

Marty Gaudian of Oak Creek is a modern day Robin Hood

BY JACK PEARSON

It was a million to one achievement, maybe a hundred million to one.

Remember the old motion picture, "The Adventures of Robin Hood," starring Errol Flynn? Robin Hood, as portrayed by Flynn, was in an archery contest. His opponent had just apparently won the event by hitting the target dead center. But then Robin miraculously did even better by splitting the first arrow right down the middle. It was an exciting moment in the picture, but after all, it was only make believe. Such a shot was impossible.

Now switch the scene from medieval England to modern day Wisconsin, where Marty Gaudian of Oak Creek actually pulled off an even better feat, because he didn't just do it once, he did it, unbelievably, on two consecutive shots.

Gaudian's accomplishment wasn't in archery, however, it was in dartball. And it was witnessed and therefore verified



by his longtime dartball teammate Archie Dadian (Who, as you may know, besides being a fine dartball player has won more golf tournaments than any golfer in Wisconsin history).

Here's the story.

Gaudian, a young 88, and Dadian, an even younger 78, have been teammates on the same team for nearly a half-century, quite a rare deed in itself. Both are excellent dartball players and last year both were inducted into the Wisconsin Dartball Hall of Fame.

Although dartball is played all over the United States, the real hotbed for the sport is right here in Wisconsin, where there are more players and teams, per capita, than anywhere in the country. The team Gaudian and Dadian played on for most of those four decades was called "Metalspun." A few years back the team lost its sponsor, so Dadian took over running it himself. Correspondingly, it's now called "Archie's."

Dartball is actually an indoor form of baseball, played with darts instead of bats and balls. Players toss the darts, underhanded, at a target 20 feet away. The darts are made of wood with metal points in front and feathers in back. The body of the dart is wood and is tapered

down to its back end, and the face of the back end is about 1/8 inch in diameter. That 1/8th end is completely unimportant except for purposes of this story.

To be any good in dartball, or in fact in any other sport, participants must put in a good deal of practice, which is just what Marty and Archie were doing at a dartball setup in the basement of Marty's home. In practice sessions, one player throws at a time, while the other stands or sits behind and watches.

As they began their practice session, Marty was the first to throw. He walked up to the 20-foot line, eyed the target, swung his arm and let the dart fly. It soared through the air, hitting smack in the center of the target, a very good throw in itself, but not really that much out of the ordinary. "Great shot, Marty," Archie said. Marty nodded his thanks, and prepared to throw his second dart. He did, and to the amazement of both men, the dart flew through the air and stuck in the middle of the 1/8-inch back end of the

first dart. It was incredible, and Marty and Archie shouted in amazement and glee.

"I've been throwing darts for three quarters of a century," Marty said, "and I've never done something like that before or ever seen anyone else do it."

Then Marty composed himself and walked to the line to throw his third and last dart. Again his arm drew back, then swung forward, and again the dart flew through the air, and again it completed its journey by hitting and sticking in the middle of the 1/8-inch back end of the second dart. ♦♦

This time the two men were too astounded to utter a sound. "I actually couldn't believe my eyes," Archie said. "It was like a dream. Those last two darts had to hit the exact center of a tiny, 1/8 inch spot in order to stick; just a hair off either way and it would have splintered and fallen off. Three consecutive absolutely perfect shots. I'll never see something like that again in my lifetime."

As soon as the two men regained their composure, Marty walked toward the target area and was going to pull out the three darts when Archie shouted at him to stop. "Don't ever take those three darts apart," he said. "They belong in the Hall of Fame. What you just did was a million to one. Maybe a hundred million to one?"

Marty has since mounted the three darts on a special plaque, which now hangs on a wall of his home. "I'm so happy and thankful that Archie was with me when it happened," Marty said. "No one in the world would have believed it otherwise, even Ripley, if he'd been still alive to see it. And I know it was just a practice session, and doesn't mean zilch to anyone except Archie and me."

Perhaps not; but with all the billions of people on this old globe, it's safe to say that only one of them has ever done it. That has to mean something.

Marty Gaudian, right, with the three darts he threw, now mounted on a display board as they went into one another. With him is his longtime pal, Archie Dadian, left, who was there when he performed that miraculous feat.