Curling 101

Curling is a team game, where all four team members’ efforts contribute directly to each shot. Teams can be composed of both sexes and all ages, and like golf, curling is a lifetime sport.

A curler at any skill level, like a golfer, finds that his or her skills decline only gradually from about age 45 onward. A national class curler, like the pro golfer, realizes that once the physical aspects are mastered, the mental aspect of the game separates the good player from the champion.

To continue with the golf analogy, it can be said that the curler who is at the height of his or her game has the same edge as the golfer who is sinking the key putts: great nerves, will to win, and mental toughness.

Historical and Descriptive Notes

It is generally agreed that curling was developed in Scotland in the 16th century. The climate in Scotland was colder then, and curling took place on the many marshes (since drained). Scottish farmers curled on the frozen marshes using “channel stones,” which were naturally smoothed by the water’s action. The principles of the game were similar to the modern game, although there were many differences in rules and equipment.

The spirit of curling evolved in the early centuries in Scotland. It is this spirit of honorable competition followed by egalitarian sociality that made curling a special game in curlers’ minds. An excerpt from “The Spirit of Curling:”

“Curlers play to win but never to humble their opponents. A true curler would prefer to lose rather than win unfairly... while the main object of the game is to determine the relative skill of the players, the spirit of the game demands good sportsmanship, kindly feeling, and honorable conduct.”

Scottish immigrants brought the game with them to North America, first to Canada around 1759, then to the United States around 1832. By 1855, curling clubs flourished in New York City, Detroit, Milwaukee and Portage, Wis. Curling in the rest of Europe developed in the 20th century.

The Game

A game is made up of 10 ends (like innings). An end consists of each team member shooting (delivering) two rocks, or stones, alternately with the opponent’s player at the same position. When all 16 rocks have been delivered, the score for that end is determined.

A 12-foot circle (the “house”) is the scoring area. For each stone closer to the center of the circles (the tee) than any of the opponent’s, one point is scored. The team scoring two or more stones closer to the center of the circles at the same time scores an additional point. The total score of each end is the “difference of points.”

Sweeping—with either a straw broom, hog hair or horse hair brush, or synthetic brush—adds the element of fitness to curling because, to be effective, sweeping must be very vigorous. Sweeping melts slightly the ice, which reduces the friction between the running stone and the ice. The result is that the stone will curl less, and slide farther. Sweeping is called for when the stone has not been delivered firmly enough, and/or when the stone is aimed “narrower,” or inside the broom target. Sweeping can help a rock slide up to an additional 15 feet. Top teams control most shots by using aim and weight “within the sweeping zone.”

Strategy is a major part of curling. Shots are played with an eye to the last rocks of each end, not simply placed at the center of the circles. The strategy can be rather complex. Innovations are constantly being made and adopted when the innovators win, similar to other sports where strategy and the game plan plays a major role.

It is common for games between national-class teams to be very close, with both skips jockeying for the last shot in the last end. In curling, all four players of a team are involved in each of their team’s shots. While the skip, or captain, holds his or her broom for a target and calls the strategy for the shooter, the other two players sweep the stone’s path when deemed necessary.

The shooter must be accurate in three functions:

1. Aim (at the broom)
2. “Weight” (velocity imparted to the stone)
3. Imparting the correct “handle” (curl) to each shot

Aiming

Aiming consists of each team member shooting (delivering) two rocks, or stones, alternately with the opponent’s player at the same position. When all 16 rocks have been delivered, the score for that end is determined.

Aiming is crucial in curling because the shooter must aim his or her stone and also provide a means to shoot around guards. Aiming with either a straw broom, hog hair or horse hair brush, or synthetic brush adds the element of fitness to curling because, to be effective, sweeping must be very vigorous. Sweeping melts slightly the ice, which reduces the friction between the running stone and the ice. The result is that the stone will curl less, and slide farther. Sweeping is called for when the stone has not been delivered firmly enough, and/or when the stone is aimed “narrower,” or inside the broom target. Sweeping can help a rock slide up to an additional 15 feet. Top teams control most shots by using aim and weight “within the sweeping zone.”

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Aiming for Three Straight

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USA Curling is proud to partner with the following:
Sinclair, Ruohonen rinks look to defend titles

By Terry L. Davis, Daily Pebble Editor

The city of Kalamazoo, Mich., is set to host the top curling teams in the nation as the 2019 USA Curling National Championships sweep into town this weekend.

Wings Event Center will host 18 teams in the weeklong competition that kicks off tonight. Ten men’s and eight women’s teams are set to vie for national titles and the chance to represent the United States at the upcoming World Curling Championships. USA Curling is partnered with Wings, the Kalamazoo Curling Club and Discover Kalamazoo in hosting the event. This is the third time that the city has hosted the National Championships (2019, 2015, 2010).

Jamie Sinclair and Rich Ruohonen are back to defend the national titles they won last March in Fargo, N.D. Sinclair is looking for a three-peat, which hasn’t been done since Debbie McCormick led her team to four straight titles from 2006 through 2009. Sinclair is past national champions in the field:

- Colin Hufman (2018, 2016)
- Todd Birr (2007)
- Greg Johnson (2007)
- Nina Roth (2014, 2010)
- Becca Hamilton (2014)
- Tara Peterson (2014)
- Tabitha Peterson (2012)

16-24 In Silkeborg, Denmark, while the Men's World Championship will take place March 30-April 7 in Lethbridge, Alberta, Canada.

Based on requirements set forth at the start of the season, five of the women's teams and four of the competing men's teams have met the threshold to represent the U.S. at the upcoming world championships should they win their respective national titles on Feb. 16. Those teams include: Nina Roth, Jamie Sinclair, Cory Christensen, Stephanie Senneker, Annamarie Dubberstein, John Shuster, Rich Ruohonen, Mark Fenner and Scott Dunnam.

Past national champions in the field:
- Phil Tilk (2018, 2016, 2013)
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Tonight:
- Sheet A: Strouse vs. Shuster
- Sheet B: Dunnam vs. Birklid
- Sheet C: Sinnett vs. Corbett
- Sheet D: Brundidge vs. Fenner
- Sheet E: Birr vs. Ruohonen

Sunday, 8 a.m.:
- Sheet A: Brundidge vs. Ruohonen
- Sheet B: Corbett vs. Fenner
- Sheet C: Birr vs. Dunnam
- Sheet D: Birklid vs. Strouse
- Sheet E: Shuster vs. Sinnett

Sunday, 12 p.m.:
- Sheet A: Traxler vs. Sinclair
- Sheet B: Podoll vs. Rhyme
- Sheet C: Chrissten vs. Dubberstein
- Sheet E: Senneker vs. Roth

By Terry L. Davis, Daily Pebble Editor

The 2019 World Women's Championship is March 2-3 p.m. (men).

The Page playoffs on Friday afternoon. The semifinal four men's and three women's teams will advance to the championship finals on Saturday at 11 a.m. (women) and 3 p.m. (men).

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EXCEPTIONAL COCKTAILS
OFFICIAL COCKTAIL OF THE 2019 USA CURLING NATIONALS

ABSOLUT CRANBERRY CURLER
Absolut Citron, Cranberry Juice, Lemonade, Ginger Ale, in a souvenir curling rock cup
$15 with $6 refills!

Team Senneker (l-r) includes Elizabeth Demers, Maya Willertz, Stephanie Senneker, Rebecca Andrew and Emilia Juocys.

Team Roth (l-r) includes Nina Roth, Tabitha Peterson, Becca Hamilton and Tara Peterson.

Throughout the week there will be autograph and selfie opportunities with the 18 competing teams at the 2019 National Championships. On tap for Saturday night will be Team Nina Roth and Team Stephanie Senneker. Bring items to be autographed and get your smiles ready for selfies. The teams will be signing autographs from 6:45-7:15 p.m. tonight at the arena.

Sheets:

Sheet A:
1. Sheet E: Shuster vs. Sinnett
2. Sheet D: Birklid vs. Strouse
3. Sheet C: Birr vs. Dunnam
4. Sheet B: Podoll vs. Rhyme
5. Sheet A: Traxler vs. Sinclair

Sheet B:
1. Sheet E: Birr vs. Ruohonen
2. Sheet D: Birklid vs. Strouse
3. Sheet C: Birr vs. Dunnam
4. Sheet B: Corbett vs. Fenner
5. Sheet A: Brundidge vs. Ruohonen

Sheet C:
1. Sheet E: Shuster vs. Sinnett
2. Sheet D: Birklid vs. Strouse
3. Sheet C: Birr vs. Dunnam
4. Sheet B: Corbett vs. Fenner
5. Sheet A: Brundidge vs. Ruohonen

Sheet D:
1. Sheet E: Birr vs. Ruohonen
2. Sheet D: Birklid vs. Strouse
3. Sheet C: Birr vs. Dunnam
4. Sheet B: Corbett vs. Fenner
5. Sheet A: Brundidge vs. Ruohonen

Sheet E:
1. Sheet E: Shuster vs. Sinnett
2. Sheet D: Birklid vs. Strouse
3. Sheet C: Birr vs. Dunnam
4. Sheet B: Corbett vs. Fenner
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