



LUKE LITTLER

This is the stuff of fairytales for darts

PDC pride in seeing the sport hit new heights

■ by HARRY CRICHTON
WE can talk about Luke Littler's cruise to the World Championship title, or his dominance in the Premier League, his Grand Slam triumph, the nine-darters or the whirlwind of victories across the world.

The truth is, even without lifting the sport's most iconic trophy, Littler's debut season was already the stuff of legend.

But now, with the world title in his grasp, he's stepped into rarified air, cementing his place among darts' immortals.

For PDC chief executive Matt Porter, Littler's Ally Pally victory is like hitting the jackpot twice.

As if the teenager hadn't done enough for the transformation of the sport already, this title, as inevitable as it felt, really is the icing on the cake.

His World Championship victory is the culmination of a journey, and it is a journey that Porter is proud to have

overseen.

"It's the stuff of fairytales," Porter reflected. "To the wider world Luke has only been a name for about 12 months, but for those of us in the sport we've known about the chances he has had of coming through and becoming a top player since he was literally almost in nappies."

Littler's time in the junior system – spanning more than a decade – has showcased how the PDC's development programs can produce world-class talent.

For Porter, Littler isn't just a champion – he's a beacon for young players to emulate.

"He has shown

that our youth system can produce champions," says Porter. "Luke is just a shining light, a shining example of that."

What has made Littler's rise even more remarkable is the sheer weight of expectation he carried as a teenager.

Porter admitted there were

“What Luke has done is open doors that darts couldn't walk through before

PDC chief executive Matt Porter



■ Luke celebrates his win over MFG and, below, with the World Championship and Ballon d'Art trophies the morning after

early doubts about whether the youngster could translate his obvious ability into success at the senior level.

"Most players don't mature until their late 20s or early 30s," Porter explains.

"So, when Luke was just 13 or 14 and hitting numbers that players of that age simply don't hit, the big question was whether he could carry that into the senior ranks."

It is safe to say there are no doubts anymore. Winning 10 titles in his maiden professional year and capping it off with the sport's

most prestigious trophy has proven he's not a flash in the pan.

Porter compares Littler's staying power to other young players who dazzled briefly but faded away.

"For Luke to show this level of consistency and maturity at such a young age proves he's well-developed and ready to stay at the top of the game," he said.

"What Luke has done is open doors that darts couldn't walk through before."

"His appeal to a younger, digitally-focused generation has introduced the game to fans who might not otherwise have engaged with it. He's put darts in front of people who wouldn't have looked at it before."

Part of the PDC's commitment to developing its youth system lies in building the

infrastructure needed to nurture and support the rising stars their efforts are designed to produce.

In Littler, they've certainly unearthed a gem. But what sets him apart is his extraordinary ability to carry himself with the composure of a seasoned professional.

From the very beginning of his breakthrough year, Littler has looked completely at ease among the sport's elite and shown a maturity far beyond his years.

Remarkably, his composure has meant he's rarely needed to lean on the PDC's child protection and welfare policies.

"Luke is fortunate in that he has a very strong family around him, he's got an excellent management team. He's a player who is well looked after in that respect,"

says Porter. "We have had the support there for him, but it is pleasing to say that he hasn't needed to lean on that."

"A darts career can be a long one, and there's a huge amount of money to be earned. But whether that changes his approach, only time will tell."

"There are kids who are 12, 13, 14 now who will look at Luke as their inspiration and try to emulate him."

"That's equally as thrilling as watching Luke himself."

The reality is, for Porter, Littler is a goose that lays golden eggs.

Right now, those eggs are the frenzied fanfare surrounding darts.

Crucially, though, Porter hopes they will one day hatch into the next generation of Littlers, inspired by his remarkable rise.



Deller knows of more young ace talents like Luke

■ HARRY CRICHTON

AFTER a year of anticipation, of expectation, of 'Littlermania' fanfare, now is the time for Luke Littler to bathe in the glory of his achievement. To drink it in.

But his victory at Ally Pally is symbolic of something more than personal triumph, it's a landmark moment for the future of darts.

The teen's success is inspiring a wave of young talent and solidifying the pathway for future stars, according to former BDO World Champion Keith Deller.

"There's a great system now for youth players," Deller explained. "Clubs, competitions, everything is in place. Back in my day we just had to go down to the youth club and there weren't even many dart boards there. The systems now are so good."

The results of this development are already being seen. Deller points to the rise of Littler and other talents breaking onto the scene, with even younger players making waves.

"There was a young lad in the MODUS League who's just 12 years old. He hit a 145 checkout, followed it up with a 180, and he's playing grown men," Deller says.

"People are already saying he could be in the Premier League by the time he's 16."

Littler's meteoric rise, capped by his historic victory at Ally Pally, has shown aspiring players that dreams of darting greatness are within reach.

"What Littler has done is show the youngsters that there's a chance of being a world champion and having an unbelievable life," Deller adds.

"I think we'll see more Luke Littlers coming through. Maybe not quite as good as him, but very, very good players."

Deller also emphasises the accessibility of the sport as a key driver of talent development.

"A set of darts can cost between 10 and 100 pounds, and if you've got a dartboard at home, that's all you need," he told talkSPORT. "You practice, you get better and better - and all of a sudden, there you go."

Despite his youth, Littler's natural ability has drawn comparisons to some of the greatest names in darts history.

Deller, who knows a thing or two about prodigious talent, believes Littler's career could be on par with the legends of the sport.

"He's fantastic. He reminds me so much of Eric Bristow, who was a master champion at 17," Deller says.

"He's just a genius. We've had players such as Van Gerwen, Phil Taylor, Eric Bristow and now Luke Littler. There's always another generation of sports stars who come along, and for darts, it's Luke."

But Deller also offers words of caution for the champion as he navigates his new-found fame.

"The only thing Luke needs to watch out for is balancing his time," Deller warns.

"There's so much demand for him with exhibitions and media appearances. Late nights and constant traveling can take a toll. He just needs to stay sharp and not let it affect his form."

With his world title in hand and his name etched in the sport's history, Littler is sure to now build a legacy in the sport to rival the great Phil Taylor.

But he is also a symbol of darts' bright future, and a testament to the work done behind the scenes to bring through a generation of new darting wonderkids.



Former world champion
Keith Deller

Heta brings the heat with nine-darter – but goes out

■ by HARRY CRICHTON

LUKE Woodhouse produced the performance of his career to defeat No. 9 seed Damon Heta in a seven-set clash in round three at Ally Pally.

The match featured a spectacular nine-darter from Heta, who earned a £60,000 prize for his feat, matched for a lucky fan in the venue as part of a Paddy Power promotion.

Despite Heta's early dominance, Woodhouse mounted a sensational comeback, winning nine consecutive legs to overturn a 3-1 deficit and secure a 4-3 victory.

Stephen Bunting delivered an emotional performance, beating Madars Razma 4-1 with a ton-plus average and six maximums.

"It was tough playing a good friend," admitted Bunting. The Bullet showed

class and composure to secure his spot in the fourth round.

Gerwyn Price and Joe Cullen delivered an instant classic in a match that swung wildly.

Price raced to a 3-0 lead, but Cullen fought back to level at 3-3, punishing the Welshman's struggles on double 20 and double 10.

Cullen missed a match dart before landing a stunning 170 checkout to force sudden death. Ultimately, Price held his nerve to edge Cullen and progress.

Callan Rydz showcased his incredible form, averaging 105.31 in a 4-0 demolition of 2024 UK Open champion Dimitri Van den Bergh.

Nathan Aspinall was clinical, hitting 60 per cent of his doubles to sweep past Andrew Gilding with another 4-0 win.

The 33-year-old Aspinall did not have to be on his best form to beat his below-par opponent and maintain hopes of emulating his back-to-back semi-final appearances in 2019 and 2020.

But he believes an evident

improvement in one of the weaker parts of his game augurs well for the sterner tests that will face him.

Aspinall said: "Normally I'm really bad at finishing, that's normally why I lose, but in the last two games I've scored

very well. I don't care about averages and numbers - I'm in the last 16.

"In the last six months I've been very flat when I'm playing and I've made a conscious effort to get that fire lit in my stomach. If I get the scoring going with that finishing, I'm tough to beat."

Seven unseeded players advanced to the fourth round, including Rydz and Woodhouse.

Ryan Joyce upset Ryan Searle, who posted a ton-plus average, to set up a tie with Luke Littler.

Ricardo Pietreczko, Kevin Doets, Jeffrey de Graaf and Robert Owen also progressed.

Owen's emotional 4-2 victory over Ricky Evans was an enthralling tie that also ensured he retains his PDC tour card for next season.

Reigning champion Luke Humphries, along with former world champions Michael van Gerwen and Peter Wright, cruised into round four.

Van Gerwen, who beat Brendan Dolan 3-1, said: "It was a really difficult game. Everyone knows Brendan doesn't give up, and I tried to punish him at the right moments and wasn't capable of doing that.

"After 1-1 I think I played some really good sets but I let it slip away with a few things. There's still a lot of work to do, but I know I'm capable of doing it."

Jonny Clayton survived a scare against Daryl Gurney after surrendering a 3-0 lead.

In a comical final leg, both players missed a combined 10 darts at doubles, but Clayton eventually sealed victory.



■ Damon Heta produced a nine-darter, but still lost to Luke Woodhouse

LUKE LITTLER

■ Luke with the Premier League trophy, after winning the Grand Slam of Darts, with the World Series trophy and, far right, alongside Olympian Keely Hodgkinson after finishing as BBC Sports Personality of the Year runner-up



THE YEAR OF THE NUKE!

■ **HARRY CRICHTON**
IT began with a fairytale to make Hans Christian Andersen blush and 2024 ended with Luke Littler king of the fairground.

Never mind the Big One on Blackpool's Golden Mile, the Nerves at Aiton Towers or his beloved Manchester United - Luke the Nuke's rollercoaster has been the theme park's most thrilling adrenaline rush this year.

"It's been a crazy, crazy ride," said the people's champion as he reflected on the 12 months that changed his life. Ten titles, more than £1m in prize money, a record 788 maximum 180s in all tournaments and the fewest darts (32) to win a set at the World Championship, we look back at Littler's year in the spotlight.

JANUARY

LITTLER kicked off 2024 by carrying a Premier League wildcard after his Ally Pally breakthrough.

Joe Cullen, who narrowly missed out, called the teenagers inclusion vital for darts' growth.

Littler also made history in Bahrain, hitting a televised nine-darter and winning the

tournament, despite not picking up a dart since his world final defeat to Luke Humphries.

Off the oche, Littler embraced his stardom. A lifelong Manchester United fan, he met Sir Alex Ferguson at Old Trafford.

FEBRUARY

ON his debut in the Premier League, Littler started February with the kind of reality check everyone needs. In Glasgow during a dramatic quarter-final with Gerwyn Price he missed a double-double finish and let frustration slip, muttering a few obscenities as he retrieved his darts. Welcome to the big leagues.

Littler rebounded in Newcastle, defeating Peter Wright in a thrilling match before falling to Michael van Gerwen in the semi-finals.

By month's end, he was joint second in the Premier League standings, silencing any doubts about his capabilities.

Littler shocked fans by hinting at a short career, saying he might retire in 10-15 years, sparking disbelief among those who envisioned decades of dominance.

For now, his Xbox and a

relaxed practice schedule seem to be working fine.

MARCH

A WHIRLWIND month for Littler. He claimed his first Premier League night win in Belfast and secured his first European Tour title at the Belgian Darts Open.

In Belgium, Littler's semi-final with Ricardo Pietreczko got heated, with the German accusing Littler of arrogance after a 7-3 victory.

Earlier in the tournament, Polish player Krzysztof Ratajski added to the antics by drinking from Littler's water bottle mid-match.

None of it mattered, mind. Littler hit a nine-darter in the final to defeat Rob Cross 8-7 and lift the trophy.

There was more drama for The Nuke in March. Raymond van Barneveld didn't take kindly to being ignored by Littler over text, but on the Premier League circuit, he exacted revenge on world champion Luke Humphries, ending his bid for a record fourth consecutive win.

A strong showing at the UK Open included landing a 170 finish to defeat James Wade en route to the quarter-finals. There, he narrowly lost 10-8 to Damon Heta.

As 'Littleman' gripped the nation, off the oche, he showcased his playful side, swapping darts for pies when he lobbed a cheese and onion pastry at Stuart Braid on TV show Fantasy Football League.

APRIL

IT WAS clear by April that Littler's impact on darts was going to be transformational.

Amber Taverns announced plans to install dart boards in all their 171 pubs and Eddie Hearn joined the Littler lovefest, claiming that darts, fuelled by the teenager's

meteoric rise, was rivaling Premier League football in TV numbers.

Littler didn't rest on his laurels, though. In Graz, Austria, he claimed his second European Tour title, defeating Cullen 8-4 in the final. His reward? A stylish green jacket, the darts equivalent of Augusta's famed prize.

Cullen, meanwhile, struggled to keep up with Littler's brilliance. Frustrated by his own performance, Cullen conceded Littler's immense talent, joking that he had practiced more in the last hour than Littler had all week.

He ended the month sitting atop the Premier League standings, with his sights firmly set on taking the title in his debut season.

MAY

IN May Littler claimed his biggest prize of the year. The 17-year-old clinched his first Premier League title at London's O2 Arena, delivering a perfect nine-darter in the final against Humphries.

"For all the doubters, hello! You're not doubting me anymore," he declared as he lifted the trophy and the £315,000 prize.



■ Luke suffered defeat at the hands of Rob Cross in the World Grand Prix in October. Right: United fan Littler in the stands at Old Trafford sat not too far away from Sir Alex Ferguson

WORLD CHAMPION 2025



Littler dominated throughout, topping the league phase and breezing past Michael Smith in the semi-finals.

Against Humphries, he hit another gear after a tense opening, with the nine-darter turning the match in his favour.

If anyone could leave the unflappable Littler starstruck it would be Manchester United legend David Beckham.

"Once a red, always a red," Beckham wrote to Littler, prompting Littler to reflect on his surreal rise on the

MMA Hour show with unlikely darts fan Ariel Helwani.

JUNE

JUNE was quieter for Littler but he still made headlines by claiming the Poland Darts Masters title, his second World Series of Darts victory of the year.

Littler beat Rob Cross 8-3 in the final, delivering a stunning 164 checkout en route to a dominant performance.

Littler's route to the title included victories over Wright, who averaged 109, and Michael Smith, who missed match darts.

The win came after a brief break following his U.S. Darts Masters triumph earlier in the month, where he beat Canadian No.1 Matt Campbell 6-0 in under ten minutes.

Despite his remarkable form, Littler opted to skip a subsequent European Tour event to manage his schedule.

His absence from the World Cup of Darts team, despite his success, was down to his ever-growing world ranking not quite being high enough, with Humphries and Smith going on to win the tournament for England.

JULY

THE month served as a humbling reminder for Littler. Drawn against three-time World Matchplay champion MING in the first round, he fell 10-6 at the Winter Gardens.

The clash highlighted the Dutchman's experience. Littler, though spirited, couldn't match him, acknowledging the challenge while hinting that their rivalry was far from over.

AUGUST

IN an otherwise quiet month for The Nuke, Littler participated in the Australian Masters in Wollongong. He made it to the final but was bested by Gerwyn Price who thumped the teenager 8-1 to claim the title.

SEPTEMBER

ANOTHER month, another milestone, as Littler reached an extraordinary 100 PDC Tour wins in his debut season. He hit the century mark faster than his top rivals, leaving both Humphries and Van Gerwen trailing in his wake.

In Amsterdam, Littler dominated the World Series of Darts Finals, dominating Michael Smith 11-4 in the

final after brushing aside home favourite MING in the semis. The victory secured Littler his third World Series title of the year and an £80,000 payday.

Despite his triumphs, the month wasn't without challenges.

Littler suffered a 6-2 loss to Dirk van Duivenbode in the European Tour, prompting Phil Taylor to voice concerns about the youngster's schedule, warning of burnout.

OCTOBER

GROWING stardom off the oche for Littler brought disappointment on it. Touted as the favourite for the World Grand Prix, he fell at the first hurdle in Leicester, losing 2-1 to Rob Cross.

Despite six 180s, his 94 average wasn't enough to match Cross' clinical finishing. Adding to his challenges, Littler exited the European Championship early, losing 6-4 to Andrew Gilding despite being seeded third.

Off the oche, Littler's star continued to rise. He was announced as a guest on the revamped Bullseye Christmas special, joining a legacy of darts legends of old.

NOVEMBER

LITTLER claimed the Grand Slam of Darts in Wolverhampton, earning his first major ranking title in commanding style.

He overwhelmed Martin Lukeman 16-3 in the final, a performance that pushed his career earnings past £1m in under a year.

The road to victory included a nerve-shredding semi-final against Gary Anderson, where Littler held his composure to win a last-leg decider.

In the final, after losing the first two legs, Littler reeled off 15 straight, leaving Lukeman in awe.

"He's just different guy," Lukeman admitted, calling Littler a transformative force for the game.

In the last major before his much-anticipated Ally Pally return it was disappointment.

At the Players Championship Finals in Minehead, he lost 11-7 to Humphries in the final despite a dominant run to get there.

Still, the Grand Slam victory and his rise to world No.5 on the Order of Merit underscored an incredible debut season as he set his sights on the World Champi-

onship. "This is just the start. Now, it's time for the big one," Littler reflected as darts' youngest millionaire.

DECEMBER

LITTLER closed out his extraordinary year in historic fashion. He was crowned BBC Young Sports Personality of the Year, and finished runner-up in the main award to Olympic champion Keely Hodgkinson after a public vote.

Littler returned to the World Championship as the fourth seed. You all know what happens next...

He delivered breathtaking performances, including a record-breaking 140.91 set average against Ryan Meikle and stormed his way to a dream final against Michael van Gerwen.

The triumph earned him the Sid Waddell Trophy and the Ballon d'Art for the most 180s in the tournament.

With a leap to world number two, Littler's victory cemented his legacy as a generational talent.

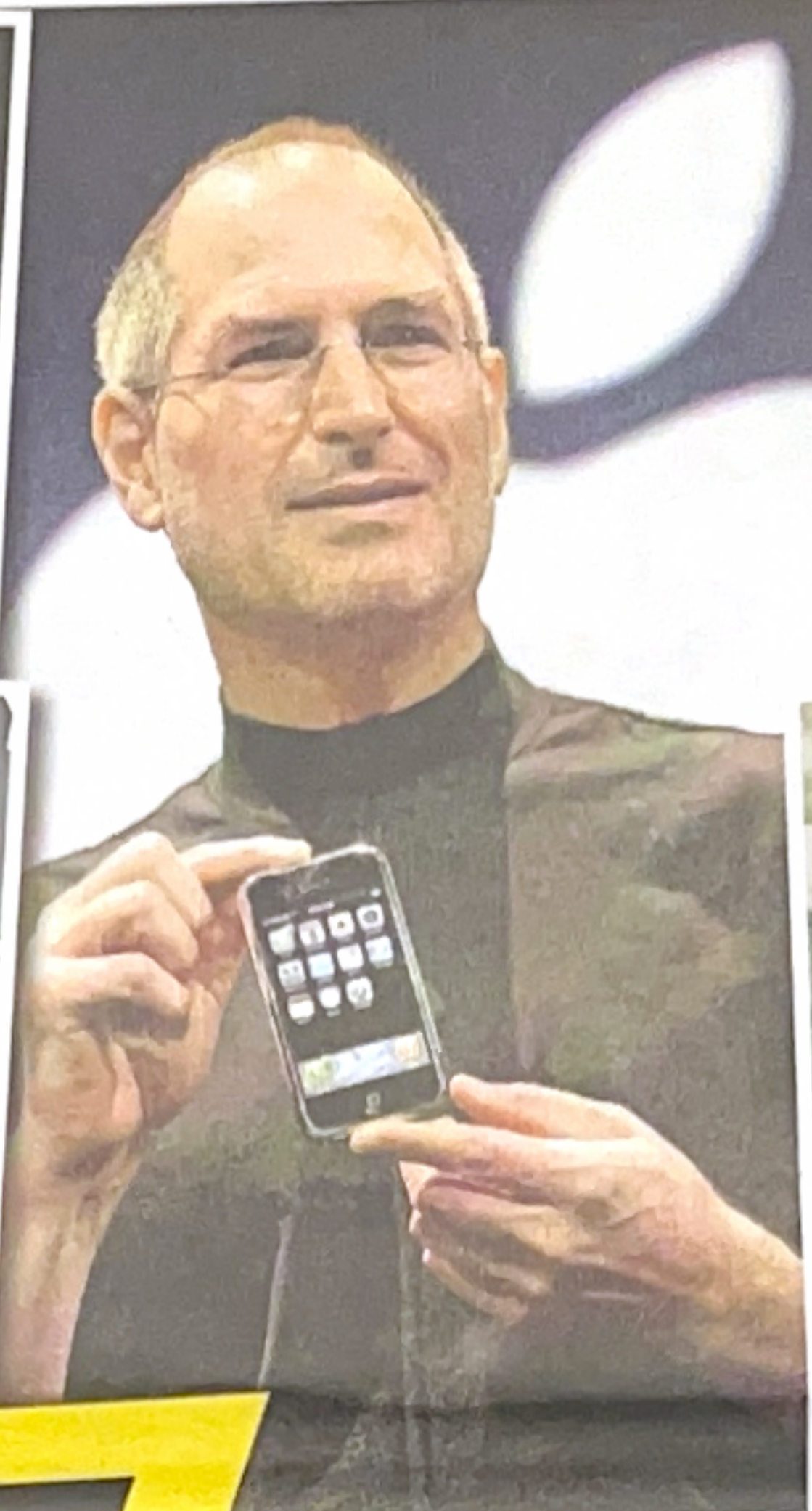
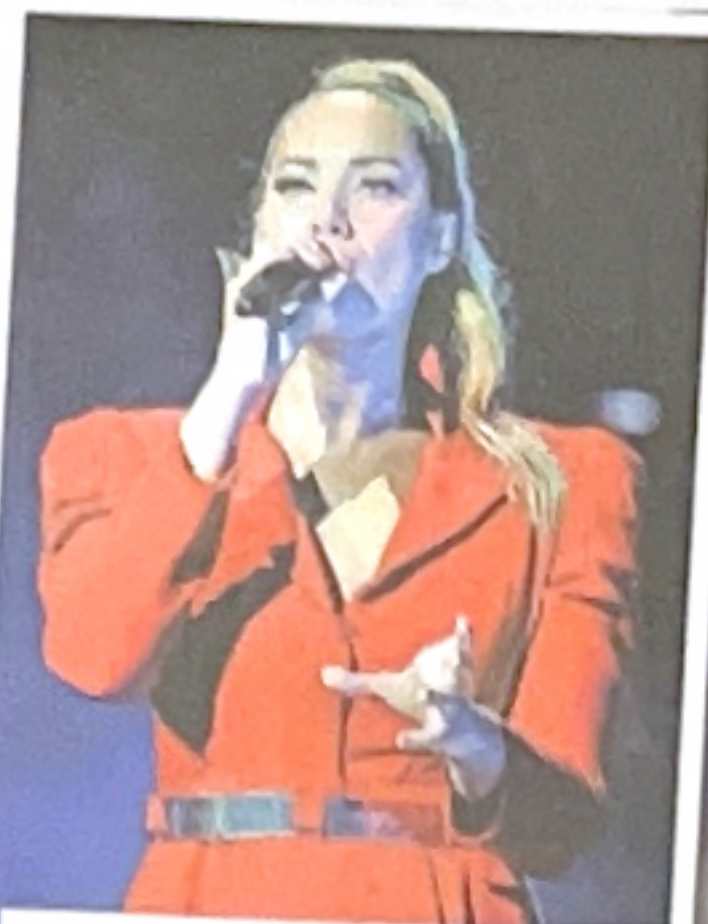
As confetti rained down at Ally Pally, it was clear 2024 had marked not just the rise of a star but the dawn of a new era for darts.

LUKE LITTLE

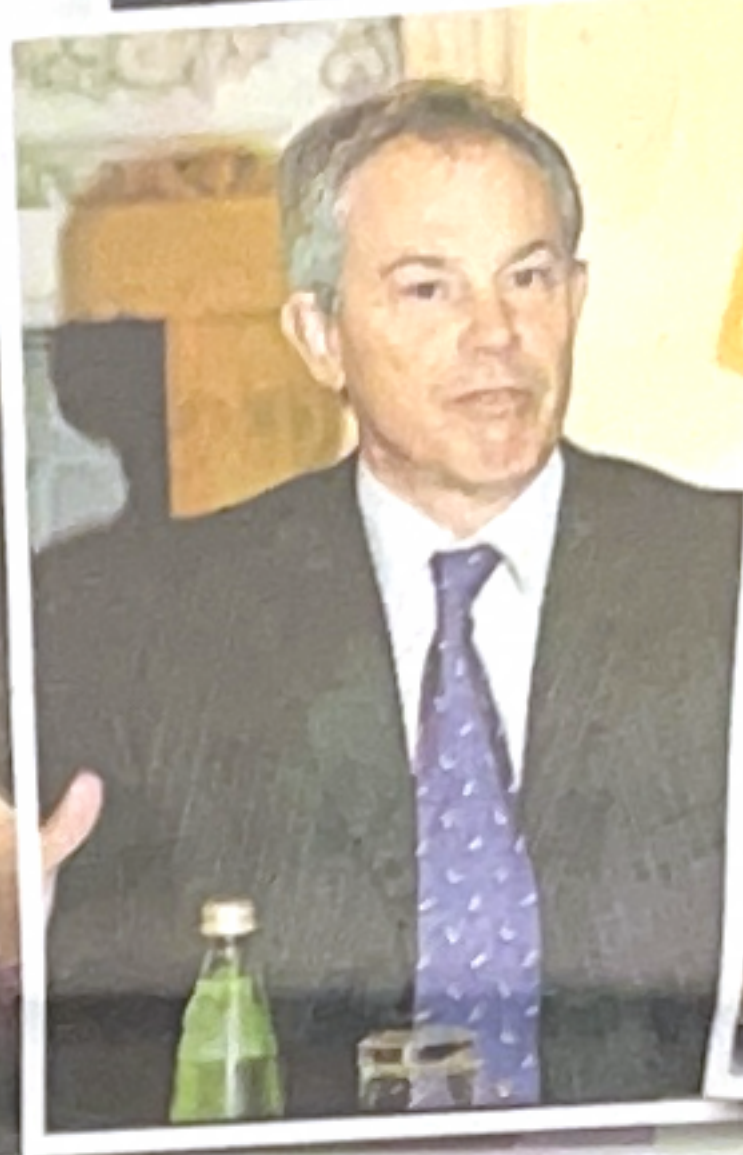
IMAGES: PA WIRE AND GETTY IMAGES



David Beckham signing for LA Galaxy. Right: Leona Lewis. Below: Barack Obama and Lewis Hamilton



Ugg boots, Tony Blair, left, and, above, the new Nintendo Wii. Far left: Steve Jobs with the first iPhone



2007 Blair, iPhones, Ugg boots and Luke Little!

■ by HARRY CRICHTON
THE year is 2007. Skinny jeans are in, Tony Blair is Prime Minister, and everyone is still poking each other on Facebook.

Mika's "Grace Kelly" is blasting on the radio, and Jose Mourinho is strutting his stuff on the Stamford Bridge touch-line. But somewhere, amidst all of this, Luke "The Nuke" Little is born.

It's funny how time plays tricks on us. On the one hand, January 21 2007 doesn't feel so far away – on the other, thinking about what life was like back then might make you think differently.

Back in 2007, the Arctic Monkeys introduced themselves with their debut album *Whatever People Say I Am, That's What I'm Not*.

Across the Atlantic, Fergie was serving us "Fergalicious," and we were listening to it all on our iPod classics. Britney

had just shaved her head and Leona Lewis had won the X-Factor – 2007 really was a year of extreme highs and questionable life choices.

Manchester United sat proudly at the top of the Premier League table under Sir Alex Ferguson, Rooney and Ronaldo up top and well on their way to reclaiming the title.

Chelsea, led by a slightly less grizzled Mourinho, were in pursuit, while Arsenal were still inspired by Thierry Henry's magic.

Just days before Nuke's arrival, David Beckham sent shockwaves through the football world by announcing his move to LA Galaxy.

Away from football, Federer and Nadal were battling it out on the courts, setting the stage for one of the greatest tennis rivalries of all time.

The Rugby World Cup saw England fall to South Africa,



Luke Little was born on January 21, 2007

while Lewis Hamilton made his Formula One debut.

In cinemas, Daniel Craig had just shaken (not stirred) the Bond franchise with *Casino Royale*, while *Pirates of the Caribbean – At World's End* was the year's highest grossing film.

People still flocked to cinemas rather than

streaming from their sofas, where snack choices didn't include the infinite scroll of Uber Eats.

Technology was on the brink of a seismic shift. Just weeks before Little's arrival Steve Jobs unveiled the first-ever iPhone.

The idea of a touchscreen smartphone that could do

more than make calls or send texts was mind-blowing to us all.

Twitter was in its infancy, Instagram was years away, and Facebook was still a place to exchange 'like for likes' and curating your Top 8 on MySpace.

In the political arena, a little-known senator named Barack Obama had just announced his candidacy for the US presidency, setting the stage for a historic campaign. Donald Trump, meanwhile, was still hosting *The Apprentice*.

Gaming was having its own revolution. The Nintendo Wii had just arrived, inspiring living-room tennis tournaments and accidental TV smashes.

The PlayStation 3 had also launched, boasting futuristic graphics that we couldn't imagine getting any better. (Spoiler alert: they did.)

Fortnite and battle royales weren't even a concept yet –

we were too busy bowling strikes on Wii Sports.

And then there was fashion. Ugg boots on feet, oversized belts on waist, head-to-toe in Ed Hardy.

MySpace glitter graphics and emo fringes were the height of online culture.

TikTok wasn't anywhere to be seen and hashtags were still the humble pound sign.

Fast forward 17 years, and the world has changed in ways we couldn't have imagined.

Streaming services have replaced DVDs, social media is a battleground of influencers, Crocs are somehow cool again, and AI can write essays and answer our emails.

Most importantly of course... Luke Little – once a newborn in a world of flip-phones and Fergie – is now a world champion in darts.

It's enough to make you sit back, shake your head, and wonder where the years have gone.

Luke is interviewed by Gabby Logan and Alex Scott after receiving his award from Gladiators Harry Aikines-Aryeetey and Jodie Ounsley



**BBC
YOUNG SPORTS
PERSONALITY
OF THE YEAR**



Luke and his parents speak to Gabby Logan. Below: after finishing runner-up to Keely Hodgkinson



Luke shares a joke with Alex Scott after collecting his award

SPOTY GOES POTTY FOR NUKE

by HARRY CRICHTON
WHEN Luke Littler's name was called out as winner of the BBC Young Sports Personality of the Year award, it was a victory for more than just the teenager.

It was a victory for darts – a sport that, thanks to Littler's brilliance, is now in the mainstream limelight.

To then see him named runner-up in the main SPOTY award – that was the cherry on top of an unforgettable 12 months.

In a year that saw Littler become the third most Googled man in the UK, his accomplishments speak to his transformative impact on darts and his ability to capture

Awards success shows Littler is keeping darts in spotlight

the nation's imagination. But winning awards at SPOTY isn't just about sporting achievement, it's about perfecting the art of being unreasonably good at what you do, saying all the right things, and convincing the public you're someone they'd love to have a pint with.

After picking up his Young SPOTY award, Littler reflected on what the recognition meant.

He said: "It just goes to show how well I've done this

year. It's not just myself that has changed the sport of darts, all the other professionals have. But I have played a big part in it.

"I know about all the different academies that have been brought up in different locations, how big the sport has got, tickets selling out Ally Pally within hours and for the Premier League as well.

"It just goes to show how much I have changed it."

Presenter Gabby Logan summed it up perfectly during

the awards broadcast by saying: "One teenager from Warrington taking the sporting world by storm with his arrows."

On the night Littler joked about where his darting journey began, saying: "It was when my dad decided he was going to hang my football boots up for me. I was about 11 or 12 – but he made a good decision."

Grand Slam glory, and now a PDC World Championship title later and you would do well to find someone who doesn't know about him. Like any teenager, though, it was meeting his Manchester United idols at Carrington that he singled out as his highlight of the year.

When asked what it would take to match the legendary Phil Taylor, Littler's ambition was clear. He said: "Um well, 16 world titles at least. If I want it, I can definitely do it for the next 25, 30 years."

Littler's second-place finish in the main SPOTY award, which is decided by a public vote, behind Olympic champion Keely Hodgkinson is a testament to his popularity and the shift he's

driven in the perception of darts.

It's a feat only matched in the modern game by Taylor, who also came second in 2010 after winning his 15th World Championship title.

Littler's ability to match this achievement in his debut year – at just 17 – is nothing short of remarkable.

Once dismissed as a pastime for beer-bellied blokes down the pub, it's a sport that has long struggled with a reputation steeped in stereotypes. Yet, to earn a seat at the table at the SPOTY Awards – and to come so close to winning – shows just how far it has come. The stigma is lifting, and darts is taking its rightful place in the mainstream.

While winning the main award may have been an outside chance, Littler was a clear favourite for the Young SPOTY prize, and he delivered.

Beating skateboarder Sky Brown and para swimmer William Ellard, Littler joined an illustrious list of previous winners including Phil Foden, Tom Daley, Andy Murray, Wayne Rooney, and Jenson Button.

No darts player had won it before – yet another first for the teenager.

The impact of Littler's rise extends far beyond trophies and accolades.

Shop owners report a 50 per cent increase in darts equipment sales, while Sky Sports noted a 39 per cent rise in viewing figures for this year's World Championship.

Across the country, pubs are reinstating dartboards, and new darts academies are opening their doors to young players inspired by Littler's success.

As BBC Sport reported, these are the kinds of cultural shifts that winners of such prestigious awards bring about.

While Taylor's dominance solidified darts as a competi-

tive sport, Littler's youthful charisma and record-breaking feats have transcended it, drawing in a new generation of fans.

Some might argue that Littler is simply riding the crest of a wave, benefiting from darts' recent resurgence. But the evidence suggests otherwise.

He's thrown fuel on the fire, igniting a sport that is now well and truly ablaze.

As his career progresses, the question isn't whether Littler will match Taylor's legacy but how far he can take darts into uncharted territory.

For Luke Littler, 2024 was the year of his life – and for the sport of darts, it might just have been the year everything changed.

