

Sweep deftly and carry a big stick

Sturling championships kick off this weekend in Petersfield

By Jill Winzoski

If necessity is the mother of invention, and since some folks need to curl, it only follows that sturling, or stick curling, would have to be invented.

For the first time ever, Petersfield Curling Club is hosting the 2011 Manitoba Open Stick Curling Provincial Championship this weekend.

Sturling is the cleverly named sport of stick curling, a modified version of curling that allows anyone with a disability to play the age-old sport.

Unlike curling, which is comprised

of four players per team, sturling requires only two, and instead of sweeping from end to end, sturling requires that players only sweep from the hog-line in. Instead of the usual two-hour, eight-end games that curling demands, a six-end game of sturling can be wrapped up in less than an hour.

And of course, sturling makes use of a stick to help push those heavy rocks.

Marcel Lemire, who sits on the Manitoba Stick Curling Association Board (and lives just down the road from the rink), said the sport was invented for anybody with a disability or handicap.

"You can still curl if you have a hip replacement, knee problems, or arthritis," he assured. Lemire has been curling since he was nine, but started sturling eight years ago after

arthritis got the better of his knees.

Carson Schultz and Brian Dingham of Didsbury, Alta., first invented the ingenious sport in 1998.

According to Lemire, Dingham went in for minor surgery and due to complications was unable to walk afterwards, and was confined to a wheelchair.

"Because he liked curling so much, Carson said 'well I'll hold the sticks and you throw the rocks from the wheelchair,'" said Lemire.

The sport has come a long way since then. Lemire said sturling has spread like wildfire and is now played across Canada, in some U.S. states, as well as Scotland, Germany, Switzerland and New Zealand.

"This is not a sport just for people with one foot on a banana peel and one foot in the grave," said Lemire.

The avid sturler also said people

from age nine to 94 can play the sport, giving grandparents the unique opportunity to curl with their grandkids.

Lemire said although sturlers don't need to buy curling shoes, the stick will run them about \$80 apiece.

"But we have guys here who make homemade sticks for \$2," he said.

"You gotta remember they're seniors and they like to invent things and they know how to save a dollar," he added.

The tournament runs from, Feb. 17 to Feb. 19, from 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. There will also be daily draws as well as daily live music performances by Craig Smith and family.

Although it's past deadline to register a team, call Marcel at 738-2488 or the Petersfield Curling Club (204) 738-4446 for more details. Visit sturling.net or stickcurling.ca for more information on the sport.