

The Most Influential People in Ontario Curling

Who wields the big stick? Who can get people to listen? Who has changed the game with innovation and hard work? Who can do a great job despite wearing many hats?

That's what the OCR wanted to find out and the results are here — our first list of the most influential people in Ontario curling — both North and South.

After discussions with editorial staff and various people throughout the sport, we came up with a long list of names that was eventually whittled down to the top 20. In putting together our list, we had a few rules. First, they had to live in Ontario and second, their influence measured here is for Ontario, although some on the list have national perspective that ultimately affects Ontario curlers. No members of the media were included. The only exception is where the person's main contribution to the sport came at something other than the media.

And so, without further ado, here are the most influential people in the sport in this province.

1- Ian Cunningham Sponsor

When it comes to curling, the affable Cunningham is the lead guy at Capital One, which has cast its tentacles from its huge play with the Grand Slam of Curling into the Season of Champions. No company is spending more with curling at the moment and the game would be vastly different without the financial company. As well, Cunningham has learned the strength of the game is its people and his company gives back through various charitable and development programs that help folks at the grass roots level.

2- Scott Taylor — Coach, Innovator, Entrepreneur

Taylor seemingly does it all. He's the coach of Team Howard and the man behind the highly successful Balance Plus stores. Along with Balance Plus founder Lino Di Iorio, he has been one of the leading innovators of new equip-

ment in the game and he sponsors numerous teams across the country. His relationship with curlers, officials and the coaching ranks means he is a true triple threat.

3- Glenn Howard Curler

Howard is Ontario's most successful curler. Period. His record is unmatched and it will nothing short of a major disappointment if he fails to lead his team to the Olympic Games in Vancouver a year from now. With his on-ice success comes off-ice credibility and Howard isn't afraid to tactfully speak out when the need arises. He and his team are leading the charge for change in the province's playdown process.

4- Greg Strelaw Official

The newish head of the Canadian Curling Association, Strelaw was left a bag of rocks when he took over from Dave Parkes and has quickly cleaned up the administrative side of the national curling office. He turned a red ink to black in a year but still has a way to go to turn around a once-ailing ship.

5- Gerry Geurts Entrepreneur

The man behind the game's most popular web site curlingzone.com, Geurts has also been the game's leading statistician, revolutionizing the manner in which stats are kept and analyzed. In addition, he's the driving force behind the Ontario Curling Tour, a highly successful circuit around the province.

6- Al Gemmill Official

Gemmill is the man who finally talked reason into the various Northern Ontario curling associations, getting them to agree to an amalgamation that has proved beneficial to all curlers. Now serving as president of the new association, Gemmill has driven a progressive agenda of common sense and practicality. From an administrative standpoint,

the north has never been so well served.

7- Wayne Middaugh Curler

If you listen to him, his best playing days may be behind him due more to desire than skill (although he still managed to win a Grand Slam event). Still Middaugh's outspoken ways are still as powerful as one of his hits. His current battle with the Canada Revenue Agency could have huge ramifications on the sport and he will be in the spotlight as the case gets closer to the court room.

8- Doug Bakes Official

The Ontario Curling Association's head honcho and the guy who manages the game's biggest jurisdiction. He makes this list not so much because of what he does for the sport at the top ranks — the men's and women's provincial championships — but the many lower tiered Ontario finals — from Bantams to Masters — that benefit the game at the grass roots level.

9- Paul Savage Curler, Marketer

Everyone knows about Savage's on-ice success, but he's enjoying almost as much of it off the ice these days. Savage has marketed the game and sold sponsorships better than just about anyone and his work continues with programs being put in place for the Canadian Curling Association. He also still has the ear of decision makers in the game and has been especially successful at opening the eyes of Corporate Canada to the roaring game.

10- Shorty Jenkins Icemaker

Although he's suffering with illness these days, Shorty's influence can be felt at curling rinks from Windsor to Ottawa. His ice-making skills revolutionized the sport and his legacy lives on through the many icemakers who learned the craft from him.

11- Fran Todd Official

The current president of the Canadian Curling Association, Todd is also an accomplished curler in days gone by. The combination of curler and official has helped her in the current role, although she has smartly allowed the worker bees in Ottawa to do the heavy lifting.

12- Danny Lamoureux Official

The CCA's Manager of Curling Club Development, Lamoureux may have done more to save curling clubs in this country than anyone. His great perspective on what makes a club run successfully has created a set of best practices that should be in use at every club in the province.

13- Krista McCarville Curler

Skip of the reigning Ontario women's champions, McCarville has become a beacon in the north, where the strength of women's curling has been waning in terms of quantity. Her high level of play gives her the ability to lead others in an area that can use plenty of it.

14- Richard Hart Curler

Although he doesn't get as much of the limelight as his skip, Hart is passionate about and involved in his sport past his rock-throwing. He speaks out on issues that affect the game and offers his services at charity events on a regular basis.

15- Earle Morris Coach

The Major is one of the game's most experienced coaches and has been a guiding force behind the success of his son's junior team, Rachel Homan's rink as well as Hugh Milliken's Team Australia. He has devised inventive ways of helping teams improve and continues to search for more. He's also working on several innovative projects with curling officials that could have a bigger impact on the game down the road.

16- Neil Harrison Curler, Coach

Harry almost always hits the nail on the head with his observations on the game. That's why he's a highly sought after person when it comes to changes to the sport, whether that be the Olympic qualifying process, the World Curling Tour or coaching a top team, of which he does plenty.

17- Sherry Middaugh Curler

One of the most consistent players in the game, hers is one of a very few Ontario women's teams that play the circuit. As such, she brings a perspective to the sport in this province that is often bang on.

18- Fred Veale Entrepreneur

You may not know the name but Veale runs Canada Curling Stone, the biggest stone company in the world. He fixes more curling stones at more clubs than anyone in the business and if you play around the province, chances are you've used his company's handiwork.

19- Tim Phillips Organizer

Although he'd love to be on this list for his curling prowess, he's here because of his handling of the Northern Ontario Curling Tour, a fledgling but much-needed competitive series in the north. Although it's had its share of struggles, its existence speaks volumes.

20- Ed Werenich Curler

Although he's almost 20 years removed from his last world championship, the Wrench is still a prominent figure in Ontario curling. He can still walk into any club or arena where championships are being played and hold court.