

Thursday, January 17, 2019 • An Official Publication of the World Financial Group Continental Cup.

THE CUP SPORTS A NEW LOOK



The first thing you'll notice when the teams take to the ice for this edition of the WFG Continental Cup is the uniforms. They're loud, they're colorful and they're patriotic on a multi-national scale. Designed by Dynasty Apparel of Winnipeg as part of a multi-year agreement with Curling Canada, these uni's are guaranteed to bring even more smiles to a place where smiles already abound.

Dynasty owner and Director of Operations, Colin Hodgson (also a competitive curler), had this to say about the new look. "At Dynasty we understand how important it is not only for athletes but for fans to feel connected to the event. This is why we created these off the wall Team North America and Team World designs. We wanted to embody the feel of Vegas without losing the identity of the nations participating. Each team from their respective countries has a slightly unique version which represents the sponsors that support the athletes on a regular basis".

Kevin Hurrie, lead designer at Dynasty added "We decided to incorporate the skyline of Las Vegas that is so iconic. When people think of Las Vegas they imagine the unique landscape and bright lights. By bringing vibrant colours to the uniforms we feel that we captured the feel of the city."

"Being an athlete that has competed in this event before I feel the lively designs match the atmosphere of the arena. The electric environment created by the fans and excitement of Vegas pair well with the world class athletes performing on the ice", Hodgson concluded.

So what do you think curling fans? Send us your thoughts on Twitter or Facebook.



Today at the Cup

Thursday, January 17th

- 8:30 am** Draw #1 Mixed Doubles
- 11:30 am The Patch is open
 - Outdoor Pool Area
- 1:30 pm** Draw #2 Mixed Doubles
- 3:30 pm The Patch is open
 - Mardi Gras Ballroom
- 4:00 pm Up Close and Personal
 - Men's Skips, The Patch
Mardi Gras Ballroom
- 6:30 pm** Draw #3 Women's Team Competition
- 9:00 pm Steelheart performance
Orleans Showroom - free
- 9:00 pm The Patch is open
 - Mardi Gras Ballroom

There will be four days of incredible shot-making this week at the Orleans Arena.

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WFG **FAN SHOTS**

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Complete details on page 3





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WHICH STARS WILL SHINE BRIGHTEST ON THE VEGAS STAGE?



By Gerry Geurts, CurlingZone.com

The WFG Continental Cup features many of the game's best players this week at the Orleans Arena in Las Vegas in a format that the players find as a refreshing break in the long grind of the tour season. As fans, you will find the players to be more approachable as they let loose a little bit before refocusing on the Championship season to come.

The scene is set for another competitive edition of the WFG Continental Cup, following up last year's event in London, Ontario, which saw the title settled with several sudden-death draws to the button.

Team World comes in strong with depth that will make them very difficult to beat this year, especially

with the emergence of their young teams, but it's going to be the experience of Team North America, especially in Mixed Doubles that we predict will see North America extend the streak to 7 straight titles for the home side.

Coming off a big win last weekend at the Meridian Canadian Open in Saskatchewan, Canada's Rachel Homan is as hot as they come, now riding three consecutive Grand Slam of Curling titles along with a Canada Cup semifinal final finish thrown in.

Homan with Emma Miskew at third, Joanne Courtney at second and Lisa Weagle at lead are coming in with a record of 44-12 on the season having recently taken over the number one spot in the World Rankings. On the men's side, Canada's Kevin Koe also recently took over the game's number one ranking, making for two strong teams to support the North American cause as they try to defend the title for the seventh straight year.

Koe has been consistently strong all season, posting a 39-17 record with several top finishes including their Curling World Cup title at the start of the season in Suzhou, China.

Koe is supported by B.J. Neufeld at third, Colton Flasch at second and lead Ben Hebert.

Olympic Gold Medalist John Shuster is another team riding a set of strong results into Continental Cup week with Chris Plys at third, Matt Hamilton at second and John Landsteiner at lead, holding a 38-19 record, having won the most recent Curling World Cup event in Omaha along with a third-place finish at the Karuizawa International in Japan. Rounding out the North American men's side is Canada's Brad Gushue, joined by Mark Nichols, Brett Gallant and Geoff Walker, who took home silver at last April's Worlds in Las Vegas. Gushue with a 35-15 record on the season has taken a bit of a step back this season but remains a formidable foe as part of Team North America.

The World is looking to shake up their game and have brought a contingent of young teams hungry to change the storyline at this year's WFG Continental Cup. Scotland's Eve Muirhead had struggled early in the season as she has been recovering from significant off-season hip surgery, but it seems as if they're rounding into form, boosting the World women's side which will

include Olympic Gold Medalist Anna Hasselborg of Sweden and Switzerland's Silvana Tirinzoni.

Muirhead's record on the season of 26-22 is off from her typical standard, though a semifinal finish at the Meridian Canadian Open along with a solid result at the Boost National, and a European Championship that saw Eve fall short of the playoffs when a picked stone caused a loss that knocked them out of playoff contention, shows that they're close to where they want to be.

Hasselborg started the year out strong with wins at the Princess Auto Elite 10 and the Canadian Beef Masters, going on to claim their first Le Gruyere European Championship title, making for one heck of a 2018 for the young women from Sundbyberg. With a 47-13 record on the season, Hasselborg has been strong for much of the season, though coming into the WFG Continental Cup they have stumbled somewhat with some poorly timed losses in the Boost National quarterfinals and Meridian Canadian Open, that saw them miss the playoffs.

Continued on Page 4

WFG FAN SHOTS

SEND US YOUR SELFIES!

Whether you are at the Arena, the Pool, the Patch, the Strip, the golf course, the canyons or where ever your adventures take you... please send us your selfies and photos - the more fun, the better - for your chance to **win a \$250 dining certificate from the Orleans Hotel and Casino, plus other great prizes.** A winner will be announced each draw.

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Post your entries on our social media platforms:



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AND use the hashtag **#WFGFanShots.**

Complete contest rules and prize details available at www.LasVegasCurling.rocks

Point Tracker

STARS SHINE BRIGHT

Continued from Page 3

Thursday, January 17

Draw	Sheet	Mixed Doubles Competition (3 points)	Points
1	A	Lisa Weagle/Brad Gushue Esther Neuwand/Peter de Cruz	1
1	B	Rachel Homan/Kevin Koe Jennifer Dodds/Bruce Mouat	1
1	C	Jocelyn Peterman/Brett Gallant Vicki Chalmers/Hammy McMillan	1
Draw	Sheet	Mixed Doubles Competition (3 points)	Points
2	A	Jennifer Jones/Mark Nichols Alina Pätz/Sven Michel	1
2	B	Monica Walker/John Schuster Anna Hasselborg/Oskar Eriksson	1
2	C	Kaitlyn Lawes/Geoff Walker Agnes Knochenhauer/Rasmus Wranå	1
Draw	Sheet	Women's Team Competition (3 points)	Points
3	A	Team Jones Team Muirhead	1
3	B	Team Homan Team Hasselborg	1
3	C	Team Sinclair Team Tirinzoni	1

Friday, January 18

Draw	4	Mixed Doubles	3
Draw	5	Mixed Doubles	3
Draw	6	Men's Team Competition	3

Saturday, January 19

Draw	7	Women's Team Scramble	3
Draw	8	Men's Team Scramble	3
Draw	9	Mixed Team Scramble	6

Sunday, January 20

Draw	10	Skins	15
Draw	11	Skins	15

Tirinzoni has a 48-22 record on the season with Alina Paetz throwing last stones this season with Esther Neuwand and Melanie Barbezat on the front end of her Swiss squad out of Aarau has shown some improved play recently with their strong performance at the Le Gruyere European Championships where they took home silver and reaching the semifinals at Boost National and final of the Meridian Canadian Open.

Niklas Edin and his team of Oskar Eriksson, Rasmus Wranå and Christoffer Sungren has one title on the season after winning the Swiss Cup Basel, is holding a 55-22 record as the highest-ranking International men's team. After recently falling out of the World number 1 position, Edin is working to hold off the Bruce Mouat team out of Scotland who defeated Edin at the Le Gruyere European Championship. Mouat's 47-23 record has them within striking distance of the Swedes but now as teammates, Mouat and his team of Grant Hardie, Bobby Lammie and Hammy McMillan Jr. form a strong contingent for Team World. Switzerland's Peter De Cruz and his team of Benoit Schwarz throwing last rocks, Sven Michel at third and Valentin Tanner joins Team World with a 51-25 record on the season, giving Team World men three of the top four winningest teams on Tour this season.

Canada's Jennifer Jones comes into Las Vegas after missing the playoffs at the Meridian Canadian Open, suffering several big losses not typical of the Jones team and their 39-22 record so far on the season. The Vegas break would seem to be well timed for Jones as they refocus themselves on defending the Scotties National Championship.

Rounding out Team North America is USA's Jamie Sinclair, the team that admittedly has struggled much of the season, posting a 21-30 record on the season. For Sinclair, adjustments to the lineup with Alex Carlson stepping away early in the season due to the expected arrival of her first child, and the challenges of practice schedules and shuffled lineups, has seen the 2018 Players' Champions struggle to repeat their success of last season.

While struggles of some of these key North American teams, they still seem well-positioned to defend their title this week as, surprisingly enough, the team's overall proficiency with Mixed Doubles will likely be the tipping point that gets them over the finish line.

Team World has some experienced doubles players in Bruce Mouat and when they did play - Anna Hasselborg and Oskar Eriksson - have been noted as the best doubles team out of Sweden. Alina Paetz and Sven Michel have a World Mixed Doubles title from 2011, but outside of that group, much of Team World lacks much experience with the doubles game.

Team North America, through both Canada and the USA's programs that encouraged their best athletes to participate in both disciplines have seen a majority of their players involved in the 2019 WFG Continental Cup get at least a couple Tour spiels under their belt along with playing their respective Olympic Trials. The experience gained by all these athletes can only make Team North America stronger this week and will likely help to overcome the general depth of the Team World lineup.

Whatever the result at the end, we're predicting another great week of curling and fun under the lights in Las Vegas in one of the most unique experiences our game has to offer.



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SHUSTER SETS THE STAGE FOR FUTURE CHAMPIONS

Kelly's
By Colin Kelly
Heroes



Since the World Financial Group Continental Cup first came to Las Vegas, in 2014, I've learned quite a bit about the inner workings of curling. But it's clear that your humble Mojave Desert correspondent still has a ways to go.

I was asked to write an article about American curling icon John Shuster's efforts to expand the sport's reach. Specifically, his push to create a 5-and-Under national championship. And I thought, "Wow, that's kind of a young age for a national championship, but hey, curling is a pretty unique sport. More power to him."

Then I interviewed Shuster and got the clarification. Color me embarrassed, as he relayed his input at a board meeting of USA Curling minds last spring.

"I asked, 'Have we ever thought of doing a 5-and-Under nationals?' Not 5-year-olds, but people who have curled five years or less," Shuster explained.

Ah, now that makes a lot more sense – with no disrespect to all you kindergarten curlers out there.

"We have championships for elite men and women, and men's and women's club championships, and we have juniors," Shuster said. "I thought it might be worth checking into doing nationals for less experienced curlers. That was where the idea was spawned."

So Shuster, being the 2018 Olympic gold-medal go-getter that he is, got right to work on a project he credited Matt Gamboa with also helping bring to the forefront.

"We had a fun little talk in April and May. Then I brought it up again in the fall," Shuster said. "The Duluth Curling Club, my club, would host. Since then, we've kind of run with it."

The USA 5-and-Under National Bonspiel was set for Feb. 22-24, and registration opened at the beginning of December. Then came an avalanche of interest from clubs hoping to gain entry and make the trip to Minnesota.

"The response has been insane. Forty-five to 50 teams applied for 32 spots," Shuster said. "It was



amazing, because of those teams that applied, they had to list accolades, and 15 or so had won 5-and-Under bonspiels. I was shocked at the number of teams that had won events.

"We found out there was an interest, a craving to have something bigger. That was a pleasant outcome. We were hoping for it, and it was fun to see. It was a very, very electric response."

Registration closed at the beginning of January, and the tournament has invitations out to the 32 teams selected. What struck Shuster most about the application process was that it showed that curling in the United States is no longer confined to freezing-cold winter climates in the upper Midwest.

"It's fun to see teams registering from the Triangle Club in Raleigh, N.C.," Shuster said. "There are a bunch from the East Coast, and a bunch from the Coyotes Curling Club down in Phoenix. We even got one from Ottawa, Canada. Maybe we weren't clear enough about it being a U.S. championship!"

"Curling has kind of always been a Midwest-dominated sport. But now, we have a ton of junior curlers from the East Coast. Only 15 or 16 of the applications are from Minnesota/Wisconsin curling clubs. We're starting to see that the places where curling is growing the fastest are these nontraditional curling areas."

That said, the event is in Duluth, so it'll certainly have that traditional curling flavor. And that traditional sharing attitude of a sport that welcomes all comers.

"One of the cool things we're putting into this, on Friday morning and afternoon (Feb. 22), we're trying to set up a little curling instruction and interaction for those players. They can meet with some of our elite players," Shuster said.

The efforts of Shuster and his peers to get this new event off the ground, and really of elite-level curlers the world over to spread the sport, should come as no surprise. Such outreach seems to be built into the DNA of all curlers, regardless of age or ability.

"I always think that the sport of curling, the pillars that it was built from, bring out the best in people," Shuster said. "I've seen the power of that throughout my whole career, and I've always embraced the opportunity to expand curling. It's the community aspect of curling."

"I just love spreading our sport. That's just what curlers do."



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THIS SUE-PER FAN HAS O.C.D.

Fanning the Flame

By Colin Kelly



There are curling superfans. And then there's the curling Sue-per fan.

That would be Sue Cassidy. Born and raised in Prince Edward Island. Resident of Orange County, Calif., the past 28 years. And although it wasn't until just a few years ago that this dyed-in-maple-syrup Canadian caught the curling bug, she's certainly ill with it now, in the best possible way.

Reached at her Huntington Beach home earlier this week, Cassidy described the scene ahead of a short road trip to the World Financial Group Continental Cup here at Orleans Arena.

"There's glitter all over my house, because of Continental Cup preparations," Cassidy said.

You wouldn't have pictured that, or anything close to it, even 10 years ago. But with curling getting into the Olympics, and then Orange County forming its own curling club, well, one thing finally led to another, and Cassidy and husband Mike both came home to curling.

"My husband and I both grew up in Canada, but never curled. We thought it was for old people," Cassidy said. "A few years ago, a group of Canadians in Orange County had a learn-to-curl event. And that was it. We were totally hooked. I'm not that great at it, but I'm the greatest curling fan. And I'm a fan of curling fans.

"I like to tell people that I have OCD

– Obsessive Curling Disorder!"

And indeed, that disorder extends beyond the players on the ice, to the fans in the stands. Cassidy, who by traveling to Vegas this week has attended all four Continental Cups contested here, seeks out curling fans as much as curlers – perhaps more so.

"Like the Sociables. Everybody in Canada knows the Sociables," Cassidy said. "They show up at the Brier in Calgary, all in identical outfits.

Different outfits every day. Maybe it's Ghostbusters or pirates. They hold up signs that tell the skips what they should do on their next shot."

"I like to tell people that I have OCD – Obsessive Curling Disorder!"

Cassidy said meeting the Sociables really ramped up her passion for curling, and she is also a big fan of fellow curling fanatics Hans and Judy – a Canadian couple she's hoping to one day meet. Since attending the 2014 Continental Cup – the first time the event came to Vegas – Cassidy has made it her job to do what the Sociables, Hans and Judy and others have done to curling events in Canada: bring that same kind of festive fan atmosphere to Orleans Arena.

"We needed to bring the fan fun to the

U.S.," she said. "I truly believe the off-ice culture is as important as what's taking place on the ice, in a different way. Fans buy the tickets, the merchandise, the beer."

Wait, what? There's beer being consumed here? Really? OK, back to Cassidy.

"The fans create the atmosphere that makes it fun. The players are rock stars who don't always have a lot of fans cheering for them. So the players love that."

Cassidy is heading to Vegas this week as part of a gang of six, joined by Mike, Justin McBride, Derek King, Jen Buehler and Joel Calhoun. She's got all her signs ready, her outfits picked out, accessories in order – including cowbells. Because yes, curling needs more cowbell!

She'll also have her hand-crafted mini dolls of elite curlers, replete with uniforms, equipment and signs. That's all part of her #MiniMemeMonday theme.

And there will surely be some surprises throughout the weekend, too.

"Sunday, we go all out. All six of us do something crazy," she said, noting that her crew will be plenty raucous the rest of the tournament, too. "We'll drink out of our curling stones, ring our cowbells – at the appropriate times, of course."

One thing that makes Cassidy's superfandom job a little easier: this is Las Vegas. The party is part and parcel of any event that comes to town. And curling fans really love a good party, even right there in the stands, during the match.

"There's no comparison. Vegas is insane," Cassidy said, noting she's attended Continental Cups elsewhere. "Vegas has this contagious energy that makes it worth putting on your fan calendar. There are actually a lot of older Canadians here, spending their winter down this way. They really do bring the energy.

"At my first Continental Cup, I was never more proud to be a Canadian. I was in there with the Hollywood, San Francisco and Orange County curling clubs. This was their first experience at a big curling event. Everyone was older, decked out in every Canadian thing possible, gear on their bodies. They're cheering, chanting and yelling for three straight hours, every night."

Cassidy is thrilled to be right in the middle of it, even egging it on in a variety of ways. So don't be surprised to see her and her crew bringing the arena to a fever pitch over the next four days.

"I want to be the catalyst, or part of it anyway," she said. "All it takes is one person to bring the energy, and watch it spread."



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Service between



The **MORNING cup**

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