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Inside Today...

**FREE Tips From Shrewd Tipster, TWL Pro
Tip and Value Win**

Top Tipsters For December 2018

**Another Darts World Title For MVG - By
Ian Hudson**

**Today's Sports Betting Preview - By Rick
Elliott**

Dead Rubbers For City And United

Your Betting Experience Better

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[Daily Blog Updates](#)

[Racecards & Ratings](#)

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[App For Android](#)

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
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TODAY'S FREE SPORTS BETTING TIPS...

[Shrewd Tipster](#)

Win Bet - Lingfield (A.W) 12:40 - Philamundo @ 5/2

[TWL Pro Tip](#)

Win Bet - Hexham 13:20 - Derriana Spirit @ 11/10

[Value Wins](#)

Win Bet - Leicester 15:00 - Cock A Doodle Doo @ 9/2

Another Darts World Title For MVG - By Ian Hudson

There is a field of 96 players for the 2019 PDC World Darts Championship but the one famous player absent will get plenty of media coverage. Phil Taylor has now retired from the sport so this is the first world event under the banner of the PDC that he will not contest. Michael Van Gerwen won't win 16 titles like Taylor but the number one seed can add to the championships he won in 2014 and 2017. MVG is the best darts player in the world.

Darts is a strange sport (if you can call it a sport) because there are two world championships. The PDC version comes first and this event has the backing of Sky Sports and Barry Hearn is one of the big cheeses. One of the issues he has had to deal with is ending the tradition of the walk-on girls. It won't quite be the same at the Alexandra Palace this year as Phil 'The Power' Taylor won't be entering the arena flanked by two attractive young ladies. The number of qualifiers has been increased by 32 players to 96 who play on a knockout basis and there will be 95 matches.

Hearn has grabbed darts and taken it into the 21st century. Those of a more mature age may remember the Indoor League. It dates back to the 1970's and featured pub games and the programme was introduced by Fred Truman. Darts was famously totally sent up in a Not The Nine O'Clock News sketch in which Mel Smith went for doubles...vodka, gin and whisky. Hearn is a smooth operator and having transformed snooker he turned his attention to darts. Taylor was the equivalent of Steve Davis in snooker and he dominated darts for over 20 years.

Whether darts is a sport or pub game is of no concern to the crowds that congregate at the arena or the television audience. Fancy dress is a tradition and holding up cards with messages to friends and family is part of the spectacle. However, amid the razzmatazz darts is a game of great skill. The consistency and accuracy of the players in aiming for triple 20 makes dart a sport of technique under pressure and it's remarkable how often players score over 100 points or maximums. Beyond the clichés darts is a difficult sport at which to excel.

The Dutch player Van Gerwen is currently the player that excels the most and he can confirm his status again as the number one seed. The second seed is Rob Cross, the defending champion, and three former champions are also seeded. The 32 highest ranked players get a bye into the second round. The next 32 players in the standings and the same number of qualifiers from international tournaments contest the first round. All the action will be shown live on Sky Sports. Matches are decided from over 5 sets in the first round up to 13 sets for the final. A set is the best of 5 legs.

The growth of darts as a popular TV and live sport is reflected in the prize money. The winner receives half a million pounds which is about three times more than Ronnie O'Sullivan won for his success at the UK Championship which is the second biggest tournament in snooker. Van Gerwen is tipped to scoop that pot.

Today's Sports Betting Preview - By Rick Elliott

Dead Rubbers For City And United

Manchester City and Manchester United have already qualified for the last 16 of the Champions League ahead of tonight's fixtures on match day six. Both their opponents cannot finish in the top two so in theory the matches at home to Hoffenheim and at Valencia are dead rubbers. Liverpool and Tottenham qualified last night so all four teams from the Premier League will be playing in the knockout stages.

There is nothing to be gained from winning the group rather than finishing second so City and United have very little to play for other than pride. Valencia can only finish third so are already heading for the Europa League and there is only a small chance of Hoffenheim overhauling Shakhtar in third place. The double on two DRAWS pays 22/1 with **Ladbrokes**.

Last weekend's Premier League match at Chelsea did not go well for City. They lost for the first time this season and the atmosphere was toxic. Abuse of any type is still prevalent in English football and there is a line between passionately supporting your team and acting like a brat. City have a long injury list and being competitive at home against Everton is the priority. In the meeting with Hoffenheim UNDER 2.5 GOALS is 13/5 with **Paddy Power**.

In the last 20 Valencia matches in La Liga and the Champions League only three have produced more than two goals. The reverse fixture at Old Trafford was a goalless draw. Jose Mourinho's squad suggests the match is an inconvenience ahead of the away match with Liverpool in the league on Sunday. Team selection and motivation will be key but the circumstances point to BOTH TEAMS NOT TO SCORE at 11/10 with **Betfair**.

The racing is more than ordinary with no standout race that is worth three figures to the winner. The nap of the day is running in the maiden hurdle at Leicester (1.30) over just less than two miles. There are only two winners in the 12 runner field and Cardigan Bay has something to find with the favourite. That horse is EBONY GALE who won a bumper last season and is 6/4 with **William Hill** to win this race today