



OTHER EVENTS

The WCF is also involved in, or runs a number of other championships. These include:

- WCF's own Olympic Qualification Event
- Olympic Winter Games
- Paralympic Winter Games
- Youth Olympic Winter Games
- Americas Challenge
- World Junior and Wheelchair Qualification Events
- Winter Universiade Games
- Asian Winter Games
- European Youth Olympic Festival
- Winter Games New Zealand

All in all, quite a development from the first eight-team World Curling Championship in 1968.

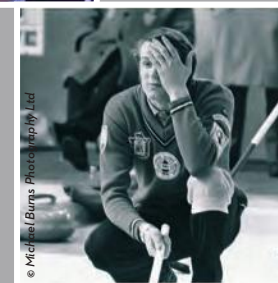
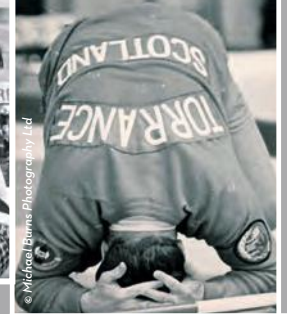
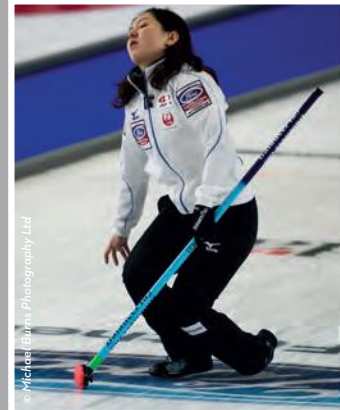


🎯 Jubilation...





🎯 ...and Dejection!





RISE OF **WOMEN**



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Left: The ceremonial first stone of the inaugural Royal Bank Ladies World Championship, Perth, Scotland in 1979

Below: USA's Mabel de Ware

Bottom: The first ladies world champions - Switzerland's Gaby Casanova and her team

Right: China's Bingyu Wang



Courtesy of Curling Canada

When you consider the prominent role that women's teams play in modern championships it is hard to imagine that, although the ICF was founded in 1966, it was ten years before the first women's voice was heard in the organisation's meetings. In 1976, USA's Mabel de Ware was allowed to address the gathered delegates.

As President Kate Caithness noted in her speech at the 50th anniversary banquet in Basel, Switzerland, "ten years of female silence? All I can say is, it wouldn't happen now!"

As a result of pioneering work, led by Scotland's Frances Brodie, the first ladies championship was held in Perth, Scotland in 1979 and won by Switzerland's Gaby Casanova. The next two years also saw Perth used as the venue and what is now called the World Women's Curling Championship moved location for the first time in 1982, when Geneva in Switzerland was the host city.

In 1980, Marj Mitchell led the first Canadian team to the title but since then, eight other Canadian skips have won gold, the most recent being Jennifer Jones in 2008 in Vernon, British Columbia. After this Jones led her team to Olympic gold in Sochi, Russia in 2014. Other victorious nations over the years have been China, Denmark, Germany, Norway, Scotland, Sweden, Switzerland and USA – each of these nations has a strong tale to tell.



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In 2009 Bingyu Wang led China to its first world title, becoming the first Pacific-Asia team to do so. To add to the occasion, the venue that year was Gangneung in Korea. This was the first time a WCF championships had been staged in that country and, following Aomori in Japan in 2007, only the third time that a WCF championship had been staged outside Europe or North America.

In recent years, Switzerland has won four of five world titles (2012-2016), with three different teams. Only Scotland's Eve Muirhead in Riga in 2013 has interrupted the Swiss successes under skips Mirjam Ott (2012), Alina Pätz (2015) and Binia Feltscher (2014 and 2016).

In earlier championships, Sweden's Elisabet Gustafson won the world title four times, (1992, 1995, 1998, 1999) although she failed to take Olympic gold in Nagano in 1998, having to settle for bronze. Instead it was Canada's Sandra Schmirler who led her team to Olympic gold in Nagano, adding to the three world titles her team gained during their career (1993, 1994, 1997).



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Surprisingly, despite her four world titles, Gustafson is not necessarily the clear-cut candidate to have led Sweden's best-ever team. Following in her footsteps, Anette Norberg won world titles in 2005, 2006 and 2011. But Norberg's team went better than Gustafson's by not only winning gold at the 2006 Olympic Winter Games in Pinerolo, Italy but also becoming the only curling team, so far, to retain an Olympic crown, beating Canada by 7-6 after an extra end in the 2010 Games, in Vancouver, Canada.

Norberg also has the distinction of producing the best-ever exit line from a media interview. After retaining Olympic gold in 2010 she said, "I must go - I have to meet the King!"

Among many other remarkable performances in women's championship play, Germany's Andrea Schöpp had a 22-year gap between her world title wins, beating Canada in the 1988 world championship in Glasgow, Scotland and then remarkably, in 2010, beating Scotland in an extra end for gold in Swift Current, Canada.

While there is much to celebrate in the on-ice endeavours of the world's women's teams, in President Kate Caithness of Scotland, curling has the first - and so far only - female leader of an Olympic Winter Sports Federation.

She was elected as President at the WCF Congress held in Cortina d'Ampezzo, Italy, and has since gone on to be re-elected unopposed in 2012 and 2014.



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Left: The original Swedish crystal World Ladies' trophy, hand-engraved by Harold Gordon of Forres, Scotland

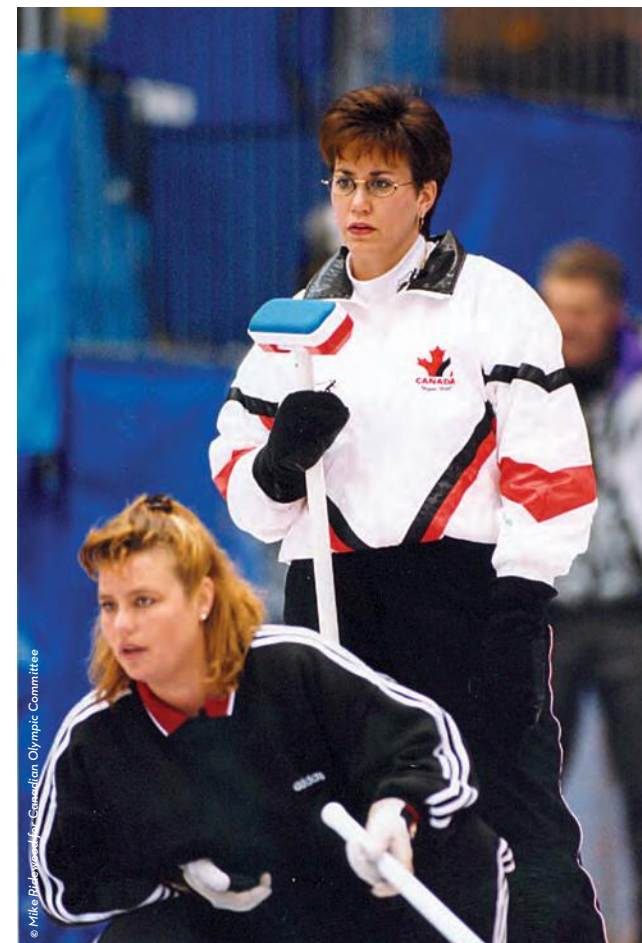
Top: Promotional material for the 1979 Ladies World Curling Championship

Right: WCF president Kate Caithness OBE with IOC President Thomas Bach at the WCF 50th anniversary banquet in Basel, Switzerland

Below: the 1980 world champions skipped by Canada's Marj Mitchell

Right: the women's final of the 1998 Nagano Olympic Winter Games - Canada's Sandra Schmirler (gold) stands behind Denmark's Helena Blach Lavrsen (silver)

Bottom right: the current Olympic champions, skipped by Canada's Jennifer Jones





Left: Switzerland's Mirjam Ott, world champion in 2012 Bottom left: Sweden, skipped by Anette Norberg, retain the Olympic title in 2010 Bottom middle: Scotland's Eve Muirhead, world champion in 2013 Top right: Switzerland's Feltscher, world champion in 2014 and 2016 Bottom right: Germany's Andrea Schöpp, world champion in 1988 and 2010

She was the driving force behind the WCF's development of wheelchair curling and was part of the team that created the first World Wheelchair Curling Championship. She was also responsible for securing wheelchair curling's place in the Paralympic Winter Games programme in Turin in 2006.

During and before her Presidency, Caithness played a full part in the management of Olympic sport. From 2005 to 2009 she was elected onto the International Paralympic Committee's five person Sports Council Management Committee and from 2006 to 2009 she served on the Paralympic Games Committee.

In March 2011, Caithness was appointed to the Olympic Programme Commission, which is responsible for reviewing and analysing the programme of sports, disciplines and events, as well as the number of athletes in each sport, for the Olympic Summer and Winter Games.

In February 2016, she was appointed to the IOC Coordination Commission Olympic Winter Games 2022 - a first for curling - and then later that year as one of the nine members of the new SportAccord Council.

It is hardly surprising to learn therefore, that in 2013 she was appointed an Officer of the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire (OBE) by Queen Elizabeth II for services to curling and international disability sport.

It may have taken ten years for the first female voice to be heard in the corridors of the WCF, but nowadays, in actions on and off the ice, there is no doubting the female contributions to the future of curling and the Federation.





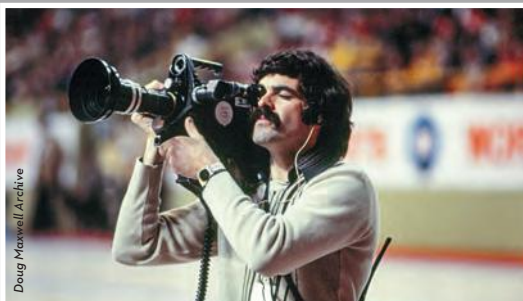
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Anette Norberg's 2011 world champions (Esbjerg, Denmark): (left to right) skip Anette Norberg, third Cecelia Östlund, second Sara Carlsson, lead Lotta Lennartsson, alternate Karin Rudström, coach Magnus Swartling

🎯 Recording the Action - Now...



...and then





TECHNICAL DEVELOPMENTS



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© Aline Pavlyuchik

To the casual observer, curling must look like a simple sport – players take turns to deliver a succession of stones down a long sheet of ice and whichever team ends up closer to the target scores the points!

But, to get to this position, where all this is done with a clear shared understanding of how the game is – and should be – played, has taken a succession of negotiations and adjustments. Over the years these arrangements have been brought about by geographic and playing environment differences, technical and equipment developments, championship management requirements and the desire to make the game as attractive as possible – especially for television audiences, all while retaining the integrity and spirit of curling.



Doug Maxwell/Archive

Number of Ends

Originally it was common for curling games to be played over 18 ends, and, when the Scotch Cup was first played, the games consisted of 12 ends.

Games continued as 12 ends in the early years of the Air Canada Silver Broom, but in 1972 the first ten end games were introduced – with, ironically the final that year going to an extra end before Canada's Orest Meleschuk emerged as 10-9 winner over the USA.

Championship games have stayed at ten ends ever since and, although over the years there have been suggestions that they should move to eight ends, ten ends remains the norm.

The Hack

As recorded elsewhere in this book, the original Scotch Cup was the spark that started the whole idea of international competition in the sport. In its early days one of the basic problems was that the Canadians were used to delivering from a hack carved out of the ice while the Scots used a metal platform, called a crampit. After a number of design experiments, it was agreed that the stones would be delivered from a hack, and eventually the modern-style hack became universal.

The Sliding Delivery

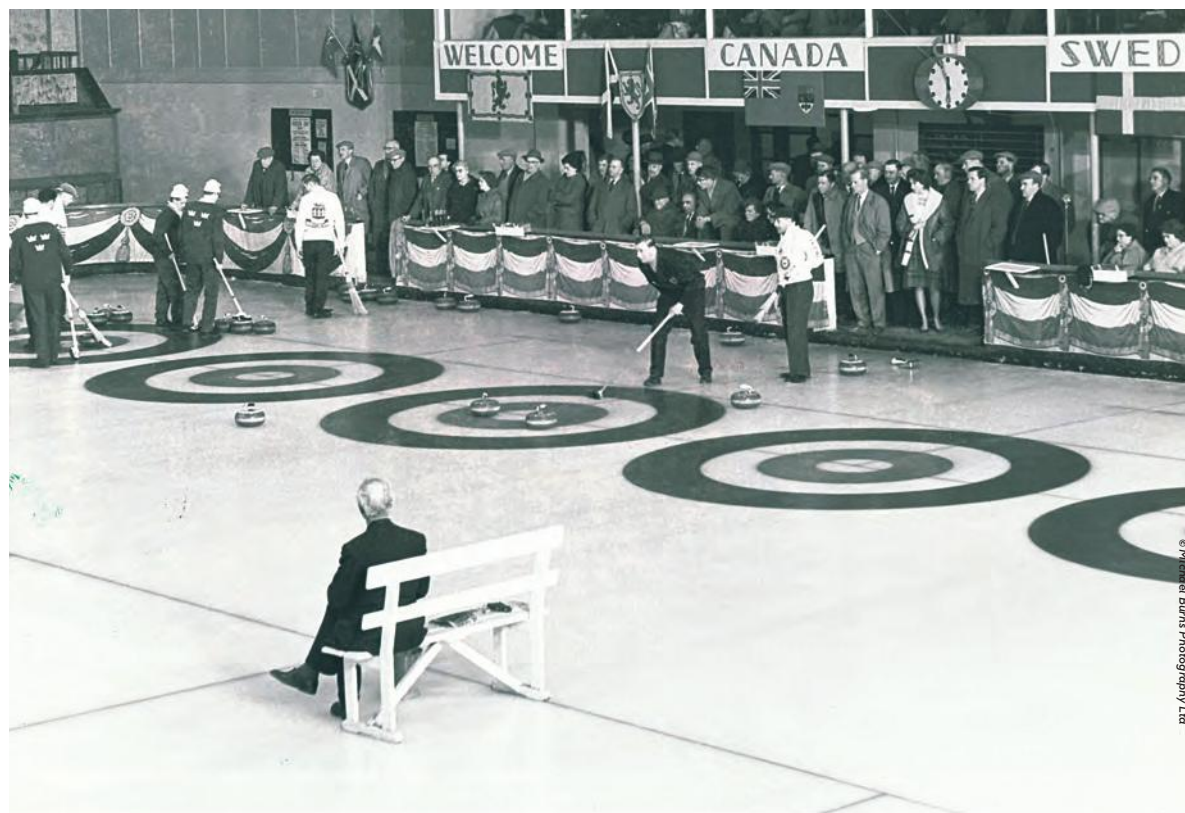
The adoption of the hack had another profound influence on the game – the development of the sliding delivery. While using the crampit involved a standing delivery, with a pendulum-style technique, using hacks meant that players could slide out as they delivered their stones. Of course, this meant that eventually a rule had to be devised and agreed as to just how far a player could slide before letting go of the stone. This sliding technique was helped by such developments as the introduction of teflon shoe soles and other aids, making sliding appear to be effortless.

The point came when it was agreed that the near hogline would mark the end of the sliding zone and the legal release point for deliveries.

Hogline Violations

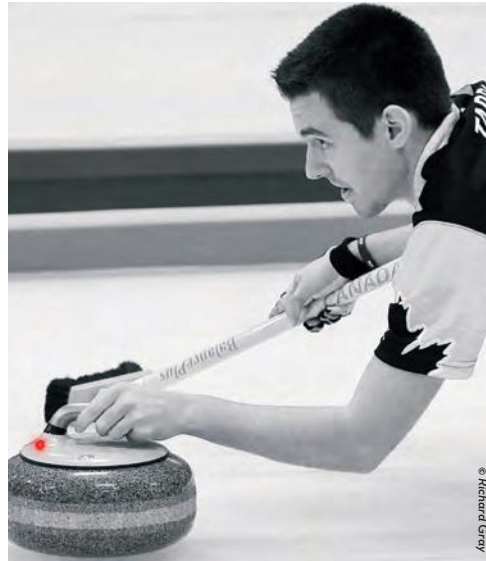
Settling on the hogline as the release point seems straightforward enough, but even such a seemingly black-and-white idea was subject to interpretation – was a release legitimate only if the player let the stone go before the front edge reached the hogline, or was it ok if the player held on until the rear edge reached the hogline?

This debate reached a high point at the 2001 Ford World Curling Championships in Lausanne, Switzerland when, in the men's semi-final, Canada's skip Randy Ferbey - playing third stones - was penalised for three hogline violations before eventually losing the game to Switzerland. At the time, one of the reasons put forward for these aberrations was the different interpretation of the hogline rule that existed between Canada and the WCF rulebook. There was also the issue that, in those days, hogline violation decisions were made by the naked eye of an umpire, who could be sitting two or more sheets away from the action, with the added challenge of sometimes having his or her vision obscured by active players in other games.





© Richard Gray



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Electronic Handles

Hogline issues and debates of the sort outlined in the previous paragraph became a thing of the past when two developments happened. First, universal agreement that the handle had to be released before it reached the hogline and the introduction of touch-sensitive electronic handles. These handles were introduced at WCF championship events in 2004. The handles, when used with a sensitive electronic pad embedded in the ice at the hogline, brought an end to hogline violation debates, for the betterment of the game for everyone. The flashing green lights on the handle as the stones come down the ice – and the occasional red ones – have now become a common sight at the majority of WCF championships.

Time-clocks

Another problem that came to light was the increasing time it was taking to complete games. The solution to this problem was to introduce time-clocks – a move first introduced for televised games in Canada. However, when the men's and women's world championships were brought together for the first time in Milwaukee, USA in 1989, time-clocks became vital tools in managing the programme of competition.

When time-clocks were first introduced, they measured the playing time of each team, but it was generally understood that this concept penalised teams who attempted to play a drawing game rather than a hitting game. In 2014, this was changed to Thinking Time for WCF championship events, with each team being allotted 38 minutes – for a ten end game of traditional curling – to consider strategies and actions. Wheelchair curling teams are allotted 38 minutes for eight end games and mixed doubles teams have 22 minutes of Thinking Time.



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Free Guard Zone

It has taken a number of years to evolve, but, coming from an initiative first suggested by famous Canadian skip Russ Howard in the 1990s, every championships game is now played with a Free Guard Zone rule. This means that any of the first four stones of a game that land in the space between the faraway hogline and the rings cannot be removed at that stage of the game.

This has the effect of keeping more stones in play, rather than a game featuring a succession of take-out shots, making the game more interesting and attractive to watch and, no doubt, even to play in.

However, like many of the other developments outlined in this chapter, it took some time for a generally-agreed version of this rule to come about. For example, Canada played a three-stone Free Guard Zone for many years before the four-stone version was universally agreed.

The idea of a Free Guard Zone rule was also supported in the early days by another famous curling skip, Eigil Ramsfjell of Norway, who made strong representations to then WCF Vice President Roy Sinclair. This also played a part in the adoption of a new rule which is still in force today, bringing an added emphasis to the importance of shot-by-shot tactics to the benefit of the game.



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Sweeping Rules

Although there was significant focus around sweeping in the 2015-2016 season, controversy in this area goes all the way back to when moves were made to ban corn-brooms from international competition.

One way or another, the dust settled on that controversy, but in 2015, it emerged that developments in the design, size and fabrics used in brush-heads, as well as variations in the techniques used in sweeping, could have a profound effect on the control of stone movement during games. By general consensus, it was agreed that these effects – whereby athletes could prevent a stone from curling, or stop a stone through a particular technique – were detrimental to the spirit and the scope of curling.

For the 2015-2016 season, a number of solutions and moratoriums were introduced, but it was apparent that something more permanent had to be done.

That's why in May 2016, the WCF convened a Sweeping Summit – near Ottawa, Canada – involving top international athletes and engaging with curling equipment manufacturers and other key stakeholders, to come up with an evidence-based solution that would restore the primary responsibility for shot-making to the thrower while continuing to maintain the relevance of sweeping.

This summit was staged with the co-operation of the National Research Council of Canada and on the basis of their scientific evidence a series of recommendations on sweeping were put to the 2016 WCF Annual General Assembly in Stockholm.

These recommendations, which had already been ratified by the WCF's Executive Board, Athlete Commission and Competition and Rules Commission, finalised arrangements for the standardisation of curling broom fabrics and stricter regulations on how brooms are used in competition, and were passed at the Congress.





© Richard Grey

Above: WCF ice-maker Hans Wuthrich shows complete impartiality (Swedish top, Norwegian pants) as he prepares the ice for the 2012 World Men's Championship Bronze Medal match in Basel



© World Curling Federation



Other Developments

It's not just developments in competition and rules that have shaped the modern game of curling, other moves have been on-going over the decades, many led by the WCF. These include:

- Progress in ice-making, with ice wizards such as Don Lewis, Shorty Jenkins and Hans Wuthrich all playing an unseen, round-the-clock role in providing the best possible, consistent ice conditions at major championships to help produce sparkling play.
- Umpiring and rule book advances, which have helped to ensure play is enforced - mostly by the players themselves it has to be said - consistently, and empathetically in the vast majority of instances.

- The role of the WCF's camps and courses - especially the annual Füssen courses and junior camp; the 'Business of Curling' seminars; The Olympic Celebration Tours, which bring famous curling Olympians and newcomers together in locations across the world to spread the enjoyment of the game as much as possible; and the Stepping Stones project, a newer development that has educated younger international teams' transition into the demands of elite curling.

All of these developments, and the occasionally circuitous routes needed to have them adopted, have contributed to making championship curling what it is today - an engaging, entertaining and skilful game that is played in a true spirit of respect.



© Christien Leibrandt



© World Curling Federation



WHAT MAKES INTERNATIONAL CURLING SPECIAL?



Doug Maxwell/Inchive



What makes international curling special?

The fans will tell you it's the teams... the teams will tell you it's the fans... the fans and the teams will tell you it's the venues...

and all will agree that it's the game itself.



Above: The first-ever Grand Transoceanic Match held in Karlstad, Sweden in 1977. Former WCF Media Officer Håkan Sundström, who was a member of the organising committee, explains how it came about: "Lennart Hemmingson, chairman of the Organising Committee, invited all the fans present to play in a match based on the Scottish Grand Match, with the games played between teams representing Europe and North America. At that time, Karlstad could offer the largest space of artificial ice in Europe - an ice rink 181 x 67 metres, which had been built for bandy and speed skating, but it was possible to make 30 sheets of curling ice. Since the Swedish curling season was over, other curling clubs were able to lend Karlstad the necessary stones and equipment. Eventually 104 teams took part and they all had a special Swedish lunch of yellow-pea soup with hot punch."

Fans

The presence of fans has always made WCF championships memorable. Whether it is sitting next to one another in the stands, or whiling away the time between games in the nearby social area at each championship - known as The Patch in Canada - over the decades, long-standing international friendships have been forged at WCF venues the world over.

Year after year The Patch becomes a vital week-long social hub, and while the likes of live music, team interview sessions and other attractions are always on offer, it is the simple interaction among curling fans that makes these locations the hottest - or should that be coolest? - spots in town.



Among the fans, many of whom return year-after-year, two great traditions have grown up. One of these is the Grand Transoceanic Match, or the GTM in short.

For many fans, it always pays to pack curling shoes in their luggage so that they can play in this fun-packed event. Although there can be changes to adapt to local circumstances, normally players are split into North America versus the Rest of the World with every effort made to mix up the nationalities of individual teams so that new friendships can be encouraged. This tradition began in Karlstad in 1977, where play took place outdoors, but nowadays a couple of sheets in a local club are almost always pressed into service.



Doug Maxwell/Archive



Doug Maxwell/Archive

ceremonies attendant upon

Be it further known that by virtue of such crossing the beam of full membership in, and is hereby duly recorded on the membership rolls of, the curling devotees known as the AIR CANADA SILVER BROOM POND HOPPER AND INTERNATIONAL CURLING BUFF JET SET

Be it further known said bearer and member of this select company including, but not limited to, the following:

to wear on any or all occasions the official recognition pin of the ACSBPH in appearance of brushed silver base, with sky blue lettering rampant on the famed Air Canada Silver Broom – the Grand

anecdotes as may



Doug Maxwell/Archive

Whether they realise it or not, most fans who take part in the GTM are also eligible to be called Pondhoppers – or to give the organisation its original 1970 title: the ACSBPHAICBJS – the Air Canada Silver Broom Pond Hoppers and International Curling Buff Jet Set. To become a member, all a curling fan has to do is to cross an ocean to attend a world championship. By 2000, it was recorded that Pondhopper Club membership had passed through the 10,000 mark.

As well as the GTM, another annual competition takes place during championships, contested by members of the media for the prestigious Brass Whisk. Modesty forbids your author from listing previous winners.



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