

What is a sturling spiel you ask?

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With curling gaining popularity all over the province and in Canada, especially since the double gold medals won on the Olympic stage, a new style of curling spiel has begun gaining ground.

Sturling curling is a two-person curling game with either stick or slide delivery. Sturling comes from the S, meaning stick or slide, T stands for two-person team and the remainder of the letters come from the word "curling." The only sweeping allowed in the game is from the hog line to the back of the house at the playing end.

Played as a six-end game, the two delivering players alternately deliver six stones each per end, so the action really does move along quite quickly. The second team member skips the other end of the sheet and the roles are reversed when playing the next end, and so on. To keep the aim of a strategic game, no stone, even if it's in the house, may be removed from play prior to the delivery of the fourth stone at each end.

Sturling curling is gaining in popularity with both genders and all ages. The Unity Curling Club has now hosted two sturling spiels, one in December that iced 12 teams and the most recent March 11 that was a 10-team format, with half of the teams from out of town.

Ever since some Unity curlers took part in an event like this in Provost, Alta., it has rapidly gained interest for Unity curlers and teams from the Unity Curling Club have travelled to Lloydminster, Wainwright, Chauvin and Provost.

The intention of this new style of curling game is to get more people involved in the sport of curling, and, for seniors, it is a way of continuing to enjoy the sport and compete with younger curlers on a level playing field.

Unity curlers, and organizers of the latest sturling spiel, Lorne Acton and Norm Potter, said "stick delivery can be quite accurate as the curler is no longer trying to maintain balance while delivering a stone." Potter adds, "There are obvious benefits for those who have hip or knee problems, or for those curlers young or old that find the rocks heavy to deliver, or for those who are concerned with falling during sweeping."

With fewer stones used and fewer ends to play, the sturling game tends to be more defensive than a regular curling game. The incidence and degree of lopsided games is greatly reduced and hardly ever does a team surrender before the end of the game.

Both Acton and Potter said they have enjoyed curling in regular curling events in addition to the Sturling events. Acton said he has played in eight sturling spiels this year and he has also curled in two regular men's bonspiels, as well as league curling. Acton said he is a long-time curler and has enjoyed the addition of the sturling events over the past four to five years. Both organizers commented that Regina hosted a sturling spiel this season with over 100 teams entered.

It's not a game limited by age or ability; rather it's a new format meant to keep everyone playing the game they enjoy. With the heightened activity in the sturling spiel events thus far, it is likely more and more clubs will be hosting events like this in the future.



Photo by Sherri Solomko

Sturling competitors line up their shots during a recent spiel in Unity.