

Darts Anyone?

Several years back I met up with my friend and KHS classmate, Andrea "Josette" Babineaux Duhon, and her husband, Wayne Duhon. It was a brief visit during my lunch hour but long enough to catch up, and I found out that Josette has been very busy since the last time we spoke.

Josette, born and raised in Kaplan, attended Kaplan Elementary, Rene Rost Middle and graduated from Kaplan High School. She married Wayne at 18 and they have two daughters, Nicole and Tia. Josette has been working with the Breast Center of Acadiana for four years. She resides in Youngsville now, and that is relatively close to where I work, and certainly not a far drive from Kaplan. But sometimes given the information you find out about a person, it can feel like the other side of the world.

You see, Josette throws darts and is ranked #1 Women's Steel

Professional for both 2017 and 2014. This title is won over all the women playing in the American Darters Association. In 2013, she was the National Women's Steel MVP and in both 2013 and 2014 she was the Women's Pro Steel Champion. This title is achieved competing against only pro players. How did I not know that my friend was interviewed in 2013 by the *Chicago Tribune* because of the status of her skills? I was totally intrigued! Knowing what darts and a board looked like, I figured it would be easy enough to watch a game or two of Josette in action and I could catch on.

On that particular rainy Saturday, we met early before players showed up for the tournament. She set up the sign-in table and there were raffles and door prizes. While we chatted I learned that she has been playing since 2007. Wayne played and she decided she would give it a

by Angie Landry



Karl Remick (VP), at left, presents Josette and Wayne Duhon, 705 Area Managers, as Managers of the Year.

hand (pun intended) and that's all she wrote. She became the American Dart Association 705 Area Manager in 2010. She really embraces that role and shared with me that there is one tournament per month and each month has a theme. Some of these have included: Mad Hatters, Mardi Gras Masquerade, a pantry party for an engaged couple, Round Up, Mother's Day Mimosas, and a summer kick off. She also loves when she is able to introduce new players to the sport. Once they achieve their first Hat Trick, Nine Mark or Ton 80 it's an honor to present them with their pins, which is usually gold.

As the players straggled in, the talk turned to the darts specifically. The weight, options, feel, etc. Did it end up that I knew anything about darts? Ummm...That would be a resounding NO, but she gave me a quick run-down on the 501 game. In this game, you throw your 3 darts and add them up and then subtract them from 501 until you get to zero before your opponent. (I thought you



Josette Duhon competes in darts on a national level and is ranked #1.

had to throw to high numbers to end with the highest number, not the lowest. And then there's a Double Out something or other... I'm sure I have something about it in my notes!) She shared with

me that everyone looks for that perfect 9-dart game; her personal best has been 17 to date. There are so many different games that it really is mind-boggling. Of course, the only experience I have

ever had with darts is at the local fair where there are balloons sitting pretty and all you have to do is "pop" the pretty pastel one to receive the coveted stuffed animal. To this extent, I think I am



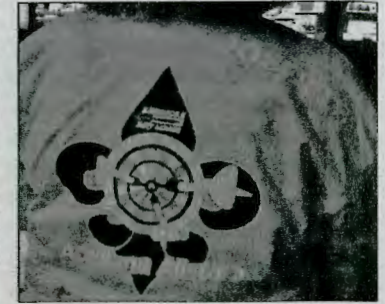
2016 Nationals in Mesquite, Texas - 1st and 2nd Place Teams
 (L-R) - Ryan Hawley, Jesse Beech, Tracy Peckinpaugh, Dale Murray, Josette Duhon, and Mark Daly. Josette's team placed second that year.

banned because for certain the last four times I threw, I hit the person running the booth. One time, I swung my arm backwards and the dart fell out of my hand. So when Josette offered for me to try my hand at throwing, I was sweating bullets. I surely didn't want to embarrass myself in front of my friend. I was able to use her pink shaft darts that spin with

Breast Cancer Awareness flights in support of women who have fought the fight. I am happy to say that although I stunk, I did hit the board once and I felt proud as a peacock not having to apologize to anyone for making contact with them. It was fun enough that I contemplated getting my own board for at home. I even compared prices online thinking that

my kids might like to play, too. Then I remembered that with my skill (or lack thereof) in addition to Jordan's strength and speed (she's got a heck of a right arm), it might be safer to stick to what we already know like running, music, movies, etc.

Speaking of memories, I asked Josette if she had a favorite and she said hers is back in 2013. She was at Nationals in St. Louis, Missouri, playing on the Friday of a weeklong tournament in the women's single event. Most of her competitors had a lot of supporters from their area and she felt out of place but as she climbed her way up the winner's bracket she made friends with each of them and in the end they said she walked all over Texas. Turns out they were all from around the same area in Dallas. Their friendship remains strong and she looks forward to seeing them at Nationals each year.



New friendships have come from dart competition.

In addition to all that she encompasses as a single competitor, she shared with me that she has had great success winning Division Championships



Throwing darts has brought many awards to Josette's home. She's even got a National Champion ring.



The Duhon Family

Josette, Nicole Duhon Arabie, Tia Duhon and Wayne Duhon. This photo taken just after Nicole's Dental Hygiene graduation from UL Monroe.

with Wayne. And they also love to compete against one another, too. Her recent success was winning a league while playing with their daughter, Tia, who began to play a year ago. One of the goals on her wish list is to find a facility that is family friendly as there is a nationwide push to create Adult/Youth Leagues.

To think that what began as a

"date night with Wayne" has led her through this amazing journey is a true testimony to what happens when you decide to try something new. I love her story; it is one that I am going to always follow. And I encourage you to step out of your comfort zone and try your hand at something new. Darts, anyone?