



● **BOBBY DAZZLER:** Bobby George won fame as the king of "bling" at the darts board

# 'School of hard knocks was the making of me'

## DARTS LEGEND BOBBY GEORGE REVEALS TOUGH UPBRINGING A LESSON FOR LIFE

**A TOUGH upbringing in a run-down council house gave darts legend Bobby George a difficult, but valuable lesson in making your own way in the world.**

Bobby was born on December 12, 1945 and spent his childhood in a Duke Gardens, Barking, house that was so cold frost used to form on the inside of its windows.

His domineering father was on the blind register, growing flowers and breeding a few turkeys to bring in some money, while his stepmother enforced strict Victorian-style discipline in the household.

The young Bobby would do gardening and painting for neighbours for pocket money.

He told the *Recorder*: "A lot of other kids were quite wealthy in that area, especially around Gants Hill. When I look back it did me good, because they taught me if you want to get on you've got to do it (yourself) – you

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can't rely on anyone. At the time I didn't like it, but when I look back it made me what I am."

For entertainment Bobby would throw knives at a target, the closest he got to playing darts until his first game at the age of 30.

A stutterer, Bobby struggled through his school years at Gearies Infants, Newbury Park Juniors and Gearies Secondary Modern, before leaving school at 14.

He said: "I didn't learn anything 'cause I used to stutter and they didn't have the time that they do today with you. Most of the teachers were ex-Army and that sort of thing. There were a few nice guys, but when I went into the big boys school they thought they were in the Army still."

Bobby continued: "It was called thick in those days. When you saw things round the wrong way, you were 'thick'. They didn't have time for that, you were garbage."

Leaving school without any qualifications and barely able to read and write – and with the stutter that did not disappear until he was 16 – Bobby went to work in a flower nursery near Romford, before working at a builder's merchants yard.

He moved on to digging tunnels, including the Victoria Underground route, and also worked as a floor-layer and plasterer, before stumbling into the world of darts.

Bobby said: "I had to use what I had. I used my strength and my determination and my body to make money."

"I was 30 really before I threw a dart. I used to watch them play and I thought 'what a funny game that is, what a Mickey Mouse game'. I just met a guy who was a bit of a bully and I took him on in a game and it was amazing. I didn't know I had the skill to play darts. I just picked it up and, bang!"

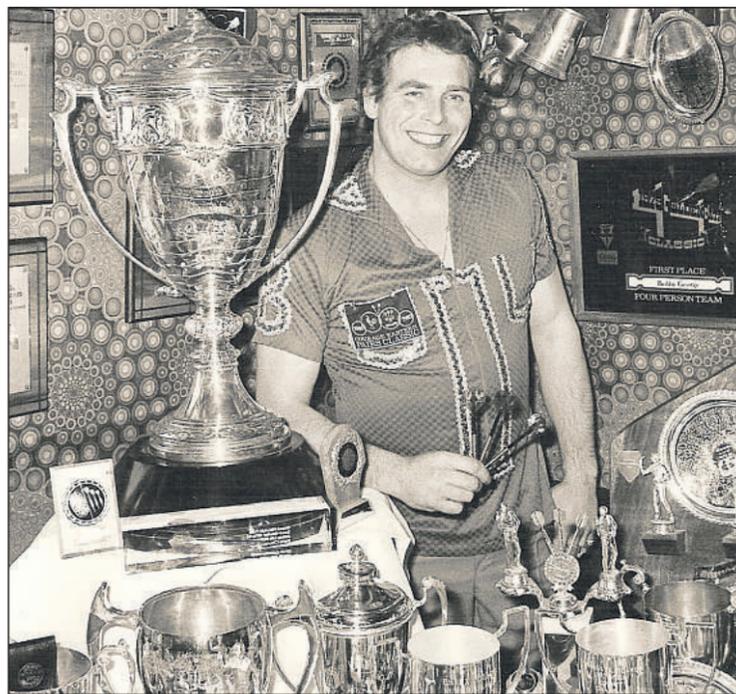
In 1976 Bobby won the first singles darts event he had ever entered – the Hainault Super League Singles.

He went on to represent England 26 times, becoming known not just for his skill but his exuberant style – wearing sequinned shirts, and carrying a lighted candelabra as he entered events to the strident sound of Queen's *We Are the Champions*.

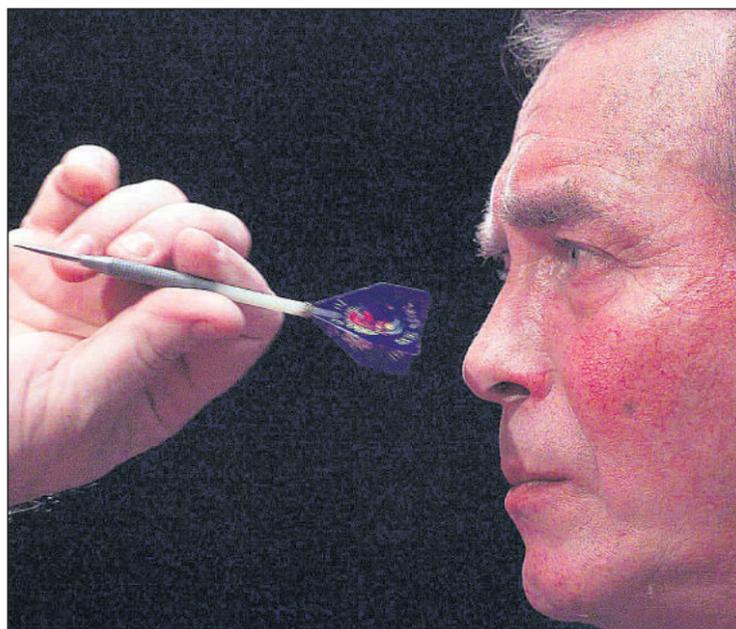
He moved out of Redbridge in the mid-1980s, and now lives at George Hall, in Ardleigh, Essex.

He is a commentator for BBC1 and has released his autobiography, *Bobby Dazzler: My Story*, which is available at major bookstores.

● Bobby George has agreed to answer questions from *Recorder* readers in our Q&A feature. Anyone with a question for Bobby can email it to [dominic.wiggan@archant.co.uk](mailto:dominic.wiggan@archant.co.uk), or phone chief reporter Dominic Wiggan on 020 8477 3821. We will publish the questions and answers at a later date.



● **BULL'S EYE:** Bobby, above, won the first singles darts event he entered and never looked back; below, still on target, Bobby is now a TV commentator





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