 15yo teenager from Gorham, Maine made history recently, first by winning back to back ADO National Youth championships in 2018 and 2019, then adding the 2019 USSDA National Youth championship to her resume. She is currently ranked #13 in the World Dart Federation’s World Youth Rankings and is headed to England for the second year in a row to compete in the World Youth Masters, representing the USA.

Aaja competes in both youth and adult events when she travels the national tournament circuit with her parents. Dad Aaron and Stepmom Melissa are nationally-ranked players that do their own fair share of winning, making them one of the most formidable families in the sport.



Whether you just hit up the local blind draw on occasion or are the captain of your own all-women team, you can be part of the growing trend of more ladies playing more darts, more often. “You throw like a girl” is no longer an insult, it just might be a warning shot. And if you want to take your game to the next level, you’ll now have more places to go.

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