

Curling

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The science of making curling ice begins with what lies beneath the ice – a 30" thick "layered" "sandwich" of materials including: sand; rigid insulation; 1" piping; stone dust; 6mm poly vapor sheet; stone dust; 4" rigid high-density Styrofoam; 6 x 6 mesh; "chairs" spacing 1" tubing 3' apart; steel rebar tied into the piping; stone dust; poly plastic; 6" of concrete, 3/4" ice.

It takes patience, finesse and art to apply that sheet of ice. Deane floods the rink, then applies 300 gallons of white paint to that first layer of ice. He mists and seals it, and uses lasers and yarn to lay out the lines for the four houses, back, tee and center lines. Deane then "pebbles" the ice (sprays it with water) – pebbling and scraping the ice as many as 10-12 times. Deane explained: "There is an art to layering the ice. On a monolithic slab – to keep it level as you are flooding – you have to keep the surface temperature up as you move across the ice, so it does not freeze right out of the hose."

There is a science and art to casting the stone as well. One Nashua curler who, as a youth, was a 1973 National Champion, sees the game in terms of strategy and team spirit. He breaks the delivery of the stone into components – the forward press; draw back; forward press; leg down drive; bottom out; arm extension; handle turn. The difficulty – and the art – is that the drawback is almost as important as the follow-through. And no matter how perfectly a curler executes the first six steps, the shot depends totally on the last gesture – the turn of the stone.

Meanwhile, two teammates of the person casting the stone begin sweeping the ice in front of the stone, pacing themselves so the stone hopefully lands in the house. Sweeping can enhance the distance traveled by the stone by as much as ten feet. Sweeping early straightens the path of the stone. Sweeping late when the stone is curling enhances the curl.



Curling also involves the art of teamwork as success depends on each team member's execution. The "lead" throws first and sets up the game. The "two" needs to be able to throw "take-outs" to oust an opponent's stone. The "Vice," the "game-changer" must have control of a variety of shots. The "Skip" or captain of the team throws last stones.

Curlers and golfers alike teamed up in creative fundraising to sponsor the \$4.4 million project that includes the curling rink and a new golf shop. Total donations amounted to \$232,000, with another \$100,000 from an anonymous source, and \$25,000 from Merrimack Valley Curling Club, a "paper" club that rents NCC ice on Sunday evenings.

All sixty-four new curling stones were donated by NCC members. There are only two places in the world where the granite is consistent enough to make curling stones that will not crack upon

impact – the Ailsa Craig Island off the coast of Scotland and the Treffor Mountains in Wales. Kay's of Scotland has the exclusive right to quarry the Ailsa Craig and this is where the NCC stones were quarried.

"Ice – it's a really complex thing – and so is curling," said Deane. "There is a science, a strategy to it. The ice is always changing even as the day progresses – the pebble starts to wear down. The average person carries 200 BTU's out on the ice, so with 48 people, the air changes and has an effect on the ice, on the surface of the stones and the skip has to read all that. I'll throw some rocks but when the day is done, I love watching it."

If you watch Olympic curling at the PyeongChang Games next month, the camera will hover on the hog line, the players, and the house. But one of the most important aspects of the game of

curling will be missed by the camera – the behind-the-scenes tradition that expresses the history and spirit of this ancient sport that is based on camaraderie and kindness. Every curling match begins with all eight players greeting each other with a hand-shake or a hug and the greeting "Good Curling!" Every match – no matter who wins – ends with the same greetings.

This "spirit of curling" is contagious. Many NCC members play both sports, but as one member noted, "the curlers seem much nicer – and happier – than the golfers!"

NOTE: The new curling rink opens to members this Saturday. Anyone interested in a curling membership can contact Nashua Country Club.

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