

Curling Strategy

Curling strategy is a complex topic. In this discussion, I am going to restrict myself to a few pointers to assist the novice. For a more in-depth analysis, your local public library should have several excellent references.

1. The team which throws the last rock in any end has a distinct advantage in that end. Much of the strategy of curling is concerned with who has the last rock. The advantage of last rock is, of course, that if the Skip with last rock knows the curl and weight of the ice, he can throw the last rock closer to the button than any rock currently on the ice, and score at least one point. Your strategy should therefore be to hold your opponent to a single point if they have last rock, and to attempt to score two or more points in any end in which you have last rock. You might even consider blanking an end, rather than taking a single point and giving the advantage of last rock to your opponent in the next end. If you score any points in an end in which you do not have last rock, this is known as a "steal".
2. It is an advantage to have last rock in any end, but it is especially important to have last rock in the last end. If you are behind, this is your last chance to catch up, and if you are ahead, your opponent would have to steal to tie the game. In the later ends, therefore, you should consider manipulating the order of play to gain last rock advantage in the final end. For example, if you have last rock in the second-last end, you might want to blank the end to keep that advantage in the last end.
3. If your opponent has last rock, try to throw a lot of guards out in front of the rings early in the end. These will make it more difficult for the other team to get the last rock into the house. Once you have a guard in place, try to get a rock into the rings, hidden behind the guard and off to the side.
4. If you have last rock, it is likely your opponent will be using the strategy above. Try to prevent him from cluttering up the area with any guards, by taking them out. Try not to leave your own rocks in play, they should roll out of play as well.
5. Try to keep in mind what the ice will look like after your shot is completed. For example, two rocks left close together could be set up for an easy double takeout. It is much better to have those rocks end up on opposite sides of the rings. Also, a rock at the back of the rings is in a dangerous position. A well placed draw shot could freeze to it (draw up just touching it), and be closer to the button, and also very difficult to remove.
6. Watch where your opponent places the broom, and what weight is used. It often happens that the shot you will have to make is very similar, if not identical, to the shot your opponent just made. If he is squeezing past a guard, can you place the broom to get just a little closer?
7. Look at the sample shots in the Help area "Types of Shots" for ideas of what you might try. There are lots of ideas here, such as raises, freezes, takeout and stay, takeout and roll, and more.