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# JOSE DE SOUSA

## JOSE DE SOUSA IN DREAMLAND AFTER REMARKABLE RISE THROUGH PROFESSIONAL ECHELONS

**S**tep aside Cristiano Ronaldo, there is a new Portuguese sporting sensation in town. Going by the name of Jose de Sousa, he has broken into the upper echelons of professional darts in spectacular style.

It was quite the week in Coventry for De Sousa as he lifted the Eric Bristow Trophy aloft to seal his maiden major accolade, overcoming an experienced campaigner in James Wade before doing so.

Dave Chisnall, Michael Smith and Simon Whitlock were all ousted by the Portuguese sensation leading up to his maiden major final, with emotions running high after nailing a mesmerising 158 for the title.

"This a feeling I cannot describe - my best moment in darts," De Sousa told Sky Sports following his triumph. "It's a dream come true and I feel like my heart will explode - it's amazing.

"I'm really happy for my fans and everyone who's backed me, my sponsors and my manager. I left my job last year and this year I'm really happy to make a place in the PDC, I've worked so hard.

"This year has been difficult for everybody and it's not easy - in two months I've had three days in my home. But all the people in Portugal and Spain have supported me and I'm very proud."

De Sousa had lifted over 50 titles in the soft-tip side of the sport and secured a one-off appearance at Alexandra Palace in 2012, but his remarkable rise to stardom commenced two years ago.

The now 46-year-old pipped current Spanish Tour Card holder Jesus Noguera in the South West Europe Qualifier to seal his second World Championship appearance, a short journey from his residence in Madrid.

Advance a year from that occasion, and De Sousa would be approaching the end of his first season as a professional, with two ranking titles to his name.

'The Special One' thrashed world number three Gerwyn Price 8-1 to win his maiden PDC honour, before doubling his title tally with an 8-6 scalp of newly-crowned Premier League champion Glen Durrant.

Having firmly marked his territory on the ProTour, De Sousa quit his job as a carpenter and kitchen fitter in the

process. Fans of the sport began to fall in the love with him, predominantly due to his hilarious miscounts and unique ways of finishing.

Nevertheless, a further challenge awaited in transforming his floor form to the biggest stages of them all.

He became frustrated after his World Matchplay exit in the summer at the hands of world champion Peter Wright, but his televised showings improved, including a magnificent nine-darter at the European Championship.

An overly impressive victory over world number one Michael van Gerwen in the final of the European Darts Grand Prix title on the continent followed, though, even more unprecedented achievements were yet to come.

De Sousa proceeded to establish himself as a contender for any title with subsequent Grand Slam success, showcasing his explosive scoring power as well as the occasional trademark miscount along the way.

Each time the trailblazing thrower departed the stage, the cameraman was greeted with an infectious smile and exuberant celebration. His coolness on-stage was revolutionised throughout the tournament.

"I'm playing much better on the big stage right now," he expressed. "My confidence is growing better and better. It's good for me. I'm starting to play like the top players.

"I know now that I can do the same things that I've been doing on the floor on the big stage and on television. For me it's not a surprise, but for many people maybe it is."

His scintillating floor form has been translated to the biggest of stages, albeit without crowds in attendance, and the destructive De Sousa has broken into the top 16 and thrown his name into the hat for Premier League selection.

The World Darts Championship is around the corner, with De Sousa vying to end his disappointing record at Alexandra Palace. No one would now be surprised if the Portuguese was lifting the famous trophy in early January

**WORDS: BEN HUDD**





Photo Credit: Lawrence Lustig, PDC

Ricky Evans moving him into the quarter finals. The Scot had begun his quest at the second round stage as top seed, with Gerwyn Price deciding to swerve the final two events after winning PC21. A 6-3 win

over Jermaine Wattimena clinched a last four berth, and there, he crushed Joe Cullen 7-1 with a 99.2 average to move into the final. Jose de Sousa accounted for Andy Boulton 6-5 in his first round match, and then sealed back to back 6-2 wins over Kirk Shepherd and Adam Hunt, and a 6-3 win over Brendan Dolan put him in the quarter finals. "The Special One" defeated Jonny Clayton 6-3, and a 7-5 win over the resurgent Adrian Lewis set up a meeting with Wright. "Snakebite" pulled away from 4-4 with three straight legs, but back came de Sousa with a hat trick of legs of his own to force a one leg shootout. Wright put in an impressive 11 darter to take the title, and a seventh of the calendar year.

Michael van Gerwen made his return to action following a back injury during the World Cup, and squeezed past 1995 BDO World champion, Richie Burnett, before falling to two time PDC World Champion, Adrian Lewis in the last 32.

Scotland's Ryan Murray enjoyed a run to the quarter finals, while two time winner during the week, Michael Smith, was ousted at the last 16 stage at the hands of Jonny Clayton.

## PLAYERS CHAMPIONSHIP 23

**T**he Winter Series concluded with PC23, and Joe Cullen was the final winner of the week, overcoming Krzysztof Ratajski 8-4 with a 105.1 average.

It was nearly the polar opposite of fortunes for Cullen, as he was 5-0 down to a rampant Justin Pipe in round one, with the Taunton man averaging 118. Bradford's Cullen clawed his way all the way back to take a deciding leg win, and played steadily all day to double his 2020 title tally. Chris Dobey and Niels Zonneveld were defeated, before "The Rockstar" routed Boris Krcmar 6-0 in the last 16. He required another last leg shootout to eliminate Daryl Gurney, and a 7-3 semi final win against Andy Boulton, followed by an assured 8-4 win over Ratajski, saw Cullen take the top prize.

Ratajski put in some big numbers on the day, averaging well over 100 three times

including 112.5 in his 6-2 quarter final win against Adrian Lewis. He booked his final place with a 7-2 crushing of Kim Huybrechts who, along with Andy Boulton, reached their first semi finals in over two years on tour.

Jermaine Wattimena grabbed the last available spot for the Grand Slam by finishing second in the Winter Series Order of Merit, a list topped by Michael Smith, while Ryan Searle also qualified as a result of his PC3 win earlier in the season.

Michael van Gerwen's appearance was again short and sweet, as Callan Rydz scored a 6-4 last 64 win over the three time World Champion.

**WORDS: PAUL MASON**





A man with a mohawk hairstyle and tattoos on his arms is holding a large, ornate silver trophy. He is wearing a purple t-shirt with 'TOYO TIRES' and 'William Hill' logos. The trophy has a globe on top and a plaque at the base that reads 'WILLIAM HILL WORLD DARTS CHAMPIONSHIP'.

# 2021 WILLIAM HILL PDC WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP PREVIEW

CAN SNAKEBITE RETAIN THE SID WADDELL TROPHY?





Photo Credit: Chris Sargeant, Tip Top Pics

**Michael Van Gerwen (NED) - Seeded**

**Age:** 31  
**Hometown:** Boxel, Netherlands  
**Nickname:** Mighty Mike  
**Darts Used:** Unknown  
**PDC World Championship Best:** 3 x Winner



Photo Credit: Chris Sargeant, Tip Top Pics

**Peter Wright (SCO) - Seeded**

**Age:** 50  
**Hometown:** Mendham, England  
**Nickname:** Snakebite  
**Darts Used:** Various Red Dragon  
**PDC World Championship Best:** Winner 2020



Photo Credit: Chris Sargeant, Tip Top Pics

**Gerwyn Price (WAL) - Seeded**

**Age:** 35  
**Hometown:** Markham, Wales  
**Nickname:** Iceman  
**Darts Used:** 24g Red Dragon  
**PDC World Championship Best:** Semi-finalist



Photo Credit: Chris Sargeant, Tip Top Pics

**Michael Smith (ENG) - Seeded**

**Age:** 30  
**Hometown:** St Helens, England  
**Nickname:** Bully Boy  
**Darts Used:** 22g Unicorn  
**PDC World Championship Best:** Runner Up



Photo Credit: Chris Sargeant, Tip Top Pics

**Rob Cross (ENG) - Seeded**

**Age:** 30  
**Hometown:** Hastings, England  
**Nickname:** Mighty Mike  
**Darts Used:** 21g Target  
**PDC World Championship Best:** Winner 2018



Photo Credit: Chris Sargeant, Tip Top Pics

**Nathan Aspinall (ENG) - Seeded**

**Age:** 29  
**Hometown:** Stockport, England  
**Nickname:** The Asp  
**Darts Used:** 27g Target  
**PDC World Championship Best:** 2 x S-Finalist



Photo Credit: Chris Sargeant, Tip Top Pics

**James Wade (ENG) - Seeded**

**Age:** 37  
**Hometown:** Aldershot, England  
**Nickname:** The Machine  
**Darts Used:** 20g Unicorn  
**PDC World Championship Best:** 3 x S-Finalist



Photo Credit: Chris Sargeant, Tip Top Pics

**Dave Chisnall (ENG) - Seeded**

**Age:** 40  
**Hometown:** St Helens, England  
**Nickname:** Chizzy  
**Darts Used:** 22g Harrows  
**PDC World Championship Best:** 2 x Q-Finalist



Photo Credit: Chris Sargeant, Tip Top Pics

**Dimitri Van den Bergh (BEL) - Seeded**

**Age:** 26  
**Hometown:** Antwerp, Belgium  
**Nickname:** The Dream Maker  
**Darts Used:** 22g Unicorn  
**PDC World Championship Best:** 2 x Q-Finalist



Photo Credit: Chris Sargeant, Tip Top Pics

**Ian White (ENG) - Seeded**

**Age:** 50  
**Hometown:** Stoke-On-Trent, England  
**Nickname:** Diamond  
**Darts Used:** 22g Unicorn  
**PDC World Championship Best:** Q-Finalist



Photo Credit: Chris Sargeant, Tip Top Pics

**Daryl Gurney (NI) - Seeded**

**Age:** 34  
**Hometown:** Derry, Northern Ireland  
**Nickname:** Superchin  
**Darts Used:** 24g Winmau  
**PDC World Championship Best:** Q-Finalist



Photo Credit: Lawrence Lustig, PDC

**Glen Durrant (ENG) - Seeded**

**Age:** 50  
**Hometown:** Middlesbrough, England  
**Nickname:** Duzza  
**Darts Used:** 24g Target  
**PDC World Championship Best:** Q-Finalist



Photo Credit: Chris Sargeant, Tip Top Pics

**Gary Anderson (SCO) - Seeded**

**Age:** 50  
**Hometown:** Burnham-on-Sea, England  
**Nickname:** The Flying Scotsman  
**Darts Used:** Unknown  
**PDC World Championship Best:** 2 x Winner



Photo Credit: Lawrence Lustig, PDC

**Jose de Sousa (POR) - Seeded**

**Age:** 46  
**Hometown:** Torrejón de Ardoz, Spain  
**Nickname:** The Special One  
**Darts Used:** Trinidad  
**PDC World Championship Best:** 2 x 1st Round



Photo Credit: Lawrence Lustig, PDC

**Krzysztof Ratajski (POL) - Seeded**

**Age:** 43  
**Hometown:** Warsaw, Poland  
**Nickname:** The Polish Eagle  
**Darts Used:** 20g Bulls  
**PDC World Championship Best:** Last 32 2020



Photo Credit: Lawrence Lustig, PDC

**Joe Cullen (ENG) - Seeded**

**Age:** 31  
**Hometown:** Bradford, England  
**Nickname:** The Rockstar  
**Darts Used:** 21g Winmau  
**PDC World Championship Best:** Last 32 2017



Photo Credit: Chris Sargeant, Tip Top Pics

**Jonny Clayton (WAL) - Seeded**

**Age:** 46  
**Hometown:** Pontyberem, Wales  
**Nickname:** The Ferret  
**Darts Used:** 21g Red Dragon  
**PDC World Championship Best:** 2 x Last 32



Photo Credit: Chris Sargeant, Tip Top Pics

**Simon Whitlock (AUS) - Seeded**

**Age:** 51  
**Hometown:** Hornsby, Australia  
**Nickname:** The Wizard  
**Darts Used:** 22g Winmau  
**PDC World Championship Best:** Runner Up



Photo Credit: Chris Sargeant, Tip Top Pics

**Mervyn King (ENG) - Seeded**

**Age:** 54  
**Hometown:** Bradwell, England  
**Nickname:** The King  
**Darts Used:** 22g Winmau  
**PDC World Championship Best:** Semi-Finalist



Photo Credit: Chris Sargeant, Tip Top Pics

**Mensur Suljovic (AUT) - Seeded**

**Age:** 48  
**Hometown:** Vienna, Austria  
**Nickname:** The Gentle  
**Darts Used:** 22g Bulls  
**PDC World Championship Best:** 3 x Last 16



Photo Credit: Chris Sargeant, Tip Top Pics

**Adrian Lewis (ENG) - Seeded**

**Age:** 35  
**Hometown:** Stoke-On-Trent, England  
**Nickname:** Jackpot  
**Darts Used:** 21g Target  
**PDC World Championship Best:** 2 x Winner

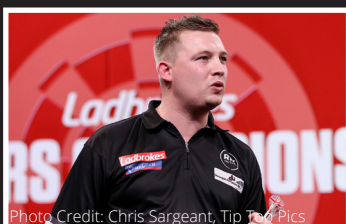


Photo Credit: Chris Sargeant, Tip Top Pics

**Chris Dobey (ENG) - Seeded**

**Age:** 30  
**Hometown:** Bedlington, England  
**Nickname:** Hollywood  
**Darts Used:** 23g Unicorn  
**PDC World Championship Best:** 2 x Last 16

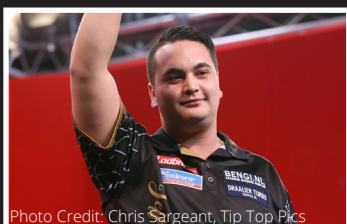


Photo Credit: Chris Sargeant, Tip Top Pics

**Jeffrey de Zwaan (NED) - Seeded**

**Age:** 24  
**Hometown:** Leidschendam, Netherlands  
**Nickname:** The Black Cobra  
**Darts Used:** 23g Unicorn  
**PDC World Championship Best:** Last 16 2020



Photo Credit: Chris Sargeant, Tip Top Pics

**Jermaine Wattimena (NED) - Seeded**

**Age:** 32  
**Hometown:** Westervoort, Netherlands  
**Nickname:** Machine Gun  
**Darts Used:** 22g Bulls  
**PDC World Championship Best:** 2 x Last 32



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