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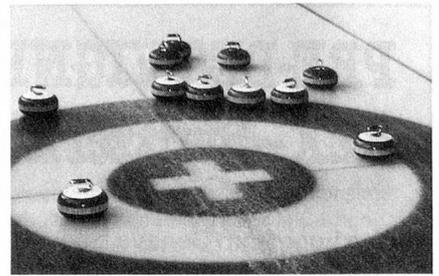
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Our Worldchampion



Have you ever spoken on the phone to a woman world champion? Never? Yes... «Secretariat for the Swiss Abroad, Meier...»

Barbara Meier, member of our staff, is one of four Bernese ladies who became women world champions in curling in Moose Jaw, Canada, at the beginning of April this year. The others were Erika Müller (33), housewife, Barbara Meyer (23), business manageress, Cristina Wirz (21), student.

We have taken the opportunity and asked Barbara a few questions relating to herself and to the competitive game of curling as played in Switzerland.

What is curling?

Answer: Curling is a winter sport which was developed in Scotland in the 16th century. But it is in Canada where curling is most widespread and where it has become a real national sport. Hence every curling player's dream is to experience once in his life a world championship in Canada where stadiums are always sold out. The championships this year gave me the probably unique opportunity of witnessing this fascinating event: It was not to be compared with the world championships in Geneva last year! There, a meagre public, whilst in Canada a passionately sympathizing crowd.

How did you become involved in curling?

Answer: To begin with I was lucky enough to have parents who had been playing curling for years. The same applies to my team mates. Except for Erika, we needed the world championship in Berne in 1974 (at that time exclusively contested by men) to involve us in a concrete way in the possibility of taking an active part in the sport. Judging from my experience, I believe that such events should take place far more frequently in order to give the

people the chance of becoming familiar with a certain sport.

The press gives the impression that there is great harmony within a team – does this correspond to reality?

Answer: Definitely. Otherwise our success just would not have been possible. For curling is a game which asks a great deal of the team, both as human beings and as players. Understanding and consideration are the prerequisites for successful team work. In addition, we have known one another well for some considerable time and spend a great deal of time together, due to common training and contests. In this way, a close friendship has developed which also unites us outside sport.

When thinking of training, the layman imagines complete devotion to the game, dedication and sacrifices. Is this true in your case? You give the impression of a happy and well-developed personality.

Answer: Fortunately there is no question of sacrifice. Curling does not demand daily training; we practise two or three times a week, about 6 hours, in the All-

mend Curling Hall. The time involved is certainly less than in other sports and games, and training is easily compatible with other activities and interests, and leaves enough time for my private life and even leaves me some necessary strength for our Swiss abroad! The biggest consumption in time and finance is demanded by the numerous contests which always take place at week-ends and often begin already on Fridays. It must be stressed, though, that curling is a winter sport, and thus demand is not so great in summer. This year, we find ourselves in a more demanding position: As world champions we are considered favourites in the coming European championships in Sweden. This summer, therefore, will have less sunbathing and more training in store for us.



From l. to r.: Christina Wirz, «our Barbara», Barbara Meyer, Erika Müller (Skip).

(Photo F. Widler)

You mentioned the financial side of your sports activities – how large is the burden?

Answer: On the reverse side of the joys of sport, certain financial problems arise for a purely ama-

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teur player, which could become a real burden if the game is played more intensively. A contest costs between 200 and 400 francs for every participant. Considering that we take part in a contest every two weeks, it needs little imagination to work out the sums...

This brings me to the question of sponsors; do you have any?

Answer: No, unfortunately not so far. We are a women's team, and it is far more difficult for us to find financial support than for men. As one of the twelve teams in Switzerland, we receive a contribution from the Sports Aid Fund, which, however, is not big enough to cover all our expenses. A sponsor would be very welcome also during the season, and not only for the world championship which is supported every year by a different financial donor.

What of your Canadian experience will remain in your memory most clearly?

Answer: Naturally the phantastic feeling of victory. But also the most lavish hospitality of the Canadians with the many social events which allowed us to get in close touch with the local inhabitants.

Would you recommend curling as a sport?

Answer: Definitely. It is a sport



which develops not only the body, but also the mind with regard to concentration, precision, nervous staying power and tactics. It is thus often called «chess on ice», a description which is quite appropriate. And since, apart from world championships, no umpires are ever present, the precept of fairness is of great importance; it is decisive in the strengthening of self-discipline.

What advice would you give to beginners?

Answer: Above all, it seems important to take a good curling course. They are available nowadays in all curling halls. This way, it will soon become clear whether there is any talent for playing the game. Accordingly, one would join one of the many curling clubs.

A beginner must always remember that curling is not an individualistic sport, and in this lies its main attraction.

Book reviews

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«Des hommes sur une route»

(Men on a road)

Raymond Courvoisier, Swiss citizen, as a result of his activities with the C.I.C.R. (Red Cross) and UNICEF, became an attentive and involved observer of the many impressive tragedies which have marked the history of the last half century. Yet his book shows more than just some reminiscences of a life of devotion and adventure. It gives a clear impression of the weaknesses and injustices of which we are capable as human beings and appeals to us to trust in our fate and in the relationship with others.

Raymond Courvoisier, Editions de l'Aire, Lausanne 1983. In French. 147 pages. Format 14 x 21 cm.



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