

Build a Bridge to Curling

Building Sports Bridges by fostering practical relationships with successful sports is always a successful marketing strategy. For example, Curling is a natural evolution of Lawn Bowling. Conceptually, the play is very similar to Lawn Bowling and the seasons are so compatible. That explains why so many people play both sports. However, Curling is immensely more popular, especially among the youth. There seems to be no logical explanation for this phenomenon other than Curling is much better organized and marketed, thus attracting TV coverage and more mass appeal. In fact, millions just like to watch on TV.

Curling has a well developed youth program. Adults who play both sports have often tried to link these sports, unfortunately to no avail. Although kids love Lawn Bowling, clubs expect them to convert to members. Lawn Bowling clubs do not provide the environment nor the programs necessary to appeal to young people. However, Curling clubs do and thus can take advantage of the similarities between the two sports by introducing the sport of Short Mat Bowls in their rinks for play during the off season, when the Curling rinks are idle most of the time.

One should note that Short Mat is a fast growing sport throughout the world attracting large prize money and TV coverage from sponsors. Major tournaments have the potential to generate worthwhile profits for organizers such as schools or Curling clubs

Idea, not so far fetched

Let's examine why this idea is not so far fetched. Short Mat carpets are only 45ft X 6ft. They easily fit in either direction on the curling rinks. The curling rink surface is hard, smooth and level, ideal for the well-padded Short Mat carpets. The carpets are also portable and can be deployed quickly and easily by two persons, thus providing flexibility for the Curling Clubs to utilize their facilities for other occasional activities. Because of the large amount of space available, the growth of this sport has no bounds. Curling clubs are designed to accommodate large tournaments events. And, as an added bonus to this, out of the box, idea, Curling clubs could share the equipment with nearby high schools that play Short Mat. In fact, one can imagine the development of Short Mat in tandem between the schools and the Curling Club, independently from lawn bowling clubs. The Curling club could own the Short Mat carpets and loan them to neighborhood high schools (or vice versa) during the curling season – a true win-win!

Low entry level

The low entry level cost of this idea makes it all possible. For example, a complete set-up to service one classroom of 32 individuals, if playing in teams of four, would include: a set of 4 playing carpets, a 4-carpet handling unit, 4-accessory kits and 16 sets of narrow-bias lawn bowling bowls, which can all be purchased for approximately \$10,000. This is a sum that can easily be raised through lottery funding, service club or through commercial sponsorships. Revenues will depend on the School or the Curling Club's market conditions and marketing acumen.

For more info on youth programs: www.dalesbowlscanada.ca/youth/programs.htm

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