



THE GAME AT A GLANCE

Curling could be summed up as a combination of chess, golf and billiards. The game is like chess in that each team is making specific strategic moves for a positive end result, while anticipating and planning for your opponent's moves. Curling is much like golf in a number of ways. First, it is fundamentally like golf in that you are trying to place an object in a particular position, relatively far away to achieve an ultimate goal. It is mechanically like golf in terms of putting; curling is all about line and weight (known as *speed* in golf) to put the stone exactly where you want it. Ice conditions are variable like putting greens are variable. Curling is also like golf in that there are some fundamentals in throwing and sweeping stones that are helpful to know; but with some practice everyone does development their own technique and style for delivering a stone as they do in hitting a golf ball. Curling is like billiards with the hand-eye coordination; *bump-ups*, *takeouts*, *double-takeout-raise* are just a few shots that require the same angles as hitting pool balls. The one thing that makes curling unique among all of these activities is the sweeping; the fact that you can alter the course of the stone after it has been thrown. Consequently, people who enjoy one or more of these activities are more likely to take to curling.

Curling is a 4-person team sport that involves sliding 8 (2 per player); 42-pound granite stones 138 feet in position to get more stones closer to the center than your opponent. Only one team scores per **End** in curling. An **End** is when all 8 stones by each team (16 total) have been delivered to the **House**. The circular area at each end of the sheet is called the **House**. Games are usually 8 or 10 **Ends** long taking about 15mins per **End**.

The **Lead** throws the first two stones, the **Second** throws stones 3 & 4, the **Third(Vice Skip)** throws stones 5 & 6, and the **Skip** throws stones 7 and the strategically all-important **Hammer**, the last stone. The "leader" of the team is called the **Skip**. The **Skip** is generally the most skilled strategically at the game, a consistent thrower, and has a very good eye for ice conditions. However, curling is very much a team sport and most importantly the **Skip** provides leadership among the team. The **Skip** is the only one on the team that does not sweep. Instead, the **Skip** is in the **House** keeping tabs on how the **End** and the game is shaping up strategically and is discussing options with the teammates. The **Skip** will call the shot by positioning a broom precisely where the thrower needs to aim and also indicate the *weight* needed to make the shot. It is up to the whole team however, to get the stone where they want it by sweeping and by not sweeping appropriately; hence all of the communicating (*some call it yelling*) when a stone is being delivered to the house. The **Vice Skip** will hold the broom when the **Skip** is throwing.

The **Hammer** is the cornerstone of curling strategy, and is strategically important because it is the last stone. The team that scores, loses the **Hammer**, and throws the first stone to start the next **End**. The strategy involved in curling is not really something you can read in a book or master in one or two short lessons. Sometimes described as "chess on ice", curling is much closer to chess than to shuffleboard or bowling. The more experience, the better the ice conditions, and a competitive nature of play all make a difference in the importance of strategy to the game of Curling. On the other hand, curling can also be played with "beverage in hand" and little or no regard for strategy.

Here are just a few of the basic rules to get started. When throwing stones, your stone must make it pass the far **Hog Line** or it is a **Hogger** and is immediately removed from play. You must also release your stone before crossing the close **Hog Line** or it too must be removed from play. The **Free Guard Zone** is the area in front of the House and behind the **Hog Line**. The first four stones delivered, two from each team, that are fully within this area cannot be hit out of play. After the first four stones are thrown, all stones are fair game to hit out. If you touch a rock that is moving it is a **Burned Rock** and is removed from play immediately. You can sweep your opponents stones only after the stone passes over the **Tee Line**. A stone that goes fully past the **Back Line** is out and removed from play.