

## Have a Goal for the Season

*By Jon Mielke*

I started curling 40 years ago. There was plenty of room for improvement and I was anxious to get better, plus the game was changing rapidly. In order to get better and to keep up with the way that the game was evolving, I started each season with a goal to improve something about my technique or my approach to the game. Here are some things that I did over the years, roughly in chronological order (some of you long-time curlers can relate to some of the things on this list):

- Learn to sweep with a brush instead of corn
- Convert from a half to a full slider
- Learn to sweep without a slider
- Learn to sweep in an upright position
- Go from a tuck delivery to flat-foot slide
- Learn to sweep on both sides of the stone
- Start using a stopwatch and “long times” to judge keenness
- Convert from a backswing to a no-lift delivery
- Consistently set-up in the hack to get my delivery “on the broom”
- Work to consistently throw with 2 ½ to 3 rotations
- Pay attention to every shot thrown in order to learn the ice
- Learn to play to your team’s strengths and the other team’s deficiencies
- Start using interval timing to aid sweeping decisions
- Learn how to throw interval times to achieve various weights
- Take hips farther behind the hack in order to throw more weight
- Understand and remember to use “SHEETZ” and have a goal for each end
- Use the free guard zone rule to exert my will and achieve my goals

Some of the things on this list are physical and some are mental, but they all require an honest self-assessment of personal strengths and weakness. We all have things in our game that we could do better. Physical changes may be the toughest because we have to be willing to work at them and too stubborn to give up. It is always easy to just say that you can’t, but, unless a player has a physical limitation, there is nothing on my list that an average curler can’t do. It just takes determination and maybe a little help from someone in your club who is accomplished and who is willing to work with you. You can also look at my previous articles on USA Curling’s website for the insights on many of the topics listed above.

The start of the season is the perfect time to set some goals and to make some changes. Give it a shot and make yourself a better curler. In the end, you will make more shots, win more games, and have more fun. Until next time – Good Curling!