

STICK CURLING, OR STURLING?

What does the future hold: stick curling, or sturling? The only significant difference is that sturling welcomes slide delivering curlers whereas stick curling prohibits them. And yes, I have ardently supported stick curling, before I realized that it blatantly discriminated against sliders. That is not only unnecessary, it's counter productive. There is no stick curling league or event held anywhere that is over-subscribed.

So the question becomes: can stick curlers compete fairly against slide curlers, and the answer is a resounding yes! A couple of years ago pressure was applied to change the rules to make the game more difficult for stick users, so the World Curling Federation (WCF) adjusted the point of release from the hog line to the tee line. This rule has not been widely accepted. In fact, both points of view – that stick curlers are too good, and that stick curlers can't compete with slide curlers – are over-exaggerated. Experience has shown that on the whole, it is neither easier nor more difficult to deliver a rock using a stick. Yes, the stick makes it easier for some individuals who have difficulty executing the slide, but it certainly does not make anyone better than the top slide curlers. It evens the competitive level.

Apparently, some stick curlers believe that allowing the slide delivery will encourage younger, more athletic curlers to take part in the game, and hence they, individually, will not be competitive. There are two things they should remember: 1) if they are not in top physical form, use of the stick will likely raise their capability (not beyond all slide curlers, but closer); and 2) there are other more practical and just means of limiting competitive levels than to ban a whole class of entrants. Also, the very top curlers have more lucrative possibilities in the regular game. It has been demonstrated that at the local level, stick curlers and slide curlers are competitively equal.

That brings me to the name, Sturling, a contraction of **s**tick or slide delivery, **t**wo-person team **c**urling. Stick curling has been defined in some quarters as "shuffle board on ice – a bunch of old farts shuffling along on ice...". The game doesn't deserve that mockery. Then too, stick curling in some locations means the regular curling game, but played using a stick to deliver the rocks. This causes all sorts of confusion and misunderstanding. Side by side provinces now hold provincial championships of 'stick curling', but play completely different games. There is also the new 'mixed doubles' game, for which the WCF hold a world championship, another two-person team game of curling, but allowing only slide curlers. So the name Sturling is short, accurate, and to the best of my knowledge unique for a game. It contains a significant part of the word 'curling', so is true to the roots of the game, yet does not contain the whole word 'curling' so emphasizes that it is quite a different sport.

This two-person team activity has many merits both for individuals (including wheelchair curlers) and for curling clubs, but to achieve it's destiny we do need a consistent name and set of rules, across the country. Logically, that's 'sturling'.

Let's go Sturling!