

# Howard sweeps to Silver Broom

cont'd from pg. 1

rock and allowed Sparkes a free draw for two. And, for the moment the advantage of winning the coin toss was lost.

The third end was blanked. In the fourth end Ontario was forced to draw for one after Sparkes was sitting two with the four foot blocked. However, you could see the momentum sweep to the other side when Howard's last stone nicked the guard but landed in the full eight foot circle good enough for one and a tie at 2-2.

Sparkes, making his 12th appearance at the Brier and looking for his first Canadian title as skip was forced to take one in the fifth. With last rock in the sixth, Ontario went on the attack and it paid off with a deuce. That's when Howard reverted to the team strategy of giving up only one.

In the eighth, viewers back home in Ontario were surely glued to the TV set as the Ontarians went for Sparkes' jugular vein. Russ drew to the house for three with his fingers crossed. However, a measure only said two Ontario rocks were counting. But the rink was up 6-5 at that point with the even ends on their side.

In the next end the roof caved in with a thud. A rock thrown by Glenn Howard grabbed straw and

veered suddenly, wrecking on a guard allowing Sparkes a glimmer of hope. The B.C. skip scored three to start Ontario sweating.

But, in the final end...Ontario threw eight perfect stones while the Sparkes rink couldn't peel off guards cleanly. On his final rock all Russ had to do was hit a yellow stone sitting just off the centre line. It was similar to his ninth end shot in last year's final game in Kitchener. And this time Howard nosed the rock and it stayed for five giving Ontario's Russ Howard a dramatic 11-7 Brier final win.

The team's jubilation was evident as their brooms went up into the air and vice Glenn Howard pumped his arm with a ferocious yelp. Within seconds, and amidst the confusion, fifth man Larry Merkle raced to the fray of hugs and handshakes to congratulate his teammates.

Later on, after the closing ceremonies, champagne was flowing freely in the dressing room as team members doused each other repeatedly. One bottle even decided to join the party itself and exploded while sitting idle on the bench. If you see Glenn Howard in the near future ask him if he drank champagne from his curling shoes and see what kind of response you get.

After Russ had finished

up with lengthy media interviews he was literally attacked by his team who showered him with bubbly.

All five members of the Ontario rink were on cloud nine for the rest of the evening as they signed autographs at the Brier Patch and at a local restaurant.

The celebration was even more gratifying as the thoughts of representing Canada at the World Curling Championships in Vancouver March 30 to April 5 began to set in. Then the entire rink is off to Calgary for the Olympic trials to determine who will participate as Canada's representative in the 1988 Winter Olympics.

And, to make the week even more joyful, the entire rink from skip to lead was selected as all stars. Russ was first all star skip, with his team being made up of B.C. vice Jim Armstrong, second Don Walchuk of Alberta and Ontario lead Kent Carstairs. The second all star team was made up of skip Mark Noseworthy of Newfoundland who became the crowd favourite through the week and lost to Sparkes in the semi-final. His vice was Glenn Howard of Ontario and second was Tim Belcourt putting all four Penetang players tops at their respective positions. Lead was Ian Journeaux of Quebec.



After the game



In the house



Victory road

## Howard 9-2 after round-robin

by David Gravelle

The Russ Howard rink from Penetanguishene found themselves in an eerie position following the round robin portion of the 1987 Labatt Brier in Edmonton, in first place with a 9-2 record.

For anyone who has followed the Howard team over the years, you have to have realized they never do anything easy. They always take the long road to the final game, either in the challenge round, provincials, and even at the Brier. But, last week it was a different story altogether.

Ontario started the week with a tough 8-5 loss to Bernie Sparkes of B.C. What made the opening round loss frustrating was the fact they outcurled British Columbia by about six percent.

But, the Howard team of Russ, Glenn Howard, Tim Belcourt, and Kent Carstairs rebounded and recorded a five game win streak over Northern Ontario 9-5, P.E.I. 10-3, Manitoba 9-5, Nova Scotia 6-2, and Saskatchewan 8-7.

In what could be called their only bad game of the week Ontario came out flat against Gary Mitchell of New Brunswick and lost 9-5. The key end in that game was the third when skip Russ missed both his two shots and Gary Mitchell of N.B. scored four.

But, the loss didn't get the boys down as they rebounded once again to win their final four games. Of those final four matches three were against tough opponents, Newfoundland, Alberta and Quebec.

Mark Noseworthy who made it to the semi-final against Bernie Sparkes was taught a lesson by the Ontario crew. The Penetang rink gave up one in the first but scored 7 unanswered points for a 7-1 win.

On Friday, Howard faced Pat Ryan, one of the pre-Brier favourites and Kevin Adams from Montreal. Against Alberta it took Howard an extra end to dispose Ryan from playoff action. For Ryan it had been a long week as the hometown fans were on his case and heckled and jeered him constantly.

What seems odd is that while Pat Ryan, the curler, was hated Pat Ryan the person was loved. At a social function Ryan jumped onto the stage and sang a rendition of Elvis and Pointer Sisters' tunes

to the thunderous applause of the crowd. One comment made last week was that if Ryan had curled as well as he sang he would be in the playoffs.

In the final game of the round robin Ontario scored a narrow 5-4 win over Quebec to advance to the final with a bye. If Howard had lost there would have been a three way tie for first with B.C. and Newfoundland at 8 and 3. B.C. would have received a bye to the final thanks to their opening day win over Ontario and Howard would have played Noseworthy Saturday. However, Russ curled at an 89 percent clip in the final game and made his takeout attempt in the 10th end to send the team to the Brier final.



Splendid sweeping