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PRESENTS THE COACHING SERIES...

“A PANE IN THE GLASS”

You Have the Power!

By Bill Tschirhart

In a recent essay (“[The Dangers of Learning About Curling Strategy by Watching TV](#)”), I referred to “the weapon”. It’s the highly accurate, vapor trail hit weight shots you see many of the elite male skips deliver resulting in stones moving in most every direction. How on earth do they do that? And, more to the point for most recreational curlers, how do I summon sufficient take-out weight for the occasional runback double? Well, my friends, frustrated as you may be, you have the power. Let’s find out where it is and how it can be used.

Most people have difficulty getting enough weight on their take-outs simply because they only use one or two sources of power from the EIGHT that are available. They struggle to summon more power but therein lies the problem. Don’t try to get blood out of a stone (oh, the puns just keep coming). Become aware of the other six or seven and choose to add one or two of them! Let’s examine each of these power sources.

LEG DRIVE - Clearly this is the most obvious source of power. But before you engage that quadriceps bundle of muscles in your hack leg thigh, read the article in this series entitled "[Delivering the Curling Stone 101](#)". It explains when to engage this power source. Actually, everyone should go there right now and read that essay before reading on here. I’ll wait for you here. I’ll deliver a few practice stones over there on sheet four while you’re gone.

Interesting about that "pane of glass" analogy don’t you think? So many curlers new to the no back swing delivery engage leg drive much too soon. It’s important that you make sure the center of gravity of the body is forward of the hack before you push. Be careful that you avoid an excessive push with you hack foot. It can lead to a trailing leg fault (trail leg that moves laterally, causing alignment difficulties with the upper body). If you find that’s the case with you or those with whom you are working, most of the time it’s correctable by pushing with the leg, not the foot.

Strength in the legs is the key to power in most sports. Powerful legs drive the golf ball, swing

the bat, throw the football, hit the tennis ball etc. In your strength and conditioning programme, make sure leg strength is an integral part! This is especially true for senior curlers. I see so many seniors with excellent technical deliveries lose some of that advantage because they simply can't slide as fluidly nor as far as they once could. Heh, I'm in that age category so I get it, but don't give in. Keep those legs strong and your slide long!

MOVE HIPS BACK – The center of gravity of our body must get moving quickly (in a forward direction). Most curlers pull back to a "park position" with the hips. This gives your body a chance to build up some momentum by the time you "break that pane of glass" so that when you "bottom out" in your slide, you're moving with sufficient velocity to execute full hit weight shots. I see so many curlers, who "think" they're pulling their hips well back, hardly move them at all. When that happens, I stand behind the curler with my brush held upright on the ice at the position to which I feel they need to draw their hips. They have to feel their backside touch the handle of my brush before they can begin the forward movement motion. It's all about awareness!

I caution curlers to be sure that the hips move straight back at shoulder height. Be careful not to raise the shoulders along with that backward movement of the hips. That can cause other problems.

MOVE SLIDING FOOT BACK – The above point cannot be accomplished without the sliding foot moving back as well. The hips must be supported. The spin off benefit is that the sliding foot has an opportunity to also build up speed by the time the curler "bottoms out". The result is more forward velocity. Remember to move the sliding foot "straight" back and "straight" forward. It will eventually arrive at a point under the sternum of the body, which is where it should be in the slide. Don't even "think" about getting it there, it does it "automagically". If you think about getting your sliding foot to the midline of the body, it has a tendency to get there much too quickly resulting in a possible side-to-side drift. I no longer use the term "get your sliding foot to the midline of the body" in clinics because even though that's why I say, the participants' brains hear, "get your sliding foot to the midline of the body *as quickly as you can*".

LIFT YOUR SLIDING FOOT OFF THE ICE – There was a time when no instructor would ever have suggested this but it's now commonplace as a reliable source of power. When you lift your sliding foot off the ice, you can move it forward more easily. When you lift your sliding foot off the ice, the height should be measured in single digit centimeters (and even though it's not in contact with the ice, the movement should be straight).

DELIVERY ARM EXTENSION – This too would have been mostly taboo not long ago because it sounds so much as though we're suggesting that you "push" the stone. Yikes, I used the "p" word!!! All sarcasm aside, it really must be thought of as arm extension NOT a push. The difference is in the follow-through. If you're going to extend your delivery arm, extend forward directly toward the target. This takes "practice", the other "p" word!

SHOULDER DROP – Along with arm extension, dropping the upper body forward, under control will provide more power. Al Hackner, from Northern Ontario used this source with

great success.

EARLY RELEASE – Think about this! The instant a curler leaves the hack he/she begins to decelerate. You are moving more quickly at the back line than you are at the tee line, at the top of house, near the hog line until your slide eventually comes to its natural stop. It stands to reason therefore that an earlier release will provide more power. I caution curlers to use this technique with care as different release points among the members of your team can lead to “team” technical issues.

HIGHER HACK FOOT POSITION – Most people place their hack foot into the hack so that the toe of that foot touches the flat portion of the hack with the ball of the foot on the sloped portion. When one pushes from the hack, the last part of the hack foot to leave the hack is the toe which for right-handed curlers using that popular left hack, can be well worn and smooth. For more power, place your hack foot in the hack so that no part of the hack foot touches that flat bottom portion. The entire hack foot is on the sloped portion. You will be amazed at the extra "push" you will get from this position. Many coaches insist that all shots be delivered from this elevated hack foot position to avoid slips.

I left the higher hack foot position as the last one for a reason as it's the **first** one I feel you should add to your “power arsenal”. For the vast majority of curlers, when they do, it's problem solved.

Well, there they are! Eight sources for power for the no back swing delivery. No curler needs to engage all eight. Choose those that will work for you and don't forget that "p" word, **PRACTICE!!!**

Let me know how it goes. My email address is at the bottom left of each page. I'll see you soon behind a pane in the glass.