

## Stone Misalignment – Use Your Body & Not Your Arm

*By Jon Mielke*

Before jumping into this edition's training tips, I want to personally thank the clubs that have contacted me and asked for permission to post some of my training articles on their website – absolutely! If your club is interested, please send me an e-mail and I will send you a list of articles that you may want to consider ([jcmielke3@bis.midco.net](mailto:jcmielke3@bis.midco.net)).

In prior articles, I have talked quite a bit about alignment – getting set-up in the hack and sliding straight at the broom. At a couple recent skills clinics that my fellow trainers from Bismarck and I conducted, I was reminded how important it is to minimize arm movement as a part of the delivery process.

Visualize yourself getting set-up in the hack. Your hack foot is pointed at the broom and your shoulders are square to the intended line of delivery. The rock is directly in front of you and on top of the imaginary line running from your hack foot to the skip's broom. Textbook perfect.

What I noticed at the skills clinics is that many intermediate curlers break the rock's stationary inertia and go into the forward press by sliding the rock back and forth with their arm. In some cases, this movement is not straight along the intended line of delivery – it is somewhat sideways. This may create a problem that will have to be corrected later during the delivery or that will result in a shot being thrown offline.

Rather than using an arm movement during the forward press, the shooter should lean into the shot and move the rock slightly forward using his or her upper body, which is already lined up at the broom. This should help insure that the forward press does not introduce any sideways movements into the initial stages of the delivery process.

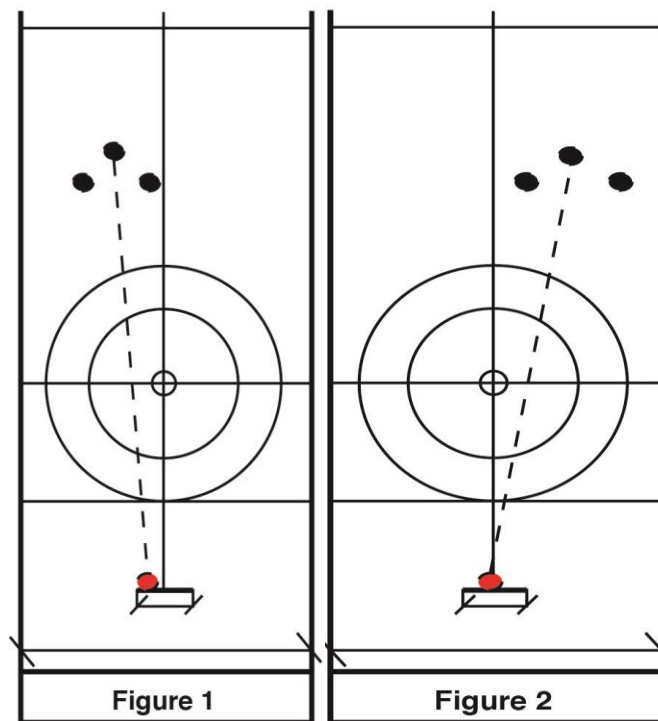
Something similar happens with many curlers during the process of drawing the stone back before sliding forward – they elevate their hips without taking them back behind the hack and pull the rock back with their arm. The stone ends up under their chest rather than staying out in front of their head and dominant eye. Quite often, the result is a forward slide with the stone still being under the shooter's chest. To get the rock out in front, the shooter must push the stone with his or her arm to get it to a point where it is visible again. The end result is often a sideways movement that gets the stone offline.

To correct this problem, once the forward press is completed, use a continuing motion to elevate your hips and bring them back to a point behind the hack. The distance that you go back behind the hack will be dictated by the kind of shot being played (hit vs. draw), the keenness of the ice, and your leg strength. The farther back you go, the more weight that you can generate. Bringing your hips and upper body back will naturally bring your arm back and the stone comes along with it, without pulling with your arm. Using your hips and torso to draw the stone back will also keep the stone out of front of you and in a completely visible position in front of your dominant eye.

As you go from this draw back position into your forward motion via body drop and leg drive, the stone should move right along with your body toward the skip's broom without the need to pull or push the stone with your arm. The arm should be slightly relaxed, not stiff, and the rock should be out in front of the shooter's head throughout the delivery.

In summary, remember that a solid delivery simplifies things by eliminating all extraneous movements and keeping things as straight and simple as possible. Using your hips and torso to move the stone forward, back, and forward again, instead of our arm, will help you keep the stone on line and will result in more made shots and more wins.

Before closing, I want to correct an error in my last column regarding a cup drill to help improve alignment. The article had a couple of diagrams, one of which did not coincide with the related narrative. Here are the corrected diagrams:



For a right-hander throwing down the left side of the sheet, the stone should be fully to the left of the center line (Figure 1). For shots down the right side of the sheet, the stone should be at least touching the centerline (Figure 2). The farther out that the shot is being played (e.g. toward the outside edge of the 12 foot), the farther the rock is positioned over the center line.

By stepping into the hack and pointing the hack foot toward the skip's broom, the all-important invisible line is created from the hack foot to the target and the rock is then positioned on top of that invisible line. The line changes with every shot and so does the rock's position relative to the center line.

For a right-eye dominant right-handed player, getting his or her body, their dominant eye, and the stone all on the same line is vitally important. Assuming no side-to-side motions during the delivery, a clean release, and the right weight, it should be impossible to miss (unless the skip has the broom in the wrong place)!

Until next time – 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).*