

Analyze Your Misses

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You don't want to dwell on missed shots but it is important for both the shooter and the skip to analyze why a shot was missed. Knowing why a shot was missed helps avoid a repeat performance. In most cases shots are missed for one or a combination of the following:

- Body and/or stone slid either wide or narrow
- A poor release caused the stone to be thrown wide or narrow
- Rock is thrown either light or heavy
- Rock is over- or under-swept or swept at the wrong time
- Skip gave too much or too little ice

If the miss was caused by the shooter, hopefully knowing the reason immediately after the shot is thrown will help the shooter make adjustments before the next shot. If not, the cause may be the focus of a future practice session. If the shot was missed because of a sweeping error, hopefully the sweepers and/or the skip learned from the occurrence and don't make the same mistake again. If the skip had the broom in the wrong place, that should also be a learning moment that will contribute to better placement on subsequent shots.

Here are a few more thoughts on shot analysis:

Body and/or stone misalignment – Proper alignment starts when the shooter steps into the hack and the rock is placed in the start position. If the shooter is not lined up straight at the skip's broom, the slide will be either wide or narrow. The same is true with the stone. It should be positioned directly in front of the hack foot when the shooter is in the start position. It should be drawn straight back toward the hack foot and then moved straight out at the skip's broom along with the shooter's body during the slide. Quite often you may also see players who slide with a drift where the rock is on line but the shooter's body slides out more toward the side board – on the right for right-handers and on the left for left-handers. The body tends to pull the rock along with it and the shot is missed. Whatever the case, sliding off line will usually result in a missed shot.

Faulty release – Remember the old saying, "A million dollar slide and a two cent release will get you a two cent shot." The key is to position the front of the handle at either the 10 o'clock or the 2 o'clock position when setting up in the hack. The stone should be gripped with the pads of the fingers on the bottom of the handle and the thumb to the side. The wrist should be elevated so it does not rest on the back of the handle. This position is maintained until about the last four feet of the slide. At that point, the handle should be rotated toward the 12 o'clock position with enough force to achieve about 3 rotations as the stone travels down the ice. Having the hand on the handle beyond the 12 o'clock position may cause the rock to be turned off line. The same thing may happen if the turn is applied too forcefully using the index or little finger. Remember that a curling stone does not start curling immediately upon release. If the stone moves off the desired line within the first several feet after release, the turn was misapplied and the shot will be missed. And remember, if the fingers turn white the grip is too tight.

Rock is thrown light or heavy – Regardless of whether the shot is a guard, a draw, or a takeout, it can be thrown too heavy or too light. Guards and draws that are thrown too light will stop

short and will often seem to over curl (they really didn't – they just started curling early). If they are thrown too hard they will go beyond the desired location and may seem to under curl (they really didn't – they just started curling late). Under-thrown hits will curl more than what the skip accounted for when the broom was placed. Conversely, an over-thrown hit will run too straight and miss wide. Using interval and hog-to-hog timing systems are a great way to develop muscle memory and more precise weights. Whatever you do, there is no substitute for practice and repetition.

Sweeping error – Well-thrown shots can be missed if they are over-swept, under-swept or swept at the wrong time. The primary responsibility for sweeping for weight belongs to the sweepers while the skip is responsible for calling sweeping for line. Sweepers must remember their duties and should not wait for the skip to call for sweeping if the rock is light - that is their job. While timing systems such as interval timing are a great aid, there is no substitute for good judgment when it comes to sweeping. More shots are missed by under-sweeping than vice versa so when in doubt, SWEEP!

Incorrect ice – Despite what some skips are willing to admit, they may be the cause of a missed shot because they had the broom in the wrong place. Some shots may be perfectly thrown and perfectly swept and then missed simply because the skip gave too much or too little ice. Reading ice and calling line are not easy and it is a learning process, especially in the early ends of a game. Skips need to watch all of their team's shots as well as those thrown by the other team. They should also use the early ends to throw different kinds of shots on as many areas of the ice as possible. Lessons learned early may result in making critical shots later in the game.

Article Library - The preceding explanations only summarize the most common reasons for missed shots. During the last 8 seasons I have written articles on each of these topics. All of my previous 35 training articles are available on line at: USA Curling – Media – Curling News – Columnists – Jon Mielke.

Until next time, thank your icemaker if the ice is good – it doesn't just happen. Good curling!

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