



Sunset on Crystal Lake

Curling 2022

Another Novel

idea

It was a dark and stormy night. The wind howled, cold and heartless across the barren ice. Supply chains were tight. Masks were still all the rage. We drew straws on whose turn it was to make another run to Menards. Conversely, the winners got to go to the store, it was the loser who had to stay back in the shop and continue the fabrications. Foster drew a straw; he also drew rainbows and unicorns and suddenly was out of crayons. Once again we needed to remind him to focus on the making of the stones. The crayons called to him, like a recently emptied bottle of opioids. That was a ruse, an excuse to go, and we knew it. We told him to stop drawing, and just pull a straw. "I got the short one again!" he cried. Then we asked him again to pull a straw; he zipped back up, and showed us his straw -- it was normal-sized, so he qualified for the road trip. Ultimately, it was the rookie, Phil who had to stay back. Some say that it was unfair, that the fix was on, but the veteran committee members knew better. We knew that it needed to be this way -- it was a proper initiation. In retrospect, while we were in the car we realized that the added hours of work on the stones was the easy part -- the hard part was, well, lets just say it was another long weekend and once again Steve hadn't showered.

Where is the Snow?

Lack of snow defined most of the winter 2021 into 2022. Crystal Lake was a sun-melted mirror surface from the North Shore all the way to Lakewood. It seemed as if even a bad golfer could shank a ball all the way across to Lakewood. But I mean, who would want to try that?

2022-01-04



Oh, uh, nevermind.

2022-01-12

Another week has gone by and there is still no snow. Just some flurries which blow across the slick surface and gather in pockets. If we don't have any barriers, it will be more than golf balls showing up on Lakewood's shores. A well-pushed curling stone, cold and frictionless in its quest for a mass to bump into, might errantly meander over. We DID think for a minute about making the curling lanes about ¼ mile long.



2022-01-18

The calendar moves to mid-January and we are teased with more flurries. The wind is relentless, and all the snow from the west is blown to the North-East part of the lake. Hey, that's us! Well it's not enough snow to make curling lanes, and its too much snow to just leave on the ice, because the sun will crystallize the uneven patches of snow into uneven patches of unmovable ice. The snow must be moved. Phil? Where's Phil?

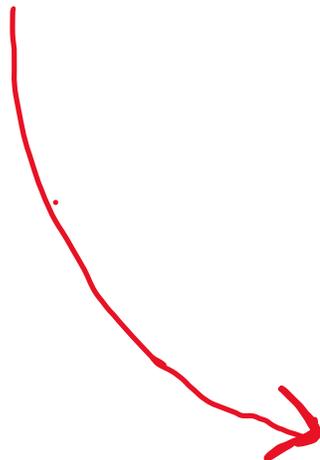


When water leaks up through cracks in the surface of the ice and slowly soaks into the snow above it leads to slush which freezes with an excessively rough surface finish. Even a stainless steel stone hurtling at full speed is no match for water in its solid state. Still weeks before the tournament, the ice preparation is front-of-mind so there is minimal last-minute emergency work. We need a volunteer to scan for wet spots along the cracks. Steve jumps up: it'll be just like high school in Peoria!



MOTIVATION

The curling vibe is all around us as the U.S. Olympic team is making a run for the gold. "... a humble midwestern team..." Hey, they're talking about us!



The prototype lab was hard at work this year as we prepared for a larger tournament crowd. We need to find a way to make the stones more quickly. We need to develop the specifications and manufacturing protocol to consistently pump out multiple runs of similar stones. We need to reduce the time working in close quarters with Steve.

The tried-and-true originals sit next to the newbie stones as the ice lanes are formed – we finally got enough snow to make the lanes!



New designs include but are not limited to:
Wheeli-Yo's a.k.a. the A.D.A. Compliant models.

Stone Av-Hengers





Hmmm – how aggressive should we get?



Sometimes the easiest way to work on the ice is by using cordless tools. Sometimes.

Preparation a few nights before the event include checking out some Beach Blondes.





Pockets of the non-uniform pigment solution bubble up and/or freeze unevenly and must be ironed down.



The wind is blowing the marking chalk off the target. We need a deflector board to create a wind-free zone. It only works so-so. We settle on hosting the 3rd & 4th sheets with “general area” targets. What’s really the most important is that the competitions are scored based on the distance from the center of the target. “Take the square of 69, carry the 3...” Steve tries to calculate the formula for determining the center of a wind-blown rhombus.

WEATHER FORECAST

Always keeping our eyes to the skies. And to the newspapers. Wait, is that really a newspaper?

LET THE GAMES BEGIN

Daybreak 2022-02-05. Glorious!



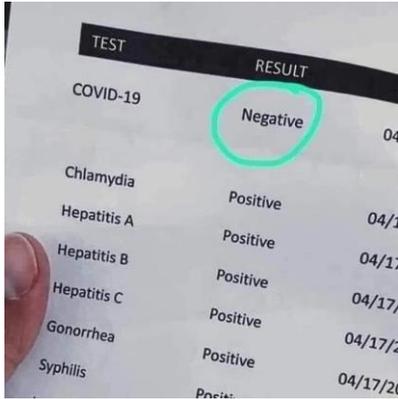
We are live here – the real-feel temperature is at minus three degrees F!



SAFETY FIRST

The safety committee sets rules to ensure a positive experience can be had by all:

1. Ice is slippery. 'Nuff said.
2. No glass on the ice.
3. Guidelines to determine safe team/player groupings:
 - Sheets 1 and 2: Those who are vaccinated, wearing masks, socially distanced, and recently tested negative
 - Sheet 4 (the farthest one): for those exhibiting COVID-19 symptoms, please isolate & compete here
 - Sheet 3: Those with flu, lice, fleas, smallpox, mumps, syphilis, gonorrhea, chlamydia, and other STDs



TEST	RESULT	
COVID-19	Negative	04/17/20
Chlamydia	Positive	04/17/20
Hepatitis A	Positive	04/17/20
Hepatitis B	Positive	04/17/20
Hepatitis C	Positive	04/17/20
Gonorrhea	Positive	04/17/20
Syphilis	Positive	04/17/20

The committee carefully reviews the participants' qualifying paperwork

4. In consideration of the neighbors, musical instruments and portable speakers shall be kept at a reasonable volume and shall not play music by Neil Young.

Final sweep and tests



Many contestants are fearful of falling through the ice and sinking to the bottom of the lake. This is understandable – who wants to be curling with wet knees? You can tell by the depth of the cracks that the ice this year is about 15" thick or more. This is thick enough to withstand a concentration of 4 curlers with 8 stones standing over the bullseye trying to add up their scores, or 2 Crouse-family tables full of liquor, or one feet-out-land-on-your-back fall by Mike Madden (the standard unit of measure).



Warmups on sheet 1



The start gun goes off: the curlers are fully engaged.





A view from the adjacent skating rink







Nice tuke, eh? Award winner.





Shortly after noon: Call the repair crew – it's bone-chilling cold out but the full sun is melting the targets. We might need to rethink the surface-mount dark color schemes.



ROUND 1

Sheet 1					Sheet 2				
MATCH	Score	W	L	T	MATCH	Score	W	L	T
1) 1 vs 2	1-2	✓			1) 7 vs 8	7-5			✓
2) 3 vs 4	3-4		✓		2) 9 vs 10	9-10		✓	
3) 4 vs 5	4-5		✓		3) 11 vs 12	11-5	✓		
4) 13 vs 14	13-14		✓		4) 19 vs 20	19-20		✓	
5) 15 vs 16	15-16		✓		5) 21 vs 22	21-22		✓	

ROUND 2

Sheet 1					Sheet 2				
MATCH	Score	W	L	T	MATCH	Score	W	L	T
4) 20 vs 21	20-21		✓		4) 17 vs 18	17-18		✓	
5) 19 vs 21	19-21		✓		5) 13 vs 14	13-14		✓	
6) 23 vs 24	23-24		✓		6) 14 vs 15	14-15		✓	
7) 9 vs 12	9-12		✓		7) 1 vs 3	1-3		✓	
8) 11 vs 7	11-7		✓		8) 2 vs 4	2-4		✓	
9) 8 vs 10	8-10		✓		9) 5 vs 6	5-6		✓	



The play-in rounds are complete. There is a lunch break lull while the playoff bracket is drawn up. The stones – still soaking up the sun – slowly melt into the ice.



Now, back to the action





Passers-by from out of town stop by to soak in the festiveness and share their own.





Sadness, part 1:

The last of the homemade spiked apple cider.



Pond hockey is an alternative for those who are no longer in contention.



The Finals

The sun is setting, the wind picks up and blows snow across the surface of sheet 4. No amount of brooming can keep ahead of the accumulations along the lane barriers – the curling must go on with this new challenge. The lanes are getting narrower. Not a problem – this is the a matchup of the best of the best. Noted: It is an all-prototype final.





The Victors. Actually, their names are Jim and Ken.

Jim Mahoney -- repeat winner! How do you think he does it? [I don't know] What makes him so good?

Ken Sankot

2nd Place

Todd Schroll

John Quinn

3rd Place

Ken Mraz

Mark Otten



Group Photo

You might not have stuck around for the finals due to the wind chill, but we know you were here!



The Committee

The committee thanks all attendees for sharing in the fun with positive attitudes, great food, hot grills, and fully stocked bars at each table.



Phil Lattanzio – The Rookie

Kevin Lydon – Ice Man

Steve Otten – Ottenberger Bergerotten

Ken Mraz – Cool Hand Ken

Ken Sankot – “That’s ‘Mr. Champ’ to you”

Tom Foster – Motown Philly, Back Again

Post-tournamortem

As the sun sets on another Crystal Lake curling tournament, we are reminded that it does not take long for Mother Nature to change her mind on the atmospheric conditions. Much like last year, it was very shortly after the last stone was fetched from the ice that the weather turned. We were “this close” to missing out on curling altogether! In early February it might have still been cold enough to send some snowbirds south, but even the “mid-winter” sun often packs a relative punch. The target circles become pock-marked circles of semi-slush....



4 days later... the errant blue chalk reappears atop the melting snow banks ...



... as do some miscellaneous grilled items (fries, I think) ...



... puddles form at the Eastern targets



... and before long nothing remains but the skeleton of the rink and the lanes. In a few days the lake will swallow all of it until the following winter's thick freeze creates the next curling adventure.

Wrap up: As we melt into Spring and Summer 2022 we remember:

- Vladimir Putin has fully invaded Ukraine, oil prices kiss \$100, hover around \$80, Germany and Poland nationalize gas plants
- Novak Djokovic is ineligible to play tennis and gets deported from Australia due to not receiving Covid treatment
- Unemployment hovers around 4% while inflation hovers around 9% as the Fed raises interest rates three times so far this yr
- Biden signs a sweeping energy bill which includes incentives for EVs made in USA for which no manufacturer qualifies
- Roe v Wade is overturned, pushing abortion legislation decisions to states
- Walt Disney Company is outed for their methods of indoctrination of LGBTQ into their media; stock plummets by 50%
- Immigrants from Texas and Florida are given free bus rides to 'Sanctuary Cities'
- Lake Meade and Lake Powell continue to dry up to levels below the water discharge chutes feeding Las Vegas
- College athletes are fully being paid for play, plus image and likeness, plus there is no penalty to enter the transfer portal
- Bitcoin sinks and hovers around \$16,000.00; FTX goes bankrupt
- The STS 7th Grade class that brought the committee together is finishing their junior year of college