Return to curling tips

"The beginning & end of both a game & a curling season are the most common time for injuries to occur".

With a little bit of preparation before the season, and before each game you have the opportunity to lower this risk. This document is going to provide you with some resources to help you over the next few weeks heading into your season starts, to help make getting into the hack, sliding on the ice, and brushing your rocks more comfortable and enjoyable.

This document is going to cover:

- **A full warm-up** that can be done at home, or behind the glass before each game
- **Top tips** for injury prevention, comfort & performance improvement:
  - For the delivery
  - For brushing
- How to get access to a free Mini Back-to-Curling workout to complete before you step on the ice in the fall

I hope you enjoy,

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THE WARMUP

"**EVERYONE WARMS UP**; IT EITHER HAPPENS BEHIND THE GLASS, OR DURING THE 1ST FEW ENDS"

Here's a little more info on what might go into, and the importance of a warm-up: Link

I have **3 goals** for a warm-up:

1. Get the **blood moving** throughout the body; to the muscles and joints, and to the brain
2. Move your body into the **positions** you will be in during the game
3. Ensure that your mental and emotional state are **game ready**!

Here are 8 moves you can complete before you step on the ice:

- Marching or jogging on the spot
- Jumping jacks (jumping or walking)
- 1 leg balance (supported or unsupported)
- Split stance dynamic rock and reach (supported or unsupported)
- Supported squat breath (you chose how low you go for your body)
- Table plank reach (hands elevated preferred)
- Arm swings
- Team high fives



Follow along warm-up video

You can also use them in the weeks leading up to your curling season to help you physically prepare

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THE DELIVERY

#HipsFirst

Your setup is arguably the most important part of your delivery.

One of the first things you are taught is to approach the hack from behind, put your toe into the hack & line up your hips and shoulders at the broom, and practice maintaining this alignment as you lower into your starting position.

How you get into the hack, or prepare to line up your hips can impact your ability to:

- hit the broom,
- find balance,
- generate power,
- and throw consistently.



Photo credit: Mike Aprile

I'm going to summarize the following resources below, but if you want to go into more detail, I invite you to check them out individually:

- Episode 05: It's All in the Hips
- Hips first into the hack video tip
- An exercise to help with the hips first cue

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THE DELIVERY

Summary of why "hips first" is important:

After you set yourself up in the hack, facing the broom and prepare to lower to your rock, you have the option of moving from the knees first, or the hips first. Take a video of your setup from the side to see what you do, and give hips first a try.

Potential benefits of hips first into the hack:

- It can make it easier to feel and load your posterior lower body muscles, which will help take pressure off of the quads, IT band, knees and ankles both during your time in the hack, and during your slide. **Think of it like "adding more muscles to the party"**
- When you "add more muscles to the party" in the hack, when you go to actually throw your rock, you will more likely utilize the large posterior hip muscles for things like **balance and power production**
- Hips first can help to keep a more "stacked" core position; helping to save your lower back and muscles around the hips from overuse.
- If you go into the hack "hips first" you are more likely to leave the hack "hips first". If you think of throwing a ball; you don't throw a ball with just your elbow, wrist and fingers. You need to wind up and include the back back and core muscles. The same is true for curling. If your kick out of the hack is initiated with the knees -you're missing out on the **potential for control, comfort and power from the big hip and lower limb muscles.**





For my stick curlers: This hip-centred cue also applies to you. Of course, with less of the emphasis on getting low, and bending the knees. Your balance on the ice, and power still comes from your hips and trunk first. I am sorry I don't have a direct video for you yet, but I hope you can imagine how a stick delivery that relies too much on the front of your body (and your knee bend, and/or arms only) can lead you to throwing off line and losing power as well as consistency. You can use your hips as the leader of your trunk to create that power as you transfer the energy from your feet, to your hips, to your shoulders and then into the hands and through the stick. You would benefit from an awareness of hips first for other activities like sitting down in a chair, and bending to pick something up (or clean your rock). You can also experiment with a smaller range of motion version of the exercise below.

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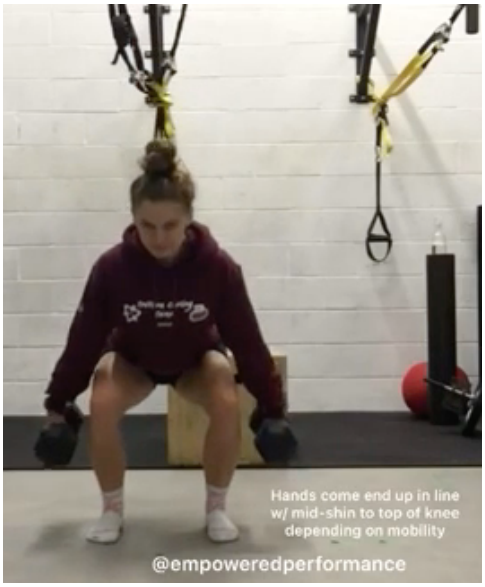
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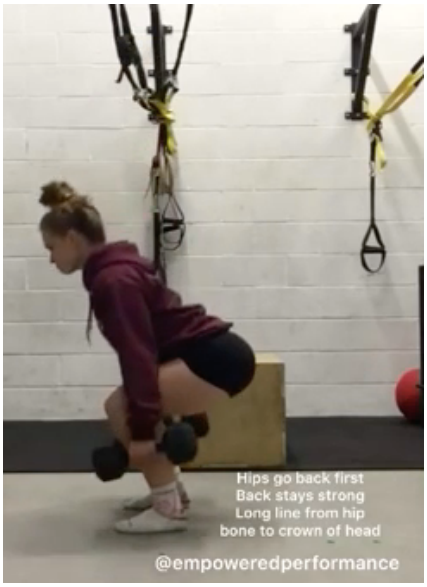
THE DELIVERY

Summary of how to practice "hips first" off- and on-ice:

- Curling is unique, because we aren't necessarily squatting down into the hack, and we aren't hinging (or 'deadlifting') either. The movement we are likely looking for is more like a "suitcase deadlift" which is a combination of a squat and a deadlift motion. This sets us up on a **better angle** at the ankle, knees, hips and trunk to propel our body across the ice instead of up, and/or into the ice.
- We can use various deadlift and squat exercises to access more of this movement that is required in the suitcase deadlift.
- **On the ice, we can use a coach, a trusted friend, or use video to see if we are setting up into the hack hips first or knees first.** Please remember that hips first does not mean that your knees don't bend. It just means that the first motion as you lower into the suitcase deadlift or the hack, is at the hips followed by the knees.
- Practice your setup and use video to experiment with different amounts of hips first movements until you find one that feels the best for you. This might mean only practicing your setup into the hack for a few reps before adding in the actual throwing of your rock







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BETTER BRUSHING

Brushing is such a hard part of curling to improve, especially when we don't have access to the ice (for most of us) over the summer. **So how can we improve our brushing, as well as gain comfort and strength on the brush before the start of the season?** In order to become a better brusher it may take more than watching a webinar or a few games of the pros to pick up some tips and make some changes. It can take a combination of strength and endurance building activities, and of course, lots of practice. When we have little to no access to ice, we can utilize something called the brushing plank to help you gain that comfort on the brush in a safer space. You can include it as a part of your pre-game routine, and/or your brushing-specific practice plan.

How to do the Brushing Plank



Open position



Closed position

Watch this *FREE* 1 hour presentation all about the brushing plank

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BETTER BRUSHING

Here's how to do the brushing plank:

- Find a safe space to complete the exercise. A beginner option is to lean your brush against the wall or backboards to help provide some extra support if you are worried about the brush slipping on the floor or the ice.
- Hold the broom in either the open or closed position (see open vs. closed article for tips)
- alt is important to keep your core and posture strong; avoid dropping your head, shrugging your shoulders, and arching or rounding your back.
- It might be helpful to think of not only pushing down on your brush into the floor, but also think of pushing your body away from the floor
- Hold this position for 10-60 seconds. You can complete a couple of sets in a row with a 30-60 second break in between at various points in your day. Or include the brushing plank into your regular workout and/or pre-game warm-up.

On-Ice Brushing Plank Example

- The brushing plank is the perfect time to experiment with:
  - trying a different position (open vs. closed),
  - challenging yourself to get your feet further out (and as a result; more of your body over the brush),
  - switch which arm is in the "down" position,
  - gaining grip, core or upper body strength,
  - and/or improve your endurance in the brushing position



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A NOTE FROM COACH STEPH

Thank you for putting some effort in to preparing for your upcoming curling season. My goal is to provide curling-specific health, fitness, coaching and rehab tips to curlers across the world. I am located in Markham Ontario, Canada & have had the pleasure of working with hundreds of athletes at all levels of curling both in-person and virtually so that they can move better, with less pain and improved performance. It means the world to be able to share information like this with you. I hope you have a wonderful season,

GOOD CURLING!



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