

## Got A Weight Problem?

*By Jon Mielke*

As is the case in life for many people, a lot of curlers have trouble with their weight. But for curlers, it is a lack of weight instead of having too much.

Throwing enough weight for takeouts has become less of a problem as most curling ice has gotten keener over the years. But the no back swing delivery has also taken away a major weight generator – the back swing. So what can today's club curlers do to generate more weight? Here are several things to try:

**Eliminate sources of drag** – First of all, look for things that might be dragging you down. Do you have an old, worn slider? New sliders are considerably faster than older ones, especially if you are using a loaner slider that is provided by the club. Get a new, full slider that you can call your own or, better yet, consider investing in curling shoes if you don't already have a pair. Shoes will undoubtedly improve your balance and assist in your ability to throw more weight. If you can, borrow a pair of shoes and try them out before you settle on a pair. Consider a pair with a thick, Teflon slider – it will be fast and durable. New and intermediate curlers should not go for something like stainless steel – definitely expensive and probably way too fast for most curlers. Also, look for body parts that are in contact with the ice – knees, mittens, etc. Work on your balance and get them off the ice. And don't forget your broom – is the pad or even a wooden head in contact with the ice? Also take a look at your trailing foot. If the shoe is showing wear from dragging on the ice, cover those areas with duct tape and eliminate related drag. Get rid of those friction points and your momentum out of the hack will increase.

**Increase leg drive** – The primary source of momentum for you and the stone is leg drive. Pushing harder out of the hack will increase weight. However, many players are reluctant to push harder because they are unsure of their balance. The only way to gain confidence in your balance is practice, practice, practice. Try pushing harder, but be sure to watch the timing of your slider foot and make sure that it moves forward and under the chest before you really apply the gas to your leg drive. Regardless of what you try to increase your weight, you have to maintain a balanced delivery.

**Take hips farther back** – Think of a curler's hips like a spring – the further they get pulled back behind the hack, the more energy they have when released. A quick observation of most curlers from beside the hack shows that their hips get elevated and taken back to a position directly above the hack. That may work on keen ice and especially for draws, but it may not be sufficient when shots require more weight. In those situations, try taking your hips back to a position that is several inches behind the hack. Doing so will give your hack leg the opportunity to generate more power as you drive out of the hack. But, as is the case with increased leg drive, you will have to work on timing and balance to make sure that your slider foot gets properly positioned directly behind the stone and under your chest. If your slider foot is running behind everything else, the tendency is to move it quickly to catch up, and then it overshoots the optimal position under the chest and keeps moving sideways. The result is a "drift" with the sideways-moving slider leg pulling the rest of the body and the stone along with it. Start the forward movement of the slider foot early enough so it does not have to play catch-up.

**Place hack foot higher in hack** – Many curlers position their hack foot with the ball of the foot near the bottom of the sloped part of the hack and with their toes on the bottom, flat part of the hack. Most hacks have a vertical and a horizontal line that intersect half way up on the sloped part of the hack. Try positioning your foot so the ball is on the intersection of these two lines and most, or all, of your foot is on the slope of the hack, with none of your foot on the flat, front section of the hack. Since the last part of your foot to leave the hack is the toe, and it is hard to generate momentum when pushing off the flat part of the hack, moving the entire foot higher in the hack should help you generate more weight.

**Release the stone sooner** – Many curlers release draw shots just a few feet short of the hog line. They may also release takeouts at about the same location. If throwing enough weight on takeouts is a problem, try releasing the stone sooner. Once you are out of the hack and hopefully on line, apply the turn and let the stone go. Hanging on longer will only reduce the stone's velocity. Curlers also have to be careful, however, not to release the stone as if it is a hot potato. Get out into a full, relaxed sliding position with the rock out in front of you and then apply the turn and release. You may want to try releasing earlier, but don't rush.

**Other less desirable weight generators** – There are other things that some curlers do to generate more weight on takeouts – things like a slight shoulder drop just prior to the point of release or even a little arm extension. These generators should be a last resort because they often cause more problems than they cure. They make it impossible for sweepers to interval time stones accurately and they tend to result in a push that causes the stone to be off-line. Remember, a million dollar slide and a two-cent release will produce a two-cent shot.

If you watch national or world championships or the Olympics on TV or the Internet, you may even see some players generate weight via a step-over delivery (the slider foot starts out behind the hack and the shooter steps over the hack and almost jumps into the slide position to generate more momentum) or even with an old-school back swing. These weight generators are fun to watch, but they are definitely not something that new or intermediate curlers should try to generate more takeout weight.

If you or a teammate are having trouble generating enough weight on takeouts, hopefully this laundry list of things to try will help. Keep in mind that balance and release are important, no matter what you try, plus it is ideal for everyone on a team to throw the same takeout weight. Similar takeout weights make life way easier for a skip and will contribute to more made shots and more games won.

Until next time – Good Curling!

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