

## A PANE IN THE GLASS BY BILL TSCHIRHART

# THE TECHNICAL DOUBLE-CROSS

So often I see teams making technical changes to cure perceived ills in delivery techniques when the culprit is something entirely different from that which is determined to be the cause. Now that I have concluded what must be one of my most confusing opening sentences, let me explain.

When a curling stone is delivered with positive rotation, two events occur when the stone comes to rest, at precisely the same instant. The stone stops moving forward and it stops rotating. Remember, this assumes that when the stone was initially delivered, the ice did not adversely affect the path of the stone in anyway and more importantly, a very positive rotation was applied. I have no idea what the cause and affect between the two phenomena is but for the purpose of this article, it's not really important. If anyone out there knows, I'm all ears (or eyes)!

A stone delivered in such a way is going to travel a certain distance and curl a certain amount (I am highly paid to know this critical information). The "track" (path) that this stone follows is germane to the premise of this article.

Teams pay attention to many details of the delivery of the stones (line of delivery and weight being the two key factors of course). But, very few teams give much heed to the number of rotations that the team members apply to the stone and ignoring that factor can lead to

"the technical double-cross".

Let's return to that stone that was delivered with positive rotation. If that same stone were to be delivered along the exact same path with exactly the same velocity but with a different number of rotations the stone will likely travel a very different path. In other words, it will "track" differently.

From the skip's perspective, the stone that is rotated outside of accepted parameters often follows a very different path could look inside (or even outside) the intended line of delivery. The athlete might, as a result, adjust his/her hack set-up or release thinking that it was faulty when in reality it may have been, for all intents and purposes, perfect. Now, the adjustment is going to cause an additional problem and the team is still left with the "rotation dilemma" that was the root cause of the problem. The team has just fallen victim to the self-inflicted "technical double-cross".

The difference in "tracking" is especially important in the modern competitive environment that sees teams coming around guards so much of the time. A player with a positive rotation might be able to draw around a guard but a teammate with a different number of rotations might "crash" even though the line and weights were the same for each of the stones delivered.

The difference in number of rotations can also lead to a perception that weight might be the "fly in the ointment" too. A stone that has excessive rotation will travel farther than a stone delivered with less rotation. To illustrate, think about something that we've all done from time to time, deliver a stone with as many rotations as possible. The handle of the stone is a blur as the stone "slowly" moves down the ice. It may take a minute or more to finally come to rest, frequently in the house at the other end of the ice. It was delivered with a velocity that, under normal rotation circumstances, would have seen the stone come to rest well short of the house, perhaps even well short of the hog line. The difference clearly was the number of rotations.

The point here is that differences in rotation may not only affect the track that a stone follows, it may also affect the distance it travels as well. Now, to be sure, the difference in number of rotations would have to be rather remarkable for this to occur but the phenomenon is present nonetheless and, as with tracking, a player might feel that his/her weight is faulty (and again make an adjustment) when the real cause was, number of rotations. Changing the weight, without paying attention to the number of rotations leaves the team open, once again to the "technical double-cross"!

Please, before you make line of delivery or weight adjustments, make sure you remove the rotation factor by having everyone on the team deliver the stones with a positive rotation (approx. 2.5-3 rotations\*)! Then if there is line of delivery or weight concerns, your diagnosis has a much greater chance of being accurate!

\* A stone that rotates less than 2 rotations is unpredictable. It may curl. It may not curl. If it does curl it may not curl the amount expected. It may "slide". It may "dig in". Well, you get the picture I'm trying to paint I'm sure. On the other hand, a stone that rotates more than three revolutions tends to run straighter than normal (sometimes

a desirable situation). But a stone that rotates about 2.5 - 3 rotations will "perform" according to the manufacturers' specifications. It will "finish"!

It's your choice! So choose wisely and I'll see you soon behind a pane in the glass.

**TRUE NORTH  
COACHING**

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