

## Movements Around the Hack

*By Jon Mielke*

*(jcmielke3@bis.midco.net)*

Competitive coaches spend a lot of time behind the glass watching deliveries. They can attest to the fact that many of the shots that are missed are caused by small lateral movements around the hack. These movements usually involve the stone and/or the slider foot moving in a direction that is not in line with the desired line of delivery.

The very first article that I wrote for *Curling News* back in 2011 was entitled “The Most Important Line.” The article focused on the invisible line that runs from the hack foot to the skip’s broom. The shooter should step into the hack with the hack foot pointed straight at the skip’s broom. As the shooter crouches down the shoulders and hips should be square to that invisible line. The rock should then be positioned directly on top of that line and directly behind the shooter’s dominant eye (assuming that the shooter’s dominant eye is on the same side as the shooting arm). From that point everything about the delivery should be back and then forward directly on that invisible line.

Watch closely as a shooter starts the delivery movement. The elbow of the shooting arm should be close to the side of the chest and the arm should be slightly relaxed. The arm should not be used to push and pull the rock forward and back. Rather, if the arm is properly positioned the shooter can lean straight toward the skip’s broom and the rock will automatically move forward on the same line.

If the stone is moved forward with an arm extension rather than by leaning into the shot with the shoulders, it will typically be pulled back with an arm motion during the drawback process. This usually results in the rock being pulled back off line to a point where the center line hits the hack or straight back but under the shooter’s chest. If the rock is pulled back sideways and off line, the error will have to be corrected later during the forward slide. If the rock is pulled straight back under the shooter’s chest, it will have to be pushed forward early in the slide so it can get out in front of the body so the shooter can look over the top of the rock as he slides toward the skip’s broom. In either case these unwarranted arm movements will often result in shots that are thrown wide or narrow.

Another hack movement that often results in off line shots involves the slider foot. Pay close attention to the position of the slider foot during the initial set up. Like the hack foot, the slider foot should be pointed toward the skip’s broom. Quite often it is improperly pointed parallel to the center line. If the slider foot moves straight back along that line it will not be moving parallel to the skip’s broom (unless the broom happens somewhere in the middle of the far house).

If the slider foot is not taken back parallel to the desired line of delivery it will be more difficult to get it positioned under the center of the chest during the early stage of the slide. This is especially evident when a right-hander is throwing a takeout down the far right side of the sheet. The necessary rapid forward movement of the slider foot causes the foot to shoot beyond the desired balance point and the shooter drifts to the right -typically taking the rock along and off line to the right. This drift is accentuated even more if the shooter takes the slider foot farther back than to a point where the slider foot’s toes are even with the hack foot’s heel. Some curlers take the slider foot too far back in an attempt to generate more weight on take outs. There are

better ways to generate weight than with a big slider foot drawback that contributes to off line shots.

Subtle little movements around the hack are often the cause of missed shots. Every launch needs a successful blast off. Pay attention to these little rock and slider foot movements if you want to increase your chances of making shots.

Etiquette Tip: Remember that the sheet belongs to the other team once your team's stone comes to rest. If you are in the house, get behind the back line and stand still. If you are going to be sweeping your team's next shot, walk along the side lines and stand still outside the hog line as the other team is shooting. If you are going to be shooting be ready to get in the hack as soon as the other team's shot passes the near hog line. Do the math - if 10 seconds are wasted on every shot an 8 end game will take 21 minutes longer to complete or you will run out of time before you play 8 ends..

Until next time – I hope you season is going well. Consider playing in a bonspiel. Good Curling!

*Jon Mielke is a Level III instructor and a Level III coach. He is the past chairman of the USCA's Training & Instruction Committee, a member of Bismarck's Capital Curling Club, and a 2012 inductee into USA Curling's Hall of Fame. All of his previous training articles are available on line at: USA Curling – Media – Curling News – Columnists – Jon Mielke.*