

## So you want to be a skip



Becoming a skip is relatively easy; (1) select a curler, (2) add ice water to their veins and 'voila', instant skip!

When I first started curling, I was the designated skip for our team. I very quickly learned that becoming a good skip required a person with certain attributes as well as a wide array of skills. I was definitely coming up short on both of these. 😬

The following guidelines should provide some helpful tips from some of our club's best and most respected skips for those of you considering the position.

### Laura Brown

- 1) Play to your players strengths.
- 2) Communicate your shot tolerance clearly.
- 3) Keep communication positive. "Pick up" your players when needed and understand the type of feedback they prefer to hear when they are down.

### Bob Daley

- 1) All members of the team should know what the ice is doing ie. watch the delivery of your opponent's rock when it's released. This added information will help your skip 'map' out the ice.
- 2) I am a skip that has to know the timing of the ice. Whether it is from back line to hog line or between the hog lines. Ensure your skip has up to date information.
- 3) Have a conversation with your vice, let him know what the options are regarding the delivery of the skip's rocks (shot tolerance) so that everyone is on the same page.

### Donna Jeffery

- 1) A skip should have a positive attitude. Remember, nobody misses on purpose. Do not show frustration, rather try to make a positive comment.
- 2) Be clear about the weight needed to make the shot.
- 3) Try to call the shot that the curler has a better chance of making but don't be afraid to let them try a more difficult shot.

### Dave Lollar

- 1) Try to get a handle on the ice, setting the broom for the right weight and know your team members releases and throws.
- 2) Park the bad shots, otherwise it will throw your concentration off for the next one.
- 3) Be decisive in your shot selection but receptive to input from your team, then commit to the shot.
- 4) Praise your teammates when they make good shots and offer constructive criticism when they don't.

### Garth Mitchell

- 1) Be patient, particularly in the early ends. When and should the opportunity present itself, try to capitalize on it; otherwise try to limit the opposition's gains with hammer.

- 2) Know your team's preferences (e.g. in-turns vs out-turns, come-arounds vs take-outs, etc.) and attempt to use these to achieve the best results.
- 3) Understand how each of your teammates deliveries/releases will affect the path of the rock.
- 4) Be specific with regards to the weight required to make a shot.
- 5) Admit your mistakes (e.g. too much ice, wrong line call, etc.), try to be positive and give credit to your team players for shots properly executed.
- 6) In order to achieve intended outcomes, try to establish a game plan, more specifically a blueprint for the end you are currently playing (e.g. aggressive vs conservative, pursue vs protect, etc.)
- 7) Try to get an understanding of rock behaviour on different surfaces (e.g. fine vs coarse pebble, changing ice dynamics as the game progresses, etc.)
- 8) Try to keep the game enjoyable.

### Denise Mulville

- 1) Play to your teams strengths and whenever possible, give them shots they can make.
- 2) Regardless of the outcome of a given shot, try to provide positive feedback e.g. "your weight was perfect".
- 3) Play your game and leave shots you as a skip can make.
- 4) Try not to change your mind once you're in the hack. Forget about your misses and commit to the shot.

### Tammy-Scott Zelt

- 1) Give my teammates shots they can make.
- 2) Know your opponents weaknesses and whenever possible play accordingly.
- 3) When deciding on a shot, anticipate the opponent's next shot.
- 4) While being mindful of the score; with hammer, keep the front open; without hammer, force the opponents to one.
- 5) Always consider shot tolerance (plan A & B ) when selecting a shot.

### My two cents worth

- 1) Be Considerate: Nothing undermines a player's confidence more than on-going negative criticism. How and what you say will make or break your team.
- 2) Hit The Broom: Often the entire end will come down to your last shot. In most cases, your ability to make it is often hampered by your outcome expectations. Your job in the hack is to clear your mind, throw the right weight and hit the broom.
- 3) Gather Intel: What are the playing conditions (slow/keen ice?; straight/lots of curl?; rigdes/ledges?; flat spots?, level/peaked/dished/slanted/combo ice?), your team's performance level today; your opponent's tendencies; rock characteristics (cutters?; mismatched?)

- 4) Plan Ahead for Plan B: Consider options for your intended shot and share it with your teammates ie. what you want to achieve, what's acceptable and what you want to avoid. Consider it a bit of insurance.
- 5) Park it: Learn from your mistakes, then set it aside. Stay focused with the task at hand.
- 6) Let's Talk: The thrower, brushers and skip need to provide frequent, up-to-date information so that the team as a whole can make the shot.
- 7) Managing your weight: Be clear about the weight needed and what the terms mean e.g. draw, hack, board, control, normal, firm, and peel. Where should the rock come to rest with these weights and how does it translate in terms of travel time between the hog lines?
- 8) Book'em Danno! Learn from the Masters; Colleen Jones, Russ Howard, Vera Pez, Al Hackner, Ed Werenich, Bob Meeks, Bill Tschirhart, Brad Gushue, Rob Krepps, etc. Everything from detailed methodology to the psychological aspects of curling are readily available to you either in print or at your digital fingertips. You don't need to reinvent the wheel.

*"The capacity to learn is a gift; the ability to learn is a skill; the willingness to learn is a choice"*

*Brian Herbert*

*From the warm side of the glass.....Denis Faubert*