

Youth curling celebrates 'Irish for a day?' in Shamrock Spiel

By Shellee Morning
King Curling Club

The luck of the Irish was measured in full volume recently at the King Curling Club's Shamrock Bonspiel for the Little Rocks and Bantam youth curlers.

There were 64 over-the-top, enthusiastic youngsters who took to the sheets in high gear, ranging from ages seven to 12 for Little Rockers and 12 to 17 for Bantams. Their contagious energy, profuse kindness and copious laughter floated throughout the building where the King Youth Program hosted clubs from the local and GTA areas. Milton, Chinguacousy, Elmvale, York (Newmarket), Coldwater and Alliston, along with five teams from King, participated in the second annual Gordon Fogg Shamrock Bonspiel. Gordon Fogg was a long-time member of the Nobleton Curling Club (now merged as King) who started the Little Rock and youth program at the old arena on hockey ice. The Spiel, which has a long history of operation, has now since been re-birthed in his memory at the new Trisan Centre's King Curling club. His wife, Maureen Richardson, commented on how pleased she was to see the Bonspiel going once again as it was one of the most coveted Youth Bonspiels in the area.

As is the tradition, curlers were 'piped' onto the ice by two bagpipe players for the opening ceremonies. As each team paraded around the ice behind the pipers, holding their club signs high above with pride, parents, coaches and spectators beamed as they watched from above. The atmosphere at ice level was as electrifying as the high-C note the pipers ended their song in signifying the games to begin.

A bonus challenge was announced to all curlers just before the opening game - to any team who made a double would be in possession of a very big chocolate bar. If another team were to then make a double, they could take the bar from the current team sheet to then sit at the end of their own sheet. The team who had possession of the bar by the end of the draw kept the prize of sugar. Sheet 3 featured two King teams playing against each other, but as Skip Austin Broad pointed out, his team played Wednesdays and their opponents played Thursdays. So they didn't really know each other - and it was game on.

Broad and his team of Eric Mumford, Ethan Barrowclough and Liam McGraw met Skip Cody Jitta, Jacob Switzer, Ethan Olivera and Aaron Heise, as well as alternate Caleb Nowell, for what was anticipated to be an exciting game, and to see who would claim the bragging rights for the Wednesday or Thursday program.

As the opening ends resulted in a fairly quiet house between both teams, the turning point happened in the fourth, after Broad and his team earned an exciting four-point ender. Broad had control of the house after five with a comfortable score of 7-3. In the sixth, calm, cool and collected, Jitta and squad pulled together, placing two rocks in counting position applying pressure to Broad. Jitta, with the hammer, watched Broad throw his first rock a pound too heavy and watched it slide right out the back of the rings. Jitta's first rock ticked off a guard and rolled into the rings to now lie three. In a heap of trouble and the possibility of losing the game, the animated high energetic Broad decided on a draw and threw with perfect weight leaving it all up to his sweepers Barrowclough and McGraw. His rock slid down with great line wicking off the Jitta top rock, and bumping it off the rings, re-directing his own across the house to now sit as the counting stone. Jitta, with his last and only shot through a small port and now only counting two, had to hit Broad's stone out and stick for the multiple score. It was another great delivery by the skipper, and saw superior sweeping by Heise and Olivera while Switzer called to hold the line. Jitta's rock made contact and removed Broad's to count three. The 7-6 score belonged to the Broad team, but one of the greatest come-backs belonged to Jitta's.

It was also then announced that the winning team of the ultimate chocolate bar was Team Jitta. The roar of cheers that followed would make one wonder if they had just won The Brier. Cody later said that winning the bar was almost as good as winning a game, and with just one question left to ask, 'Could we eat it now?'

Team Broad went on to win the silver medal overall and the Peter Schneider rink from Chinguacousy Curling Club won the gold. The Bantams were next to be piped onto the ice for their ceremonial openers and as a spectator, the difference in size between the Little Rockers and these guys was astounding. Great shot making and top quality sweeping was all to be expected.

Codie Harris as skip led his team of Michaela Valentini, Taylor Cober and Jocelyn Barrowclough through both games that required strategy levels to the extreme. Harris played a solid game while his rookie team mates displayed great enthusiasm never giving up and all achieving personal best performances. The game strategies that were presented to them by their opposition were taken in stride and handled with confidence.

Skip Riley Broad, Garyck Morton, Ethan Mumford and Cameron Sheardown played both of their games with keen strategy and a high level of energy. The first game resulted in an inch off both sides of the broom for most of the close scoring game. Keeping their opponents at close range, Broad, who never faltered, led his gang through each end with encouragement and patience. His front end

displayed high class sweeping resulting in a great team effort by all.

Both Bantam teams were denied a win, but both deserve applause for great attitude, great team effort and most of all, great sportsmanship. A tremendous learning experience that will surely play a big factor in their next Bonspiel, and be recognized contenders.

First place winners overall was the Dylan Niepage team from Coldwater Curling Club.

This highly and well represented event saw its success due to a large group of volunteers and sponsors that worked endless hours in its preparation. Youth program directors and coaches Kathleen Gorsline, Julie Oakley, Barb Davis and Diana Russo have to be commended on a truly phenomenal great day of curling.



Austin Broad celebrates a great shot to earn a point during his team's first game of the Shamrock Bonspiel. Broad and his team of Eric Mumford, Ethan Barrowclough and Liam McGraw went on to win the silver medal in the Little Rocks division for ages 7-12.