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The Sweep

Royal Kingston Curling Club

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Where do we go from here?

By Martha Tanner, Communications Chair

It seems a long time ago since the 2019-2020 curling season. What a remarkable year that was! Highlights included the celebrations to mark the 200th anniversary of RKCC and the Kingston Brier. Miraculously, there was no outbreak of COVID-19 at the Brier, which attracted thousands of visitors. For less than a week later, the shutdowns began, including at our club, where the season ended abruptly and without fanfare on March 15.

Cue the 2020-21 season. Thanks to the sustained efforts of staff and members, the club was able to open for a stop-and-go season that ended just short of Championship Weekend.

As I write this, Ontario has entered Step 1 of its COVID-19 re-opening plan. In Kingston, cases are low, although the Delta variant of the virus is causing new upswings in other areas of the province. By September most of our membership should be fully vaccinated, or have had at least one dose.

So where do we go from here? As club president Deb Wilkin noted in her report to the annual general meeting on May, "We've already started planning the 2021-2022 reopening and beyond.

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Teeing it up for RKCC

The new RKCC Golf Tour began on May 28 at Loyalist Golf and Country Club. Thirty-eight golfers braved the 4-degree C temperature and scattered flurries and rain, including, above from left, Karen Matheson, Sharen McDowall, Bob Hellier and Murray Matheson. See more on page 3.

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“A two-year Strategic Business Plan is under development, as is a COVID-19 Financial Recovery Plan. Both will be unveiled over the coming months so all members can be apprised of the Board’s planned activities.”

As expected, we lost revenue this season and will need to rebuild as well as try to set aside funds for reserves. In addition to the Financial Recovery Plan, there will be an online auction of items donated by club members. This is being spearheaded by Donna Poirier, club member and RKCC accountant, with the support of the Finance Committee. Thanks to everyone who donated items – please watch for an email about the auction date(s).

As always, we will be looking at how to encourage more people to try our sport. The Membership Committee is applying to the Ontario Curling Association (CurlION) for the chance to host this fall a new program called Try Curling Now. Only 15 of CurlION’s member clubs will be chosen to host this program “designed to attract new curlers and convert them to members”. The program consists of a four-hour free drop-in clinic for first-time curlers, plus two hours of training for club volunteers who will lead the ensuing six-week Adult Learn to Curl program.

Michael Flowers, chair of the Membership Committee, will be sending out two more surveys this summer, one to past members who did not return to curling last year, the other to current members. The surveys will promote the new season and collect feedback on the numbers of members planning to return.

We will be looking at how to make our club more welcoming and accessible, especially by encouraging inclusion and diversity. To this end, we are thrilled to have been accepted to participate in the Queen’s University PhD Community Initiative, which brings together PhD students from different programs of study to assist local community organizations in addressing a particular issue or challenge.

A working group consisting of John Ryce, Deb Wilkin, Jim Barton, John Giles, Michael Flowers, and Shirley Kwakkenbos has been working with Queen’s on this project. Club president Deb Wilkin informed the board at its June 23 meeting, “In September we will do a presentation to all the interested PhD students. Three to five students assigned from multi-disciplines, along with a mentor, will conduct research and provide their findings and advice in the spring of 2022. There is no cost to the club, other than our time to meet with the students, estimated at once a month for an hour.” Watch for more details as the program gets underway.

We will be making a more concerted effort to increase volunteerism at the club, by encouraging more members to become involved and are hoping to create – and fill – the position of volunteer coordinator. Member at Large Sylvia Myers is leading this initiative.

As well, the board has approved an updated Strategic Business Plan, which has many exciting initiatives to improve and strengthen our club. It will be posted soon on the website. Feedback is always welcome.

As for curling itself, it is generally expected that curling will be “back to normal” in the fall. We will continue to follow all legislation, public health rules and Curling Canada recommendations. Some people may choose to wear masks or maintain a little distance from others on and off the ice. Maybe fist bumps will replace handshakes and frequent hand sanitization will become the norm. Here’s hoping that the 2021-2022 season will be a healthier one for our club, our fellow curlers and our community.



From left, David Fanset, Rich Waller, Benny Gordon and Steve Hulton were happy to be back on the links.

Photos by Martha Tanner

RKCC Golf Tour

The Inaugural RKCC Golf Tour began on May 28 at Loyalist Golf and Country Club, with dates scheduled at courses throughout the region during the rest of the summer. Club manager Steve Hulton, who organized the Tour with the help of Keith Mitchell, says he hopes RKCC golfers will “show us they aren’t just one-sport wonders”. Both competitive and recreational golfers will celebrate the end of the Tour with a BBQ and prizes at the club in September.



Keith and Vicki Mitchell braved the unseasonable weather (unlike the rest of their fair-weather foursome,) who shall remain nameless.



Karen Matheson tees off.

Try lawn bowling this summer at the Kingston Lawn Bowling Club

By Pierre Vanderhout

I started curling nearly 20 years ago, and will begin my 15th year at RKCC this fall. Before curling, I spent most of my sports career in contact sports like soccer and hockey. I also went on an extended alpine skiing trip every year. I still participate in all of those sports now. So why did I get into lawn bowling four years ago?

As I approached my 50th birthday, I decided that soccer might not be a lifetime summer sport. Playing several times a week no longer gave me enough time to recover from the various aches and pains. My wife Louise and I decided to try lawn bowling for the same reasons we took up curling: to have a less painful sport that we could play together. We thought it might be a nice way to bridge the gap between our very busy winters.

To our surprise, curling's core skills (line, weight, and strategy) were exactly what you needed in lawn bowling. The bowls curl just like curling rocks. There's a target (called a "jack"), and you want to get your bowls as close to it as possible. And for the same reasons that I really like doubles curling, lawn bowling offered more active options such as singles and pairs play.

Just like curling, some people lawn bowl for social reasons. It's easy to learn, always good for a laugh, and you ultimately get some good exercise without getting bodychecked or slide tackled. In addition to singles and pairs, you can play triples or even "fours" for a more leisurely experience.

And just like curling, you can choose a competitive path in lawn bowling. In my first year, together with RKCC member Tim Hochban, I made it to the provincial novice pairs championships (for bowlers with 5 years or less experience). I hadn't competed provincially in sports since my teenage hockey days, but I absolutely loved getting back into that kind of environment.



Pierre Vanderhout prepares to roll the bowl on a 'rink' at an Ottawa competition.

By the end of my third year, I had been to six provincial championships. Louise has competed in three provincial championships too. Winter sports are now almost a way to pass the time between lawn bowling seasons!

Recreational lawn bowling games usually take less than 90 minutes. If you can curl for 6 or 8 ends, you can lawn bowl. However, at competitive tournaments, I have played in singles matches lasting more than three hours. Tournaments often require you to play three games a day in the hot sun: to succeed at that level, conditioning is really important. Emotional control is also extremely important...possibly even more than in curling, because you usually have fewer teammates to help settle you down.

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Try lawn bowling, continued from page 4.

I think that's what I like most about the game: the combination of athletics and mental discipline. You have to be able to read the green, master and reproduce an accurate delivery, and make minute adjustments for the best results. But you also have to think several shots ahead, constantly assess your opponents, and remain absolutely in control of your emotions. Playing aggressively at the wrong time is a recipe for disaster. Throwing an accurate "drive" (similar to a take-out) can have very high rewards, but it is a much more difficult shot than a curling take-out. A poor drive can lead to giving up an 8-ender (in pairs) or even a 9-ender (in triples). And you can't rely on sweepers to keep your bowl straight!

If you think you'd like to try lawn bowling, give me a call or send me an e-mail. The Kingston Lawn Bowling Club is located on Napier Street, just south of Johnson. While all outdoor sports are currently shut down by the stay-at-home order, we will eventually open. Ideally for curlers, the season lasts until the beginning of October.



Pierre stares down at the 'jack' or target. If you want to try lawn bowling, contact Pierre or the Kingston Lawn Bowling Club. New members are always welcome.

Photos provided.



Fellow curlers, can you spare a pin?

Wanted!

Fellow curler looking to trade for or buy one of the Kingston 2020 Brier Volunteer pins pictured here. Please text or call Ron at 289-834-3620.

