

What it takes to become a successful and harmonious team



1. **Establish at the outset what your individual and team goals are.**

If your vice and skip have aspirations of making it to provincials and your front end only want to make it to the bar after the games, there may be dark clouds in the horizon. Make sure everyone shares a common goal.

2. **Examine your team's DNA.**

Determine early on how your games will proceed. Does your team's collective skills and temperament favour an aggressive, balanced or conservative style of play.

3. **Whenever possible, play to your team's strengths and be aware of your opponent's tendencies.**

If your team can "bend it like Beckham" and draw on a dime, you may want to play a pursuing rather than a protecting strategy.

Conversely, if your team is more comfortable with takeouts and tap backs, a protecting approach with fewer rocks in play may be to your advantage.

Should you be fortunate enough to have a team with all of these shots in their back pocket (providing you can afford them), you may want to use a probing strategy early on and then switch to whatever approach offers you the biggest gain.

It goes without saying (but I'll say it anyway), much of this depends on playing conditions, the oppositions tendencies and of course the scoreboard in the middle and late ends.

4. **Identify, acknowledge and respect each player's role on your team.**

I've found that one of the best ways to understand and value each team member's responsibilities is to play those positions first hand at some point in time.

Your perspective will be significantly different depending on the position you play; don't be afraid to mix it up a bit. You will find it enlightening and hopefully you will develop a better appreciation for your fellow teammates' contributions to a successful end.

5. **Don't worry be happy** 🧐

This is not to say that you should be drinking in the sights and sounds of the bucolic world around you with a silly grin on your face or whistling a happy tune; however, your demeanour on the ice can impact your team's overall performance in a positive or negative way.

There's nothing wrong with letting off a little steam if you've missed the broom or overshot the intended target, but picking apart your team's delivery during a game or being overly critical of their weight judgment or icing, will invariably cause uncertainty and a lack of confidence among your teammates.

..... do you hear that? It's the sound of silence (no, not Paul Simon's song). It was conveyed to me in a curling coach's course that silence is worse than saying something after a person misses a shot. Try to be kind, support your team mate. Offer constructive criticism if need be or possibly remind him or her of their contractual obligation to buy a round of beer for a hogged rock.

6. **What we have here, is a failure to communicate.**

As much as I've tried to hone my telepathic skills, I'm still not able to discern what my teammates are trying to convey to me unless they actually communicate what I need to know as 40 pounds of granite comes hurtling towards me.

Successful teams have taken this to heart and constantly communicate with one another, adjusting and updating the information until the rock comes to rest. Don't be afraid to blurt out where you think the rock will stop e.g. 'top 8 foot'. Adjust your best guess estimate as needed as the stone travels down the sheet. You will find over time, that you will become much more proficient at judging weight.

Concurrently, the person delivering the rock needs to let the brushers know if there was a change in the release which may affect the rock's speed or trajectory e.g. 'threw it wide; pinched it'. At the far end, the skip needs to keep the brushers informed of the line of delivery (or as in most club games, a switch to plan B, C, D, etc.) and the need to sweep for line and/or weight to attain the desired outcome.

7. **Shot Tolerance**

While some shots occur with flawless execution (at least in my dreams), it's important to consider what might happen before the delivered rock reaches it's final stopping point. Always consider the following:

- What do you want to *Achieve* with this shot?
- What do you want to *Avoid* with this shot?
- What will you be able to *Accept* with this shot?

Nuff said!

8. **Know when to bail!**

There will come a critical point during an end when your team needs to consider other options to mitigate a potentially disastrous end.

"Doing the same thing over and over and expecting different results is insanity"

Being somewhat OCD, I tend to be more susceptible to calamitous on-ice outcomes. Fortunately, I rely on the good sense and experience of my vice and front end who will usually point out the obvious or perhaps not so obvious recourses available to us.

9. **There is no in team**

Curling is unique among sports in that it requires the combined efforts of 4 people to make a successful shot.

Knowing, respecting, communicating and supporting your fellow teammates and their abilities is an integral part of achieving your ideal performance state as a team.

John Donne's famous quotation comes to mind:

"No man is an island entire of itself, every man is a piece of the Continent, a part of the main"

From the warm side of the glass Denis Faubert