

## Responsibilities of the Skip

The skip is effectively the team leader. They are responsible for the "game plan" or strategy for the team that draws on members' strengths and minimizes weaknesses. They call the game based on that game plan.

Stays positive. Motivates and inspires the team.

Reads the ice and 'maps' the sheet.

Communicates - ensures team members understand the called shot and game plan by using simple audible and visual commands.

Studies the opposition for weaknesses and strengths. For example, if the opposition lead struggles with hits, bring your lead's stones into the rings to force an error.

Makes their shots!

Manages time if the event is on a clock.

Encourages members to practice improving their skills.

## Characteristics of Good Teams

Their game plan strategy builds on their strengths.

They practice, together or separately to improve.

They agree on and use a clearly defined weight signal system for takeouts, and for calling out draw weights to the skip during play.

The third relays skip's messages to front end members.

They accept that bad ends happen; know that good ones will follow.

They stay positive and press for momentum to change.

They are flexible, changing game plans to adjust for game and ice conditions.

## Best Practices for Calling Shots

Consistently use the tee-line for broom placement to help you learn/remember the ice. For example, for a lead's free draw, broom at the outside edge of the 8-foot circle to see if it gets to the button.

Stand or kneel, but block background by keeping legs together and use a white handle and bright coloured broom head to maximize broom visibility for your players.

Indicate what is called - pat ice for a draw; tap stone for hits. Use signals to indicate specific, pre-determined speed for hits.

Stay in the house (!) reading and calling line; rely on the sweepers to do their job, the 3rd sweeper's impact is negligible, more important is line call.

When you get the opportunity, especially in early ends, use easy to remember ice calls (ie; edge of 8 foot circle) and track/remember the result for reference later, when a correct ice call is critical.

## Best Practices When Shot Is Underway

Once the stone is released, quickly move behind the backline to call line - you will see plan B's more quickly and clearly than if standing in the house.

Note if thrown stone was on the broom - adjust sweeping accordingly.

Stay behind house to call line until stone comes to rest - avoid the urge to come out and sweep; your job is to call line.

Sweepers are responsible to judge the weight and call it out to the skip so they can better call line and chose plan B's early, based on incorrect weight choices, when the original outcome can't be achieved.

Call sweeping early, before stone starts to move in its arc. Once it starts to move, sweeping simply takes it further down the arc path; good directional sweeping can help keep a stone from over-curling if started early.

Have sweepers call out their estimate on draw weight early, refining it as it closes in on the house.

## Best Practices During Opposition's Throw

### Skip

Stand directly behind the skip to observe if the player hit the broom. Keep your broom up to avoid causing a distraction.

Watch their broom placement and shot result to help map the sheet.

Observe opponents for delivery faults that you can exploit.

Be thinking about your options for the next shot.

Be positioned and ready to sweep opponents stone behind the tee line.

### Other Team Members

Stand outside the house (past the first hogline) out of the line of play to avoid distracting your opponents; it's a good place to judge ice speed as well.

If you're throwing next, watch the opposition's throw by moving in behind them after they have released their stone; you can learn the ice and weight, important as you may have to throw a similar shot.

One of your team should set up your stone in front of the hack while that's happening to speed up your delivery process (or you, if you aren't throwing).

## Strategic Considerations

Offense involves throwing guards and drawing around them; to the wings with hammer, or centreline, if without - better strategy if your players are not strong hitters; keep your opponent chasing you.

Offense ignores opponent stones rather than hitting opponent stones; risk giving up big ends if you miss or if opponent makes a double; can leave you a pressure draw or hit to save the end if you have hammer

Defense involves clearing guards and drawing your stones into the rings rather than throwing guards to make the opponent hit, but requires good hitting skills to keep opponents from building a big end.

Draw rather than hit if you have hammer Draw to the wings, not down center; draw to opponent stones that are behind the tee line - it gives you draw weight and forces the opponent to hit - if light, you get a guard.

If you see the opponent struggle to hit the broom, or ice is 'swingy', draw if you can rather than hit; keeps your team aware of draw weight and forces opponent hitting errors.

Look for faults in the ice like straight spots, falls, ridges or late movement; use stone positioning where possible to force opponent to throw on these faults. For example, hit in a straight spot.

Be mindful of defense, but take chances with hammer to set up big ends.

If behind in points, don't hit stones at back of house with hammer, use them as 'catchers' for your stones.

Keep control of the front of the house, especially the area in front of the 4-foot area; let back of the house take care of itself.

What you leave is as important as what you make – if the options are confusing, think about what would favour the opposition; it'll narrow your options to those that work in your favour.

Slide path, the 16" centerline strip from the hack to the front of the house where all the stones travel, will 'fudge' or slow down towards later ends so remember to throw a bit more weight for a draw if it finishes on that path.

The 'string of pearls' - all your stones in a line directly behind one another - or 'Christmas tree' - where your stones overlap showing only a half stone - can be effective in building big ends.

Play the score board - if you have been playing offense, lots of stones in the rings, scoring multiple points per end because the opposition's hitting skills are weak, and they switch to offense (guards, draws, freezes), stay on the offense. Draws to bury stones or freezing to theirs to force them back to defensive actions.

If you are down, and defense (missing hits) is the cause, switch to offense. Throw more guards and draws than hits to see if you can get your stones in play and make the opposition chase you, instead of you chasing them.

If you are tied coming home, the last end is like a separate game. If you have hammer, try to leave yourself as easy a final shot as possible by keeping your stones to the wings and clearing centerline guards. If you decide to go behind a centerline guard, make sure your lead or second hits the house, otherwise you have given the opposition another centerline guard.

If you are tied playing the last end without hammer, set up your centre line guards for the steal, and ignore opponent stones; losing by one or four is the same thing, so take offensive risks!

If your team is up near the end of the game without hammer, to defend, put your first stone on the top of the four foot (a defensive move). If the opponent throws up a corner guard, bring another stone(s) into the rings on the centre line or a tight centre line guard. Make the opponent throw hits to clear the center line to keep them from going around their corner guard. DO NOT go around an opponent's corner guard without hammer, that's where they want to play to build an end.

If your team is down near the end of the game (or any time you want to build an end) without hammer, play offense by throwing up a centre line guard (or a corner if you have hammer) and try to build stones in the rings, as much behind guards as possible.

Have fun and stay positive, complement your opposition for good shots, it's only a game, meet lots of people and remember, there's beer afterwards!