



50 Years & Still on Target

Arachnid 360 Celebrates Half Century of Darts

There's no doubt that Arachnid's legacy as the creator of electronic soft-tip darts has left an impact on the sport. They were early trailblazers of dart leagues and tournaments, and have shaped the global popularity of darts and set a high standard for competition within the industry.

The company – celebrating an impressive 50 years in the industry – is a living testament that “innovation is more than just a favorite word of product and marketing spin-meisters and can withstand the tests of time.”

By taking a 400-year-old sport, redefining it, and launching it into the future, Arachnid has worked hard through the past five decades to enhance the bar and operator's social atmospheres and bank accounts, while also engaging players to transform their hobby into a professional sport.

Throughout this evolution, there has always been a powerful link between darts and music, the company said, because dart players love to

hear their favorite tunes when competing with others. Recognizing this synergy factored into the TouchTunes decision to acquire Arachnid's businesses in 2024, bringing together two “number ones” in the amusement industry – darts and jukeboxes – which should drive continued growth for both.

Way back in 1975, Rudy Allison and Harry Gill began as a coin-operated balloon machine manufacturer. Allison was open to new product ideas, and on a business trip to England appreciated the camaraderie and appeal of steel-tip dart play. Interested, he sent his employee, an engineer named Dick Jones, back to England to learn more.

The rest, as they say, is history, and the soft-tip dart board manufacturing company Arachnid was born.

Shortly after Arachnid's start, a patent illustrator named Paul Beall was brought on board in 1976 to help with drawings and it didn't take long for that job to become a whole new business venture for him. After a



Arachnid pioneered electronic soft tip darts, debuting their *English Mark Darts* in 1975 and five decades later, the “A Team” is still innovating!

Now part of TouchTunes, originators of the digital jukebox, the companies join forces on Arachnid's mission to see more *BullShooter* dart games around the world, grow the player base and make money for operators. **Here's to the next 50 years!**



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Paul Beall and his new business partner, Mike Tillery (right) bought Arachnid from Rudy Allison and Harry Gill in 1977.

slow start, Allison and Gill decided their other businesses were more lucrative and opted to sell the company in 1977 to Beall and his new business partner, Mike Tillery, who had worked with Beall in manufacturing in the past and for Allison in

his machine shop up until his jump into business ownership.

With two new owners and four new eyes on the prize, it drove Arachnid forward to the next step when they began putting prototypes in locations: the first

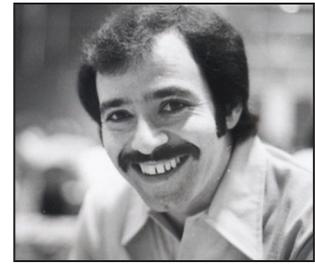
in their Rockford, Illinois, HQ. As development continued, Beall traveled to Green Bay, Wis., and successfully completed the first big sale of 25 dart boards to a local operator.

These *Model 1000* boards, known as *English Mark Darts*, were made of heavy wooden cabinets, full of intricate wiring, green and yellow

graphics, and were just the breaking ground of what would revolutionize the coin-operated industry (all while having only two games to play: Count-Up 301 and 501). This dart board series evolved from the *Model 1000* all the way to the *Model 4000*, released in 1980.

Around this time, Rockford native and dart enthusiast Sam Zammuto emerged as a pioneer in electronic dart league development. (His enthusiasm and pioneering continues to this very day as president of Arachnid.) His passion for the sport began during his service in the United States Air Force when he was stationed in England and grew as he entered this new hobby. In October 1977, he launched the first-ever electronic dart league with TBI Games with the lucky number “777” – seven locations, seven dart boards and seven teams in Rockford area bars.

Green Bay, Wisconsin, followed suit, launching their own leagues around the same time. But it wasn’t all luck for Zammuto. While there were strides in ways of automatic scoring, he and the other players experienced the difficulties of



Marcio Bonilla, a world football champion, came on board in 1981. He would stay at the company for 30 years before retiring to his native Costa Rica.

manual scoresheets and tallying standings, a time-consuming feat. It only took a short time driving around to each location to pick up the scoresheets each league night until he decided to install a mailbox at Foxy’s Lounge so the scoresheets could be dropped in one location.

As headway was made in the dart business and with leagues, it was clear Beall and Tillery needed to seek outside help if they wanted to make the business a true success.

In 1981, a two-time world football champion and former Tournament Soccer promoter named Marcio Bonilla was hired. His knowledge of coin-op went all the way back to his childhood in Costa Rica working in his grandfather’s pool hall, then later at an arcade. Along with his background in demonstrating, his newly found interest in darts after a visit to Wisconsin where he met Paul Beall, and an unexpected job search, Bonilla became a key player at Arachnid for 30 years.

It wasn’t long after, in 1982, when Paul hired Sam Zammuto to become an official Arachnid team member – the original “A Team.” Zammuto became another key player whose passion

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Sam Zammuto became another key player from the early days, joining Arachnid's original "A Team" in 1982 and serving as VP of Marketing. He's at right with Beall and Bonilla, who was VP of Sales.

and drive would be long-lasting, giving him the ability to create many business relationships that have

spanned many decades and, in some cases, multiple generations.

With Marcio's promo-

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Arachnid held its first league seminar for operators in 1983 in a rented conference room of the Howard Johnson hotel in the factory's hometown of Rockford, Illinois. Pictured are Jim Stansfield, Gary Nelson, Gary Benson, Jack Deming, Sam Zammuto, Bob Cavina, Rally Beach, Gene Winstead and Paul Beall.

tion and sales skills, combined with Sam's expertise in darts and leagues, a powerhouse duo was formed,

which would drive the business forward in ways no one could have imagined over the next 30 years as they worked side-by-side.

When you have two men involved in doing something they love, it never seemed like a job to them. They had a lot of fun over the years, even when working tirelessly together to promote, educate and sell dart boards all over the world.

It was during this time that Arachnid's *Model 5000* was released with the addition of the matrix, an automatic scoring pad installed behind the target that created more consistent scoring and a better player experience.

There was massive growth, tough competition, and innovation around every corner. The introduction of seminars and training on leagues and tournaments two nights a week soon created the opportunity for operators to expand their business and really reap the benefits of having dart boards on their routes.

Distributors and operators would travel from all over to Arachnid to learn from the best and leave with a wealth of knowledge that



Arachnid pulled out all the stops for this great show booth dubbed the "BullShooter Lounge."



The first "A Team" as seen in this photo from 1985, the year of Arachnid's 10th anniversary.

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couldn't be beat. In turn, Zammuto and Bonilla traveled as well, demonstrating and educating as many people in the industry as possible, sometimes being on the road for weeks at a time. This increased not only the value of a dart board, but also the demand, causing Arachnid to make the jump from 200 to 2,000 game sales a year.

Arachnid competed fiercely with all iconic game manufacturers of the era, facing off against games such as *Pac-Man*, *Space Invaders*, *Donkey Kong*, and many more to earn a space in bars, pubs and restaurants.

As the years went on, Zammuto's passion only amplified, giving him the



Changes in leadership: Paul Beall left Arachnid in 1989 and John Martin joined Mike Tillery as a partner in the company. Pictured above, Bill Ward, Sam Zammuto, Marcio Bonilla, Tillery and Martin.

vision to install a dart game called Cricket. It was released on the *Super 6* model in 1986, using X's and O's for scoring on the newly installed monitor, and instantly made players fall deeper in love with the sport. This was something new and exciting that would set Arachnid dart boards

apart, the company thought. While it was always an uphill battle against entrenched video games, the fact remains that pool, jukeboxes and darts all hit their mark during this time to secure their place at the top of the leaderboard, and remain strong to this day.

Efforts to educate opera-

tors and promote soft-tip dart leagues really took off and dart enthusiasts and competitors continued expanding, resulting in the first BullShooter Regional Tour, which led way to the BullShooter World Championship in May 1986.

In the finals, players vied for a \$25,000 prize pool in four events. This year for the BullShooter 39 Finals, held May 22-26 in Chicago, they'll be giving away \$150,000 in prizes to a field of 1,000 players enjoying 23 different events. There's also 10 different regionals, including the original Rockford, that qualify players for the finale.

Over the years, this has grown to be an international experience, shared in many

We're happy to celebrate your five decades of innovation!

From English Mark Darts to G3 ICE, your games have brought success to the coin-op industry and countless hours of fun to players around the world.

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countries across the world. Arachnid is the proud supporter of the international qualifying tournament circuit, BullShooter Europe in Spain, and many other associations, including the AMOA's National Dart Assn. (AMOA-NDA), Partners Promoting Darts



The 1993 sales department (from left to right): Lori Dull, Tami Spitz, Ron Bonnell, Candy Nelson and Julie Stotler.

– Tournament of Champions (PPD-TOC), North American Dart Association (NADO), and various state level and operator tournaments which help advance the sport even more.

Arachnid said they had the key ingredients for continued success: a state-of-the-art dart board, dynamic sales team, promotional efforts focused on education, respect within the industry from distributors and operators alike, and a dedicated player base that was growing rapidly.

As a result, their most effective advertisement was created with the slogan, “No People, No Profit,” featuring a photograph of a local bar packed to the brim with patrons during a dart league night. This ad emphasized the benefits of dart leagues within a venue causing bigger crowds, increased drink sales, music playing on the jukebox, and all-around fun to be had by all! This push propelled a sales increase to 6,000 games a year in '86, and then 9,000 a year for each of the two after.

With a strong run under Paul Beall and Mike Tillery,

Beall parted ways with Arachnid in 1989 to focus on other opportunities, at which time John Martin became a partner in the company.

Martin was an engineer-entrepreneur from outside the industry who always had new ideas. Working closely with Tillery, one of their first innovations appeared on the original *Galaxy Top Gun* in 1991, also a first for the coin-op industry – an online coin-operated dartboard – for collection of dart player league match results and statistics,

which was far beyond Zammuto's original mailbox idea from the early days.

This patent-protected ability to connect between operator offices and locations to automatically download stats via a modem and phone line was a game changer. The company touted that the *Top Gun Challenge Galaxy* dart board remained a hot commodity longer than any of its predecessors, winning “Most Played Dart Game” from the AMOA for nine consecutive years.

Interestingly, one of the significant new ideas Arachnid needed to embrace for the *Galaxy*, which both Martin and Zammuto resisted, was the transition from the “fat-spider” (shown on the cover) to “thin-spider,” needed to minimize dart bounce outs, as well as an enhanced target look.

In a bit of other company history, Pat Rice joined Arachnid in 1992 to take over the desktop league management software, Dartman. In 1995, Martin became the



With Top Gun Challenge in 1993 are Advertising Manager Barry Teithmeier, Asst. Ad Mgr. Debbie Lamont and *BullShooter Magazine* Editor Jeanne Penney.



When we call them a team, we mean it! Here's the 1994 Arachnid A Team softball squad.



Working hard but having fun: From left to right, we find Arachnid salesmen Bob Mills, Darren Decatoire, Marcio Bonilla, John Hassett, Sam Zammuto, Ang and Jim Beyer.

sole owner of Arachnid and worked closely with Pat and the engineering team on the Arachnid’s first “two-target” dartboard, which utilized off-the-shelf PC moth-

erboard hardware and a DOS variant – a model before its time – and was soon replaced by the successor to the *Top Gun Challenge... the Galaxy II*.

Now beyond the wooden boxes of past models, the *Galaxy II* had two-way communications eliminating the need for team cards, and featured a “lighter, sexier,

rotationally-molded cabinet,” with an upgrade to a 15-inch CRT color monitor and updated graphics. For additional convenience, more efficient shipping and easier setup and teardown at tournaments, the *Galaxy II* came with top and bottom sections.

Dartman continued to evolve from DOS to Windows versions, but it was still limited to the desktop, so with the help of Mike Gannon, a customer and support technician hired in 2002, Arachnid continued forward and broke the pattern by moving to the cloud with LeagueLeader in 2005.

Sales of the *Galaxy II* remained strong well into the 2000s, with another

Happy 50th Arachnid

Sam, you and your team have effectively been

“SHOOTING THE BULL”

and getting away with it all these years.

Congratulations to the entire Arachnid group on

50 GREAT YEARS

and we wish you continued success in whatever the “NEW” future brings. Your help and support of everything we have done promoting dart tournaments and dart leagues has paid huge dividends for us.

Thank You and Congratulations from your friends at Stanton Automatics





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boost in 2009 with an upgrade to the Galaxy 2.5, with an even larger, 19-inch screen that also contributed to less weight with its LCD flat screen. To enhance user experience even more, the screen was convertible, being switchable from the center of the cabinet to the top for better visibility. More than 27,500 of these models were sold.

John Martin passed in 2011, leaving ownership with his trust, allowing Zammuto and Rice, then “co-presidents,” to continue model innovation.

In 2012, Arachnid unveiled the *Galaxy 3 Live*, which was Arachnid’s second dual-target model, but this time, as a manual flip option allowing players to choose between either the 15-inch or 13-inch. Way beyond that, though, was also including remote play where players could compete with other players on connected boards anywhere in the world.

This opened the door for operators to generate more income and gave players more opportunities to play without requiring opponents in the same venue. Additionally, Arachnid took proactive steps to enhance its reach by expanding the team



The Beall Brothers, Tony, Shawn and Chris, reacquired Arachnid in 2014 and remained at the helm until the 2024 sale to TouchTunes.

with dedicated salesmen focused on specific territories. The company explained that these team members are

“not only introducing dart boards to new markets but are also providing valuable mentorship to operators and



Arachnid’s Sam Zammuto accepts an AMOA Innovator Award from the association’s Rick LaFleur.

league coordinators.”

In 2014, ownership went full circle (hence the switch to “Arachnid 360”) when Paul Beall’s sons Tony, Chris and Shawn followed in their father’s footsteps and reacquired the company.

Arachnid was a part of their childhoods, and it was now their turn to continue to advance the business and sport. Highlights from them include the *Galaxy 3 Plus* in 2016, with a motorized, automatic flip feature of the dual targets and larger 24-inch monitor; the *Galaxy 3 Fire*, a first-of-its-kind, red-hot colored, illuminated cabinet that stands out in locations (more than 15,000 are in the field today); and reentry into the home consumer market under the Spider brand for man caves.

Also during their time, they faced the Covid pandemic, which ultimately closed all public spaces including the bars and restaurants that are necessary for hosting players, leagues, and tournaments. Despite this setback, the small crew helped the company stay alive during this time and continued to work on the next steps toward the future.

By 2022, soft-tip darts received a huge opportunity to extend tournament event

coverage to TV, when the Beall brothers and Zammuto worked with ESPN to create a 32-player bracket invitational event of the finest players who qualified by placing at the top in the BullShooter tournament circuit.



Eye candy! You can bet Arachnid’s rig gets a lot of stares when it’s rolling down the highway!

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These players competed to the final four and gained the chance to shoot darts live in a televised event – a long way from seven boards in local bars back in the '80s. With such successes under their belts, the Beall brothers recognized that technology was a driving factor in today's dart world, so they wanted to ensure Arachnid had the ability to remain a staple in the industry well into the future.

That led to the TouchTunes acquisition in early 2024, creating a powerhouse by “pairing the number one dart machine with the number one jukebox,” as Zammuto described it.

One of TouchTunes' values is to “Bring the Fun” and this truly aligns with the roots deeply ingrained in Arachnid's history. They've



Dick Jones stands proudly beside the first *English Mark Darts*, the machine that “started it all.” With Arachnid's dart machines so familiar today, it may be difficult for some readers to realize just how revolutionary it was. Hopefully, this walk through Arachnid's story helps.

always strived to set the bar high with quality dart boards, exciting games, packed venues filled with

great experiences for dart players in leagues and tournaments, and importantly, profitable ventures for distributors and operators.

One fundamental piece through all of this is that music played a huge part in ensuring the environment remained fun. With new teammates on board, the *Galaxy 3 Ice* made its debut at Amusement Expo in March 2024.

“In all its glory with a stunning blue, illuminated cabinet, this dart-board could be considered a statement piece,” Arachnid said. “The color blue is commonly associated with

trust, loyalty, knowledge and stability, and these values continue to be on the front line of business goals.”

Arachnid said they look forward to new technologies in the works with the announcement of an upcoming TouchTunes digital payments platform, and a partnership with gamification company Lucra to enable darts players to challenge each other to compete for real money or credits.

For 50 incredible years, Arachnid has been a trailblazer in the coin-operated industry, transforming a centuries-old sport into a dynamic and rewarding experience.

From its roots – when English soldiers aimed their spears at wine barrels and tree trunks – to its modern incarnations, Arachnid has remained at the top of darts' evolution by staying innovative and true to its mission.

This journey wouldn't have been possible without the passion and dedication of the owners, workers, and visionaries who carried this legacy forward and the loyal distributors, operators, and players who helped build it into what it is today.

As Arachnid celebrates this milestone, they are inspired by the collaboration with the creative minds at TouchTunes. Together, they are paving the way for a future filled with opportunities for distributors, operators, establishments, players, and employees.

Darts and music unite them, bringing fun and connection as they lead the way for the next 50 years and beyond.



At BullShooter 25, the Arachnid team of Bob Lenz, Sam Zammuto, Mike Gannon, Bob Wiles and Dave Schultz (clad in Hawaiian shirts) take a photo with Team Netherlands (the fellows in red and black shirts).

