

# Japanese curlers keen

If two per cent of the Japanese population decided to curl they would outnumber the 1.2 million curlers Canada currently boasts. The Japanese have thrown themselves into the sport, attracting World Champions such as Russ Howard and Marilyn Darte to their country to teach the finer points of the game.

The man behind the curling movement in the Orient is a chap by the name of Hiroshi Kobayashi. Hiroshi first met Russ Howard when Russ was the icemaker in Huntsville. He took a liking to the congenial champ immediately. Two years ago, when the

Ontario Tankard was being played in Richmond Hill, Hiroshi was there again, studying the Canadian style of play, but more specifically, watching the Russ Howard rink from the Penetanguishene Curling Club.

Then, this past spring at the World Curling Championships in Vancouver, Hiroshi headed up a Japanese contingent gathering information on curling and watching the Howard rink in action.

Hiroshi's Magazine, Happy Curling, featured the exploits of the Howard rink's win in Vancouver so distinctly, it was unbelievable. From every angle he captured the

moments of ecstasy and emotion of the team, their families and their supporters.

When it came time for the Canadian Curling Association to send a representative to Japan to co-ordinate curling clinics, Russ Howard was the choice. No doubt Hiroshi had a hand in persuading the CCA into sending Russ and his wife Wendy.

There are currently 6,000 curlers in Japan, and with Hiroshi at the hel, there is no doubt the curling fraternity there will grow substantially in the next few years.

In January, Japan's first curling club will open. The Howard rink has been invited as special guests to of-

ficially open the new site. However, Russ has to talk it over with the guys first to see if they can take the time off work. Another factor they have to consider is the Ontario Tankard in Ottawa is in early February and they will have to take time off for that.

Curling is an international sport. At World Championships curling calls are voiced in English, French, German, Swedish etc. Soon, instructions will be heard in Japanese.

Hiroshi Kobayashi's rink is the Japanese champ. He will undertake a Canadian tour this winter to spice up his game to be more competitive against the strong curling nations like Canada, Norway and Scotland.

In a mini-bonspiel while Russ and Wendy Howard were in Japan recently, Russ defeated the Kobayashi rink twice to win the Challenge Cup. Wendy Howard, meanwhile, won the ladies event skipping a team of women from the Canadian consulate.

Wendy's team won four and tied one. In curling, ties are usually broken, but their Japanese opponents were so satisfied with the tie they didn't want to determine a winner. As Wendy explained, a tie is the "Japanese way."



**Oriental Visitors**

Wendy Howard, left and Russ Howard flank two young Japanese children they met while visiting Japan last week. Russ and Wendy conducted clinics and participated in a few exhibitions. They found

the Japanese to be very eager to learn about the game of curling. The Howard rink has been invited back in January to participate in the opening of the first curling rink in Japan.



**It's Crying Time**

Nancy Deenan appears to be wiping a tear from her eye as Steve Laurin prepares to release the rock at the Midland Curling Club Saturday night in the annual Bourgeois Motors Bonspiel.

Nancy was able to pull herself together, but we're not sure about Steve. The spiel took on an Italian air with several curlers "donning" Italian garb.

## Howard Rink tired

Sleep, that's what Russ Howard needs more than anything these days. Since returning from Japan he's travelled across Canada, and ended up in St. John's, Newfoundland over the weekend for a bonspiel.

The Howard foursome from the Penetanguishene C.C. picked up \$475 for their trouble winning four games and losing two.

Last Thursday, they lost an exhibition game to 1987 Brier participant Mark Noseworthy.

When the spiel began, the Howard team won

their first match, lost their second, then scored three victories in a row. At 4-1, they qualified for the main event. First prize was eight flights to Hawaii which was won by the Paul Savage rink from Toronto.

The bonspiel was played in two rinks, one with keen ice, the other slow as molasses. "It made it tough" (to be consistent said Russ.

After dropping down to the "underwear event" the Howard Team lost to Mark Noseworthy in six ends.

It has been a nightmarish month and a half for the

World Champion. He's travelled the globe promoting the game of curling, which Russ adds is great. He would never have turned down behind a World Champ, but, someday all this running around will have to end and real life will have to begin.

"To sum up the whole spiel, we didn't play well," said Russ. "We're doing too much travelling and not much curling."

Let me remind you that Russ and the guys have been here before and have more often than not come up "peachy keen"!!



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