

# WISCONSIN STATE CURLING ASSOCIATION



## PARENT GUIDE TO JR BONSPIELS

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Here are some tips that can help you feel more comfortable with entering the world of junior curling:

### GENERAL INFORMATION:

- You don't have to do everything – your involvement with curling can be little as participation in your junior program and a bonspiel to traveling for bonspiels every opportunity you have. But know that just because someone in your junior program might travel to distant lands every weekend, that doesn't mean that you must do the same. Find out what works for your athlete, your team, and your family and build a schedule that works for everyone. Some teams have 5 players and rotate different players at different events to reduce the time and expense burdens on families. Some teams stick with the same 4 players to help increase consistency. It is whatever works best for the team and families – talk to your junior coordinator and get some advice on which bonspiels will fit your players skill, schedule, and maybe what to expect from the event if they had been there in the past.
- Don't be afraid to try something new – going to new bonspiels that you have never been to is half of the fun of a bonspiel. You will get to meet new people (and see some of the same people from other events) and see different parts of the state and country. Different bonspiels have different vibes, and it is fun to try as many as you can and develop long lasting friendships.



### LODGING:

- Depending on the distance of travel, you will probably want a hotel for at least one night. The schedule for the event should usually come out a few weeks prior to the event so you can see the approximate times that you will play. There are occasions when you will need to play a later night game followed by an early game the next day. It is challenging to do a bunch of traveling between those types of games. Also, it is fun for the kids to stay somewhere new. Staying together in the same house or hotel is beneficial



for the team. It builds relationships that can help their performance on the ice. Hanging out, swimming, playing games are all good ways to help the team bond and face challenges together when things don't go perfect on the ice. Whether the team decides to stay in a hotel or an Airbnb, the team should discuss which option works the best for everyone. In some bonspiels where food is not provided, Airbnb's are nice because you can make your own meals. But in other situations, hotels might be a slightly less expensive option and provide families with more time to separate. Some teams decide to have the athletes stay in a room by themselves and other teams separate by families. Bring up the conversation with your team members and you will usually find that one of the families will be willing to do the research of hotels or Airbnb's to stay at. When looking at hotels, some bonspiels have a preferred hotel that they have made a deal with that lowers cost. Check the flyer or contact the bonspiel coordinator and they can sometimes help.

## EXPENSES

- Expenses – when teams share expenses, it is often a good idea to create a sharable document like a google sheet, that includes the expenses (hotel, registration, food, etc.) that was spent for the team along with columns for each of the families on what they need to reimburse each other. Some teams reimburse along the way and others do everything at the end of the season. It is sometimes nice to do along the way so one family is not stuck with large credit card bills that they might struggle with. Using things like Venmo allow for quick payment from one family to another without the hassle of checks or cash exchanges. Ultimately, it is up to the teams on how they want to structure it, but there should be some conversations early on to make things easy and less awkward throughout the season.

## BONSPIEL BASICS

- When should I arrive? That is another conversation to have with the team, but usually it is a good idea to get there about an hour prior to the game (especially the first game). That gives you time to check in with the person running the bonspiel, find the locker rooms and change, find your teammates if you didn't travel together, maybe watch a little bit of the game that might be happening before you, grab a snack, and stretch out before heading onto the ice. It is always better to be early for a game than late.
- Some bonspiel games will be timed, and others will be based on a certain number of ends. Typically, developmental teams will play 6 end games (that's like 6 innings in baseball) and competitive teams will play 8 ends. If the games are timed, then there are usually instructions at the beginning of the bonspiel about how the timing works. Some events will ring a bell after an hour and 45 minutes and teams will play the end they are in plus one more. Others will play just the end that they are in. Taking a look at the rules sent out prior to the event or paying close attention in the pre-event meeting helps is important.
- Equipment – you will need to bring your own equipment to the event. But if something happens like a broom breaks or a slider is misplaced, you should contact the event coordinator, and they



are likely to be able to help you out for the event. Just ask and they will probably be able to set you up with some equipment for the weekend. If you have curling shoes, that's great (they do help with stabilization), but they are not necessary. You can use some athletic shoes and a slider. The best athletic shoes have a soft rubber outsole. Soft outsoles grip the ice a little better than hard ones. Also remember that curling shoes should be dedicated to being worn only on the ice. Dirt and other debris can cause a rock to "pick" which usually results in a missed shot. If shoes were worn outside, please clean them and try avoid wearing them outside until the season is done.

- Clothing – Every club is a little different in terms of inside air temperature. For the most part, plan on the air temperature on ice to be about 35 to 40 degrees. Since everyone is a little different in how they handle the cold, the best suggestion is to dress in layers. Some curlers will be down to their short sleeve shirts and others will have 4 layers on. Picking the right amount of clothes also depends on the position that they are playing. Skips need more layers as they don't sweep as much as the other players. So, prepare with several layers and find the right amount during that first game. Gloves are somewhat up for debate, but I would encourage finding some with a reasonable amount of grip – that usually means some soft leather. Some people like wearing gloves, some wear mittens, and others don't wear either. Find out what works for you. What I would say is that when you throw the rock, don't wear a glove or mitten on the hand that you are gripping the rock. Your grip and release are one of the most important components of throwing – don't have anything that reduces the connection between you and the rock. Taking a glove or mitten off while you throw shouldn't cause your hand to freeze. You can always put it back on when you are done.

## PARENT AND COACHING ETTIQUETTE

- As a parent, we want our kids to do the best. Understand that even though curling looks relatively easy, it is not. It takes many years to develop the consistency and team work to be successful game after game. Encourage them to keep working hard, watch the little things that their opponents do (especially if they are more experienced than them) to see what can make them better, and be supportive of each other. Everyone is out there trying their hardest. Encourage them to have fun and keep learning and the wins will eventually take care of themselves. Talk about the improvements, the funny things that might have happened, and the make the experience fun.
- In football, when the other team fumbles the ball and we recover it, we cheer. In basketball, we might chant while the other team is on the foul line shooting a free throw in the hopes that they miss. In baseball, you might start some chants to get into the heads of the other team. But curling is considered a "gentleman's sport." That means, we don't cheer when the other team makes a mistake. It is considered rude to cheer a missed shot from the other team – just hold your tongue and internally appreciate the advantage it gives your team. That doesn't mean that you need to be silent as a spectator. If someone makes a great shot, clap for them whether it is your team or the opponent. If you don't want to clap, complement the shot to your opponents' parents. You are all in this together and you never know when your kids might be on the same team. Teams change every year, and you may end up playing with your biggest rival. Curling is a small world, and it happens more than you would think.



- Coaches and parents are not allowed to signal or tell the players on the ice what to do. Encourage your players to watch the ice and don't turn around to look through the glass for confirmation. It looks like the coach and parents are sending signals to the team and that is not ok. Try to avoid large arm swings, pointing directions, and looking frantic behind the glass. Learning through mistakes is one of the best ways for them to remember different situations. Let them learn.
- Timeouts are different for every bonspiel. Along with the length of the game, knowing what the rule for timeouts is important at every bonspiel. The hard thing is that this rule is often different for each bonspiel. Some bonspiels allow for 2 timeouts, some 1, and some none. Some bonspiels allow for the opponents to go talk to their team while the timeout is happening, and others do not. In any case, when going out for the timeout, you should avoid standing in the field of play with your warm shoes. This can leave marks in a critical area – the house. Stay out of the house and talk from either behind the backline or from the carpet. Some bonspiels express where coaches can go, and others do not. The general rule of thumb is to stay out of the house and keep the timeout to about a minute. Keeping the game moving is important for the game and the bonspiel as a whole. Say what needs to be said and let the game start back up. Discussion can happen later.

## **CLOSING COMMENTS**

- Curlers are some of the most friendly and welcoming people around. They have all been new curling parents at some point in their lives and are willing to share little tricks or experiences that can make your life easier. Don't be afraid to introduce yourself and chat with them. It is fun to get to know people from all walks of life and all different experiences. You never know – you might end up talking to an Olympian or a world level curler.
- Remember that different families and teams have different goals for curling. Some are out there having fun and others are trying to get to the Olympics. Find where you want to be and commit to that. There are lots of opportunities from junior bonspiels to junior camps to high school participation to U18s and U21s. Enjoy the curling experience – it is a lifelong journey.