CURLING Tactics

Tactics 101: Offensive and defensive tactics are important to understand in curling.
Know what they are and when these tactics are normally used.

**Offensive:** keeps more rocks in play and involves guards, raises, come-arounds and freezes.
Teams using this strategy are attempting to score more than one point or to steal points.
(A steal is when a team without the hammer gets a point or more)
Associated with this style of play is **finesse**, referring more delicate shots such as come-around draw shots.
This strategy can be **risky** or **complicated** because of the number of rocks that are usually in play.

**Defensive:** is cautious generally referring to a takeout style of play where there are few rocks in play.
Other terms used for this style are **conservative**, **safe** and **open**; as a result of very few rocks being in play most shots are relatively simple. A general name for this kind of strategy is the defensive approach or “defense first” approach. The following list provides for a further understanding of this terminology:

**Offense** - aggressive, finesse, risky, many rocks in play, freezes, use come around draw shots

**Defense** – cautious, conservative, safe, open, peels, hits, run throughs

Most teams need to combine offensive strategy with defensive strategy in a full game.

**A BASIC STRATEGY:**

a) When you have the hammer be offensive and try to count more than 1 point in the end.

b) Without the hammer be defensive and try to steal 1 point in the end or force the other team to take only 1 point and give the hammer back to you in the next end.

**THINK LIKE A SKIP:** Where to put your first rocks in an end.

Deciding on where to place your first rocks can make a difference.

The FGZ rule is important to use and understand. (FGZ = The free guard zone)
(the zone above the rings to the hog line).

**The rule:** If any one of the 1st 4 rocks in an end stop in this zone they **can not** be removed by their opponent.
If removed – replace to original place and remove opponents rock from the ice.
WHEN OUR TEAM HAS FIRST ROCK ....
You want a defensive first rock (almost always).
A good shot would be having a rock close to the house on the centre line in the FGZ for a first rock.
A major concern is "if" your opponent attempts to come around this first rock if it is too far out.
The further out the centre guard is the more likely your opponent is to play an aggressive come around draw
(that you can't easily remove) in search of 2+ points.
When you have first rock (they have the hammer), **Direct play toward the centre of the sheet**.
This will block the opposition's path to the four-foot circle, thus enhancing the opportunity to steal a point(s).
Teams without last rock are usually more cautious in their shot selection, in that take-outs are played rather
than draw shots when opponents have stones in the rings.

WHEN OUR TEAM HAS THE HAMMER
Your goal is to score more than one point. You may choose to blank the end rather than take one point.
In general the idea is to direct play to the sides of the sheet with your first rocks, enabling you to spread your
rocks out. This tends to keep the path to the four foot circle open for a possible end saving last rock draw
shot (or adding another point to the rock(s) you already have counting).
Last rock teams often begin their offense to the side of the sheet by establishing a corner guard(s).
The Second curler of the hammer team will often throw rocks that peel off guards that block the centre zone.
You may also change to shoot come-around draw shots on high centre guards as opportunities arise.
Aggressive last rock skips will take advantage of centre guards by playing come around draws in an effort to
score 2+ points, even though this strategy will put them at greater risk to a potential steal by the other team.

CURLING can be as complex or as simple as you want it to be.

*Sportsmanship, fun, socializing and being competitive are all important!*

**A Tip to the Skips (and all players) as you begin any Curling Adventure**
Teams are constantly faced with re-evaluating their game plan and shot selection as opportunities arise.
There is an element of risk vs. reward.
Involve your team by communicating your tactics when you can.
Always consider the strengths and weaknesses of your team members and maximize team success.
Try to consider the “Plan B and Plan C” effects are if shots are not made (off-line, too heavy, or too light).
Being skip is like being a goalie in other sports.
The difference in curling is that you are both the goalie and the coach who makes tactical decisions.
You are the last person to play as points get scored or are prevented from being scored.
You could be seen as a hero or goat.
Communicate with your team and make it fun for yourself and everyone else while you balance the
sportsmanship, fun, socializing and competition.
