

# No Turtles Allowed

By Jon Mielke

([jcmielke3@bis.midco.net](mailto:jcmielke3@bis.midco.net))

There is no topic that I hear more about than slow players. Most curlers want to get in a full game when they show up at the club. They get frustrated when players are not ready to shoot and when a skip takes forever to make even routine calls. I wrote an article on timely play several years ago but some things are just worth repeating. This article is for new curlers and my dedicated readers who have asked for it.

Playing eight ends in two hours is routinely possible if everyone does their part. This is especially important for arena curlers who are renting ice for several hundred dollars per hour. Sometimes slow play is the result of new curlers simply not knowing when to be ready but it is also often the result of experienced curlers who should know better. If your slow players are new – teach them. If your slow players are experienced – remind them.

Timely play is everyone's responsibility. The following paragraphs look at everyone's duties to get full games played in the time allowed.

**Everyone** - Start on time! A 7 p.m. start time means shaking hands and throwing the first stone by 7 p.m. It doesn't mean walking in the front door at 7 p.m. and then dressing, stretching, and getting to your sheet. Starting late means you probably won't be able to play a whole game. Proper etiquette is everyone's responsibility.

All players need to keep in mind that the ice belongs to the opposing team as soon as your team's rock comes to rest. Your team's skip should get out of the house and behind the back line and the rest of your players should move to the sidelines between the hog lines. Don't walk down the middle of the sheet toward the other end. Get out of the way and stand still. Don't make the other team wait because you are in the way.

Everyone needs to remember that skipping is not a committee function. Leave shot-calling to the skip. There may be times when the skip needs to ask for input but do not make it a regular routine for everyone to stand in the house to look things over and debate the next shot. Vice skips should be constantly paying attention and should be ready to offer advice when asked.

When an end is over, it is typically the duty of the vice skips to agree on the score. Everyone else should stay out of the house and out of the way if a measurement is needed. Everyone should help move rocks out of the house when an end is complete and the score is agreed on. Whoever is shooting first in the next end should immediately move their first stone to the hack and get ready to shoot.

**Shooters** – Shooters should be ready to shoot when the preceding rock comes to rest. Players are often out of position when it is their turn to shoot. They may be sitting on a bench at mid-sheet or they are off somewhere looking for their slider.

Except for skips, the next shooter should be on the end board behind the hack or just outside the hog line when the opposing player is shooting. As soon as that player's stone is sliding down the ice (or crosses the hog line if that is where the next shooter is standing), the next shooter should

move his/her rock into position, clean the stone, and stand behind the hack waiting for the skip to call the next shot. As soon as the shot is called and the skip's broom is in place, the shooter should get lined up, step into the hack, take a deep breath, and go. Make this your pre-shot routine – it is a huge time saver and it will actually help you make more shots.

Front end players can help a skip and vice skip save time by moving their stones to the hack before they arrive at delivering end of the sheet. Saving a few seconds here and there adds up.

**Sweepers** - Sweepers should also be in position and ready for the next shot. They should be waiting just outside the near hog line and, once the preceding shot is passed them, they should move toward the hack and be ready to go. Sweepers, your place is on both sides of the sheet near the back line. Don't waste everybody's time by being out of position when it is your team's turn to shoot.

**Skips** – Skips need to think ahead. When the opposing skip makes the call, the skip should decide what to call if the shot is made and what to call if the shot is missed. Have a plan in mind before the opponent's stone comes to rest. Planning ahead and being ready to call the next shot is a huge time saver. A skip is the general and should not routinely call on the troops for advice. Just do it and talk about it after the game. Learn to be decisive and only ask for input, if needed, on critical shots.

**Do the math.** Saving just 10 seconds per shot gives teams an extra 21 minutes to complete a game (10 seconds x 16 rocks per end x 8 ends = 21 minutes). And remember, curling etiquette frowns on teams that play slowly deliberately in order to make time run out and to thereby protect a lead.

Until next time – I hope you have a good season. Teach your new players proper etiquette, including timely play. And a reminder to some of your older members may be in order, too. Until next time, Good Curling!

*Jon Mielke lives in Bismarck and is a Level III instructor, a Level III coach, and a member of the US Curling Hall of Fame. All of his previous training articles are available on line at: USA Curling – Media – Curling News – Columnists – Jon Mielke.*