

Bullet Proof Delivery



Sometimes when you're in the hack, you feel like Superman, on other occasions ... more like Clark Kent.

There are many things that can affect your game. Some you control, others are beyond your sphere of influence.

Let's focus on the ones you can, namely: fitness, equipment and performance.

- 1) A little **fitness** goes a long way. One of my flight team curlers slides out of the hack and well past the hog line without benefit of broom or curling stone and on most days is rock steady. His technique is near perfect but more importantly he is in terrific shape (BTW, he's the one that's completed the Boston Marathon several times). The large and small muscle groups required to maintain balance during a delivery are often less than up to the challenge particularly if you don't put in the time to achieve a certain level of fitness. Give it some thought the next time you're catching your breath after sweeping from hog to hog. Check out John Morris' book "Fit to Curl" for some great curling specific exercise routines.
- 2) One of the most beneficial and often overlooked aspects of our game is maintaining and possibly upgrading the **equipment** we use to curl. Easy fixes include:
 - (i) a toe coat/cap and/or shoe lace cover for your hack shoe (trailing leg)
 - (ii) a vinyl covered knee pad
 - (iii) replacing your gripper (your iceman will thank you!)
 - (iv) washing or replacing your brush head
 - (v) switching to a crutch/stabilizer if appropriate,
 - (vi) upgrading to a thicker slider.

As they say, the devil is in the details, and you'll be amazed how changing one small item may significantly improve your curling delivery.

- 3) Now for the meat & potatoes of a “bullet-proof delivery”. When you’re striving to reach your ideal **performance** state, think about the 5 **P**’s, namely: **Purposeful Practice**, **Persistence**, **Preparation** and **Psychology**.
- ⊙ First and foremost, a sound technical delivery is the most important weapon in your quest for peak performance. Seek out knowledgeable curlers/instructors who can help identify some of your delivery problems and hopefully provide helpful advice.
 - ⊙ How do you get to Carnegie Hall? PRACTICE!! The old adage still holds true with the following small caveat: It is far better to ‘place’ 8 shots up and back with a set plan, than to throw rock after rock for 2 hrs without any definite purpose.

Practice doesn’t make perfect ... perfect practice makes perfect.

- ⊙ It takes a minimum of 10 yrs and 10,000 hrs of training for a talented athlete to reach elite levels. Roughly translated, that’s more than 3 hrs of daily training for 10 yrs. Take every advantage you can of available ice time to fine-tune your technique once you’ve mastered the basic mechanics of your delivery. You may not get to the Brier, but persistence and purposeful practice will make you a better curler!
- ⊙ A late night, a long day, a quick snack before you play and possibly something to chase it down with (and I don’t mean water) are a great recipe for a less than ideal game performance. As tired and overused as some clichés may seem, they occasionally reflect simple truisms or facts that have withstood the test of time. “*Get a good night’s sleep, eat properly, drink plenty of fluids*” are aspects of your pre-curling preparation that are just as important and an integral part in ensuring you “*be the best you can be*” during your game (sorry ... clichés beget clichés).
- ⊙ Unquestionably, curling is both a physical and a mental challenge. The ability to stay focused and remain relaxed with the confidence you need to succeed, are skills that must be acquired and nurtured throughout your curling career.

For your consideration, in no particular order:

-  The delivery of 8 rocks for each curler takes less than 60 seconds. The actual game may take 2 hrs, so there's a considerable amount of "down" time. What you do during that time usually determines what will happen during your delivery.
-  Do you perform well because you're confident or are you confident because you're performing well? Confidence should come from knowing you've done everything you can to prepare for this event. It may also stem from recalling similar, previous experiences and succeeding, or it may be bolstered by your team's dynamics i.e. they give you confidence.
-  If enough people tell you that your delivery is excellent, trust your mechanics, trust your delivery! Don't let one failure derail the rest of your game. Did I mention, TRUST YOUR DELIVERY!
-  Although there are many aspects of the game you can't control, you are always in complete control over how you react to those events!
-  When you're in the hack do you hope to make the shot or expect to make the shot. A positive attitude that projects confidence, preparedness and a love for playing the game is worth its weight in gold no matter the outcome.
-  When doubt starts creeping into your thoughts, think about when you've successfully made this shot in the past, imagine it in your minds' eye then, make it happen.
-  The two hemispheres of your brain function somewhat differently. The left side is somewhat like my personality, obsessing about the details. The right side is more easy going, it looks at "the big picture". When you're delivering a stone, the trick is to keep your left brain occupied so that the right side can take charge and allow you to move in a calm, confident manner devoid of the small details that tend to get in the way.
-  When you watch a top level skip sliding from the playing end towards the hack, pay attention to what they do. Often, you may notice

that they'll balance on one shoe as their sliding, or sweep the intended path of the rock or seem somewhat distant. Although their actions may appear random, it is more likely that they are trying to keep their left hemisphere busy i.e. using a mantra, balancing their body, or performing short, intense exercise in order that the right side can perform and "Just Do It".



One last piece of advice before I sign off. Like everyone else, I struggle with consistency. Did you ever have one of those games when you feel like your descending into the 9 circles of suffering from Dante's Inferno? On one such occasion, in desperation I asked a good friend and fellow curler how he managed to make most of his shots? "Simple" he said "I just concentrate on hitting the broom and leave everything else to my teammates".



"It is always the simple things that change our lives".

From the warm side of glass - Denis Faubert