

Zeitschrift: The Swiss observer : the journal of the Federation of Swiss Societies in the UK
Herausgeber: Federation of Swiss Societies in the United Kingdom
Band: - (1971)
Heft: 1608

Artikel: The art of curling
Autor: Epstein, Eugene v.
DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5169/seals-686600>

Nutzungsbedingungen

Die ETH-Bibliothek ist die Anbieterin der digitalisierten Zeitschriften auf E-Periodica. Sie besitzt keine Urheberrechte an den Zeitschriften und ist nicht verantwortlich für deren Inhalte. Die Rechte liegen in der Regel bei den Herausgebern beziehungsweise den externen Rechteinhabern. Das Veröffentlichen von Bildern in Print- und Online-Publikationen sowie auf Social Media-Kanälen oder Webseiten ist nur mit vorheriger Genehmigung der Rechteinhaber erlaubt. [Mehr erfahren](#)

Conditions d'utilisation

L'ETH Library est le fournisseur des revues numérisées. Elle ne détient aucun droit d'auteur sur les revues et n'est pas responsable de leur contenu. En règle générale, les droits sont détenus par les éditeurs ou les détenteurs de droits externes. La reproduction d'images dans des publications imprimées ou en ligne ainsi que sur des canaux de médias sociaux ou des sites web n'est autorisée qu'avec l'accord préalable des détenteurs des droits. [En savoir plus](#)

Terms of use

The ETH Library is the provider of the digitised journals. It does not own any copyrights to the journals and is not responsible for their content. The rights usually lie with the publishers or the external rights holders. Publishing images in print and online publications, as well as on social media channels or websites, is only permitted with the prior consent of the rights holders. [Find out more](#)

Download PDF: 11.12.2025

ETH-Bibliothek Zürich, E-Periodica, <https://www.e-periodica.ch>

already impeccably aligned when Ouin-Ouin rushes in out of breath. The captain complains bitterly and snarls at him in a stentorian voice:

"Go and stand at the end of the column!"

Ouin-Ouin races to the end of the column and rushes back to the captain.

"I can't Captain, there's already somebody there".

Like every Swiss, Ouin-Ouin has been mobilised in 1939. He buckles his sac, takes his gun and the 24 cartridges which every citizen keeps at home and is about to bid a heart-rending farewell to his wife, who has tears in her eyes.

"Cover yourself well!" she pleads. "Don't drink too much, write to me,

and if they want to fight, please don't interfere! Let them alone".

Ouin-Ouin has at long last been promoted to the rank of sergeant. He attends every repetition course with discipline. One day his commander calls him and tells him:

"Sergeant Ouin-Ouin, inform the company that the alert exercise will take place either in the morning or in the afternoon, depending on the weather".

Ouin-Ouin writes down his commander's order on a prescribed piece of stamped paper and pins it on the company notice board. It reads: "Captain's orders. If it rains tomorrow morning, the alert exercise will take place in the afternoon. If it rains in the afternoon, it will take place in the morning. Signed: Sergeant Ouin-Ouin".

on with our curling — I think you'll learn to like it after a time.

"The dolly, as I said, is extremely important, although, quite frankly, she — I mean, it — has virtually nothing to do with the game, other than serving as — well — a focal point of everything that's happening on the ice — I mean, the rink. Now, to continue, each team, consisting of four players each, shoots eight stones into the opposing house, and are directed to do so by their own skip who tells them to curl in or curl out. Curling is the name of the game and it comes from the fact that the stones are not bowled down the ice, but are 'curled' down, with an 'in' curl or an 'out' curl. The stones are then able to describe various curves so that they avoid other stones and so on.

"Now, one of the most important things to know about this marvellous game is that you can't play it without a broom in one hand".

"Now that's a sweeping statement", said Hermann. "Continue, I'm bristling with excitement".

"The purpose of the broom is to sweep the ice in front of the stones, but only when the skip says so. For example, if your skip wants a particular curve on the stone, he allows it to reach a certain point on the ice and then calls for the other two members of your team to sweep in front of it. This melts the ice a bit and prevents the curling stone from continuing its curve. The stone changes direction and ostensibly ends up where the skip wanted it to go in the first place. I forgot to mention from the very beginning that the skip stands at the other end of the ice and gives directions — using *his* broom to point to the spot where he wants the various stones. There are a lot of other details, of course, but basically the idea is for one team to get as many of their stones as close to the middle as possible without having an opposing stone between them. I mean, one stone near the tee or dolly counts one point, the next stone another point, but only one team can make points. Is that clear?"

"No, but with you nothing ever is".

"Now, when all sixteen stones — each, incidentally, weighing around 44 pounds — have been shot, that is called the end".

"Thank goodness!" cried Hermann.

"No, not the end of the game. Just the *first* end. Each game consists of nine or eleven or thirteen ends, depending on how the players feel. Then the whole thing starts all over again, but in the opposite direction. Fun, don't you think?"

"No, not especially. And, anyway, I don't like sweeping — I get enough of it at home. But I sure like to sweep late in morning. I can tell you!"

"The most important thing about the game is that the skip is always right. If he places his broom on a particular spot and says 'Play it', you play it. He's the boss. In other words, he

THE ART OF CURLING

Eugene V. Epstein

Since curling is a rather old game — having originated somewhere or other in the fifteenth century — there are naturally a lot of old jokes about the sport. Old jokes are all right in their place, but they simply do not blend well with curling, which is a fine and difficult pursuit. To take the wind out of everyone's sails right at the start, I must state that curling simply isn't the old man's game it is thought by many to be.

"Then it's an old lady's game", said my friend Hermann, who had just been named president of the Swiss Anti-Curler's Klub (SACK).

I assured Hermann that I was closer to my own adolescence than to senility, and I liked the game very much.

"You like the game", Hermann replied, "because you don't have to wear skis on your feet to participate, and, furthermore, it's a heck of a lot easier than ski-ing".

"I don't travel into the mountains every winter to wear myself out". I told him. "I like the free and easy camaraderie of the curling clan. They are true sportsmen. Curling requires intense concentration; there is no ranting and raving and rushing about up and down the mountains. This is the difference, *old* man, though I'm still not sure you understand me".

"Well, to tell you the truth, I don't . . . and I never want to!" Hermann said.

"Let me explain it to you. Imagine standing on the smoothest, most perfect piece of ice in the world — a shiny battlefield in the crisp, health-giving air of the Alps".

"Go on, old fellow", Herman interjected.

"Well", I continued, "there you are, wanting to learn something about the distinguished sport of curling, just

as I was last year at this time. And look at me today: a master curler already! Anyway, the first thing you notice is that somebody offers you some stones with handles on them. These are what our irreverent friends call hot-water bottles. But they're fine stones, heavy, polished granite from the Scottish quarries at Mauchline in Ayreshire or Ailsa Craig in the Firth of Clyde".

"Firth things firth, please", said Hermann. "Or should I simply take you for granite?"

"Hermann", I countered, "I just finished talking about old jokes. For your information — once and for all — I know *every* curling joke you can think of. So be quiet, and learn something for a change!" I then continued my lesson:

"Curling is played on a rink by a rink. That is to say, there is a rink which is a number of yards long and then there are the teams, which are also called rinks. There are circles — called 'houses' — at both ends of the rinks, the ice rinks, I mean, not the people rinks. The circles contain a number of additional concentric circles to help scoring, although the individual circles have absolutely nothing to do with the number of points one gets. The centre of the house is called the tee, and on the tee there stands a 'dolly', which is like a bowling pin. The dolly is extremely important, but it can be removed anytime by the skip, who is the captain".

"If dolly is so important", asked Hermann, "why can she be removed by the captain, or would you rather skip that question?"

"Dolly is a thing, not a she, and stop your infernal punning! It must be terrible living with you. How in heaven's name can your wife stand all those horrible plays on words? Now, let's get

stands at the top of the rink and points with his broom".

"Oh, sort of like 'broom at the top'!"

"Yes, exactly. That broom you treat so lightly, sir, is the sceptre of the curler. No honourable curler would ever be seen without it. Now, for your information, here are some other details: learn where the 'hog' is, watch out for the 'sweeping score' and always remember the difference between the normal side and keen side of your stone. Sweep when the skip tells you and stop when he says 'up' and make sure you play the stones with the right colour bubbles. If you give an 'in handle' when you're told to and an 'out' when it's asked for, you'll have absolutely no trouble with the bubble. Keep your foot on the crampit by or in the hack and, whatever you do, play the broom. Now, do you think you understand a bit more?"

"I suppose so, except for one thing".

"What's that, Hermann?"

"Are you crazy?"

("Switzerland", *SNT*)

THE HARD TIMES OF AMBASSADOR BUCHER

Mr. Giovanni Enrico Bucher, the Swiss Ambassador kidnapped in Brazil, was quoted by a West German magazine recently as saying he felt nervous and frustrated and that "my biggest problem is to overcome claustrophobia".

Stern, the Hamburg weekly, said the ambassador had taped the interview on December 18 in response to questions submitted by the magazine's local correspondent through his captors.

The tape recording was delivered to the correspondent with photographs showing an exhausted-looking Mr. Bucher.

The magazine reported him as saying that he was in good health despite his detention in a small room by

masked guards. The room was comfortable but the sanitary arrangements were "less so" and he was forbidden to move around the house.

Mr. Bucher, kidnapped on December 7, said in the alleged recording: "Right from the beginning I received magazines, books, playing cards and later daily newspapers. Sometimes I was allowed to listen to the radio, see television and play records".

He had only a vague concept of the negotiations over a ransom for his release, but said he had kept his faith in the Brazilian Government.

Describing his kidnapping, Mr. Bucher said that at first he had thought it a normal car accident. But then someone had opened the door of his car and ordered him out. It had all been over in a few seconds.

Stern quoted him as saying he had heard a shot ring out but that he did not realise at the time that his bodyguard had been shot.

He had been made to wear glasses masked with cotton for the drive in the kidnappers' car.

"I often debate with some of the kidnappers, really long discussions when one considers that the heat must be very uncomfortable for the masked men.

"They are doing their best to treat their 'guest' as well as possible under the circumstances", Mr. Bucher was quoted as saying.

(*Daily Telegraph*)

A CORRECTION AND A POINT TO CLEAR UP

A monstrous error cropped up in our report of Mr. Bucher's kidnap in the last issue. The Federal Council was alleged to have "reacted callously" to Mr. Bucher's misfortune. It should have read "reacted calmly"! We apologise to our readers for the error—and not least to the Federal Council.

The story about the worthy Swiss of Britain has produced varying appreciations, the echoes of which have reached our ears by circuitous ways.

One reader who definitely *didn't* like the article was its author, Miss Madeleine Eidam. Here she explains why:

Under the heading of "6 Prominent Swiss in Britain" the last issue of the *Swiss Observer* devoted more than two pages to the publication of a series of short biographies which must be qualified as a *breach of copyright*. The Editor of the *Swiss Observer*, Pierre-Michel Béguin, had been given at his own request a copy of the original article written in German, which had not yet appeared in the *Schweizer Illustrierte Zeitung*, on the author's understanding that it was for his personal information only. The exclusive interviews of the Ringier Group were thus published in the *Swiss Observer* without their author's knowledge or consent, and necessarily without translation rights. Despite this the *Schweizer Illustrierte Zeitung* appears to be held responsible for the absence of any pictures in the Editorial introduction of the *Swiss Observer*. They should obviously have gone with the story. Here I quote: "These pictures were unfortunately still in the hands of the *Schweizer Illustrierte* at the time of writing and the readers will have to guess their contents by reading the captions which we have reproduced". Furthermore the Editor gives the impression of apologising to his readers for publishing these articles which in his own words are appreciated "by hundreds of thousands of unsophisticated people", although he is himself not ashamed of using them without the consent of the author. Finally, it is worth acknowledging that the Editor, while appreciating the legitimacy of Ringier's choice of prominent figures, feels that at least a score of other worthy Swiss in England would also have deserved to have their life stories published in the "*Schweizer Illustrierte*". As I could not agree more with Pierre-Michel Béguin on this point, I readily apologise to the "sophisticated readers" of the *Swiss Observer* for "limiting the portrait gallery to a minimum".

Madeleine Eidam

THESE VEHICLES



TRAVEL TWICE MONTHLY TO AND FROM SWITZERLAND AND ENGLAND

Providing DOOR TO DOOR SERVICES
with vans specially equipped to carry

- Household Removals.
- Exhibition Goods.
- Works of Art.
- Machinery.

For full information contact

In Switzerland

Kerhli + Oeler,
3001 Berne,
Nachf. A. Oeler,
Bubenberplatz 9.

In England

Neale & Wilkinson Ltd.,
1 and 2 Rangoon Street,
London, E.C.3.

Tel. 031 22 00 22. Tel. 01-480 6351. Ext. 54 or 58.