

Her fans in Europe won't let her alone. In airports, hotels and pubs, they chase her and hound her for autographs, or maybe even a photograph.

But back home in Hermosa Beach, Stacy Bromberg — arguably the best at what she plays — remains anonymous.

That's probably because she plays darts.

And she plays a lot — competing on the road most weekends, leaving her husband behind for the sport she loves.

"The pressure's on, not just because other people are out to be better than you, but because of the pressure you put on yourself to remain No. 1," she said.

For the past two years she has amassed more points than any other woman on the American Darts Organization tour.

"I have an ego like anyone else," said Bromberg, a pleasant, carrot-haired, self-effacing woman, "and I finally found something I'm good at."

Being the best means constant practice and hitting the road for weekend tournaments, where she wins the few hundred dollars that sponsors put up and garners points to retain her World Cup team member standing.

World Cup darts was organized 18 years ago by the World Darts Federation, which has a small but loyal following: Two weeks ago, more than 750 darters from 34 countries met in Las Vegas to compete for medals and a smidgen of fame and prestige.

The World Cup has no cash prizes, but that's not why Bromberg competes. She plays because it's fun, she said. And, she added, "I'm very competitive."

The Culver City native was weaned on sports: softball, basketball, flag football, diving, swimming, tennis and volleyball.

"I played all sports, everything I could compete in," she said. "Once I got involved in something, I always wanted to find out how good I could be, compared to the rest of the world."

Sports in her genes

Her mother and father played sports, but it was Bromberg's two athletic older brothers that pushed her the hardest. "I figured I'd better be good or they wouldn't let me play," Bromberg said.

But she'd never tried darts.

Her first turn came seven years ago when she was enrolled in law school. A darts team at a Culver City pub asked Bromberg to

stand in for an absent player. She wasn't even sure how to hold a dart.

But her performance that night so impressed one of the players, he offered to help her learn the game.

After gaining her bachelor's degree in commercial business and recreation from California State University, Northridge, Bromberg had traveled the world, spending time with Southeast Asia CARE, where she negotiated contracts and brought relief to refugees from the Vietnam War.

She graduated from the University of West Los Angeles School of Law in 1985 and, after two tries, passed the state bar exam.

Lawyer-turned-investigator

But six months into her career as a lawyer, Bromberg realized she hated hustling clients and trial work. What she liked best — besides darts — was investigations.

Now attorneys hire her to collect information for their personal injury and family law cases. She searches records, sits on stakeouts, tracks down witnesses and uses private sources to get her information.

The job lets her work out of her home, where a dart board is handy. The sport doesn't cover her bills — she wins about

\$20,000 a year — but it's still her first love.

And practice makes perfect, or darn near.

"It's a game of precision," Bromberg said. "We have a saying in darts: 'It's 80 percent mental, maybe 10 or 15 percent practice and 5 or 10 percent luck.'"

It takes all that to toss a 6-inch dart weighing not quite an ounce



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Stacy Bromberg

at dart board targets less than a square-inch wide — all under the steady glare of your opponents.

Darts

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"It's a vicious competition," she said.

But not so vicious to make her quit, or stay home.

Come the fall holidays, she will be back in England for the international masters tournament.

She'll go without her husband, but that's the way she wants it. He understands: He was the one who taught her to play darts seven years ago in that Culver City bar.

They got married just a few months ago.

"I travel alone, and I stay alone," Bromberg said. "If I could, I'd play the events alone. I'm that focused. You have to be. . . . Nothing else can get in the way."

Besides, she enjoys the trips to Europe, where darts has a strong following. For Bromberg, it can be a heady time.

"They take it very seriously," she said. "Over there, they have darts and soccer. I'm as famous as Joe Montana over there."