

Be Honest With Yourself

Insanity – doing the same thing over and over and expecting different results. Do you have certain types of curling shots that consistently produce undesired results? Maybe it is time to make some changes. The start of a new curling season is the perfect time to start.

Looking back, were you satisfied with the way that you played last season? Be honest with yourself. Were there shots that you routinely missed (out turn hits, backline taps, etc.)? How about throwing consistent hit weights? How's your balance coming out of the hack? Maybe your set-up in the hack and the resulting alignment (both your body and the stone) could use some work? Ever throw weak or dead handles?

Regardless of a curler's years of experience or level of competitiveness, everyone has something that they could improve. The start of the season is a perfect time to do a self-assessment and to set goals. Working to achieve these goals will make you a better player. You will make more shots, have more fun, and win more games.

In addition to doing a little soul-searching, don't hesitate to ask your teammates for their input on things that you might work on, especially if they are fairly accomplished players. You may find that their suggestions mirror things that you already have on your list.

If you have access to open ice, don't hesitate to ask one of your club's instructors if they would help you a bit. Give them your composite list of goals. The list will let the instructor know that you are serious about wanting to get better and it will give him/her a good place to start. You should start with several practice slides so the instructor can look over your pre-shot routine, your set-up in the hack, your alignment, balance, etc. The instructor may notice things that you were not aware of and may present easy fixes that will make a world of difference in your shot making.

There is also a wealth of information on the Internet regarding faults and fixes. A related table is presented at the end of this article. The Curling News instructional library is available at www.teamusa.org/usa-curling (click on *Clubs – Membership Materials – Curling News – Columnists – Mielke*).

Identifying goals, working with an instructor, reading articles, and doing a bit of practice are critical first steps, but the really important part is following through and using your new/refined techniques in game situations. Time and time again, instructors universally say that their students do great during practice sessions or in the early stages of their first game, but they gradually regress as the game goes on or as shots become more critical. The player either decides that the new way is just uncomfortable or too hard, or they simply forget and slip back into old habits.

If the game was easy and if everyone could do it, the game would not be a challenge and it wouldn't be as much fun. Getting better takes work and the willingness to stick with what you have learned. Don't expect different results if you keep doing things the same old way.

The start of the season is the perfect time to implement changes to your delivery, sweeping techniques, etc. Everyone else will also be trying to get back in shape and the games probably

are not as important as they will be later in the season. Work at improving now and make your new techniques a consistent part of your play. The rewards are many for those who are dedicated and willing to make the effort.

Until next time – Good Curling!

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DELIVERY FAULTS & FIXES

FAULT	DETECTION	CAUSE	FIX
Balance	Unsteadiness / Wobbliness	Improper sliding foot position	Sliding foot central to body trunk, between sternum and belly button Slight toe out for more stability Assume delivery position and have second curler pull first curler along the ice while holding the brush handle
	Body tilting to one side or the other	Weight on delivery device or the stone	Practice without stone and /or sliding device
	Timing	Sequence out of step	Call sequence - Rock, Foot, Rock, Foot, Slide
	Foot beside stone	Sliding foot moves forward too soon	Delay foot forward, make sure stone moves first
	Lateral drift	Timing / direction of sliding foot moving into position	Adjust timing Practice sliding foot placement for stability
	Trailing leg not fully extended	Not getting full leg drive when leaving hack	Practice leg extension off the ice and then on the ice
Line of Delivery	Lateral drift	Excessive leg drive	Reduce amount of leg drive and increase body drop through weight shift
	Straight slide but off-line	Poor alignment	Shoulders square to target. Hack knee and hack toe pointing to target
		Sliding foot out of position	Align heel of sliding foot behind stone so that stone, heel and trailing toe are in line during slide
	Step back is not straight	Stone out of position on step back	Align with skip's broom and draw straight back

	Forward delivery motion not straight (shoulders turning)	Sliding device does not remain in constant position relative to stone during delivery	Practice maintaining positioning of sliding device and stone
	Sliding foot not on line of delivery	Feet not positioned correctly on setup	Feet parallel to line of delivery on setup Practice using alignment aids such as cones or cups
Release	Flip wide or crossfire inside	Poor start position	Start at 10 and 2 positions
		Early or slow release resulting in rock being in neutral position before release; flipping or dumping action results	Hold 10 or 2 handle positions to start of "release zone"
		Not finishing at hand-shake position	Practice "pass the roll" drill using PVC tubing
	Rock rotation	Quiet handle	Increase rotation on release; positive release to hand shake position
		Too much rotation	Quieter release; reduce flipping action
	Different points of release	Lack of weight control	Practice a short ice game such as curling bocce Practice alternating shots - draw, takeout, draw takeout, etc. Extend arm on release
	Inconsistent curl	Poor grip	Check grip on handle Palm off handle, grip stone in fingers
		Not completing rotation	Follow through to hand shake position

