



THE YIN & YANG OF CURLING



Okay, let's suppose for argument's sake that you have a sound, technical delivery.



“Peak performance comes from a relaxed, focused state of mind”



Ensuring that you are in the right 'state of mind' before the game, really varies according to the individual:

- Some players prefer to be left to themselves with their thoughts,
- while others like to engage in conversation,
- and some listen to music.

How each curler attempts to achieve this may be different for each person, but the end result is the same. Respect your teammate's process.

The amount of time you have to think about your shot as opposed to the actual delivery of the rock are vastly different, so it's worth considering how you can best manage your thoughts & emotions **before** you settle into the hack.

Some of you have no doubt heard the expression 'One bad apple spoils the bunch'. I've personally witnessed the impact one negative person can have on a team's overall performance. You or your teammates can't control some things that happen during a game, **but** you can control how you react to those unwanted or unexpected events. A positive attitude without being overly effusive or enthusiastic is both an often overlooked and undervalued aspect of the game.

No one enters the club with the intent of losing a game, but unless your playing for a spot in the Brier or Tournament of Hearts, playing for the love of the game trumps a "win at all cost" attitude.

Needless to say (but worth mentioning anyway), confidence stems from lots of preparation and some degree of experience. Third end in a tight game is not the time to experiment with your delivery. All too often, a curler will start adjusting their delivery after a failed attempt. **Trust your mechanics**, don't let one (or two) missed shots derail the rest of your game.

Now for a bit of neuroscience! The left hemisphere in your brain (keep in mind that grey matter may be considerably less for skips) is detail-oriented whereas the right side is concerned with performance. In other words, breaking down the components of your delivery is left-thinking while the right hemisphere takes charge in performing the delivery in one seamless movement devoid of all the minutiae (this is where you scratch your head for a few seconds). In order to reach your ideal performance state, you need to achieve some degree of balance between the two sides, or yin & yang if you like.

Bottom line keep the left hemisphere busy so that the right side can get the job done. (Ok, I heard you say, "So how do I make this happen?", glad you asked!).

Whether you've picked up on it or not, when you watch elite curlers on television or better yet in person, you may have noticed they have one thing in common. They each have certain idiosyncratic gestures or rituals that they perform before they deliver the stone. These movements serve to keep the left side of the brain busy so that the right side can perform. You may want to experiment in the privacy of your own home before you bring your own customized ritual to the ice. Mine basically involves brushing the ice as I slide from one end of the ice to the other and then fiddling with my baseball cap as I prepare to throw the rock.

Just a quick word on visualization. This technique is used to good effect by elite athletes. It essentially involves imagining the shot (in vivid detail) in your mind's eye and then making it happen. This 'mental rehearsal' used on a regular basis may yield dividends with respect to your on-ice performance.

One last thing which I've mentioned previously. Once you're in the hack, you need to be task-centred, not outcome-oriented, i.e. forget about what may or may not happen and focus all of your attention on 'hitting the broom' with the correct weight. Sounds simple, but after more than a decade I'm still a work in progress.

Although the above material (i.e. activation; emotion; attitude; trust; balance; focus) may seem somewhat disjointed (and it probably is), consider each one as a part of a puzzle that together will hopefully make you a better curler.

From the warm side of the glass Denis Faubert