

## Sporting Comment

THE "business" curling season is practically over, and from date to the going out of the ice curlers will devote themselves to those friendly games that are always said to be the most enjoyable, but which are always left over till the great prizes of the curling world have been lost and won. It has been a great season too. Ice in plenty breeding bonspiels galore to fill in the spaces left between the big competitions, while those main events have furnished yet more proof that while luck has its place in the roarin' game, as in every other sport, the greater part of the "jewelry" will always go to those players whose fame has been made in many a hard-fought battle on the ice.

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Does luck or skill win curling games? Some will shout "luck" and point to the Ontario Tankard competition, where four of the clubs in the finals and the two in the semi-final had never before got past the primaries. Others will answer "skill" and point to the Winnipeg Bonspiel where after nearly two weeks of hard play never a new-comer got in at the finish. Both are right, and to win a big curling event you've got to have the skill—and a little luck as well. Barrie won the Ontario Tankard with Preston as runners-up. And nobody who saw them curl in Toronto last week will deny that both had skill. The game Preston played against East Toronto and Paris caused more than one critic to remark, "It is not hard to understand how those fellows come to beat Galt." On the other hand, those who saw Barrie dispose of Southampton and Guelph picked the men of the North to win out in the final. So much for the skill. It was when the finish came that luck got into the game. When these players realised that for the first time in their lives the blue ribbon of Ontario curling was almost within their grasp it got on the nerves of most of them. Had it been one new club against one seasoned to finals and in the habit of winning tankards, such as Galt and Lindsay, the latter would have won in a week. But luck had it that both were new and Barrie won in one of the poorest games seen in the finals in years.

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Now no disparagement of either the Barrie or Preston curlers is meant. As said before, both showed some good curling in the earlier games. But it takes experience and lots of it to curl your best when you have one eye on the brass band to welcome you home if you win.

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In Winnipeg things are somewhat different. If a crack club has an off day in the Tankard and gets bowled out it is all off with them. In Winnipeg a crack rink will have their off day and lose a game but that simply knocks them out of one competition. They catch their second wind and go on and win in some other event. Every crack skip at the big bonspiel has been beaten. But what a row of cracks lined up when the prizes were being passed round: Mathewson, of Russell, winner of the Empire twice in succession; Braden, of Winnipeg

Thistles, one of the greatest curlers the West ever knew, and this year winner of the Dingwall, Tetley Tea and Grand aggregate; Bob Dunbar, of St. Paul, whose name every curler knows; Russell and his "kid" rink of Thistles in the "jewelry" in every event and second only to Braden in the grand aggregate of games won; Flavelle of Lindsay getting only a "third" but satisfied with his showing in such company; Hicks, of Napinka, a former Grand challenge man but this year forced to be content with the consolation and in fact pretty lucky to win out in that from R. B. Rice of the Toronto Queen Citys, who for his first appearance did remarkably well to bring home a souvenir of any kind.

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It must be remembered that Ontario players are at somewhat of a disadvantage playing in the West. The extreme cold makes a different ice surface and necessitates a different game. Ontario ice is practically the same all over the rink but in Winnipeg it is keen in the centre of the rink and dirty or "dull" at the sides. This causes the game to be played almost entirely on centre ice and the game is to play rather stronger than a draw, catch the opponent's stone a little on one side, driving it through, while your own drops over on the side where it is hard to get at. Ontario curlers who play the "draw game" at home have consequently to change their style in the West. Under the circumstances, the showing of Ontario rinks in Winnipeg has been remarkably good.

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One week from to-day, Eddie Durnan of Canada and George Towns of Australia meet on the Nipeon River, near Sidney, N.S.W., to decide the sculling championship of the world. It cannot be said the race has as yet aroused any wild enthusiasm on this side of the world, but let Durnan win and the enthusiasm will be forthcoming easy enough. And it might be mentioned casually that the Canadian oarsman and his closest friends are pretty confident that the world's championship is about to move to Toronto Bay. They admit that Tom Sullivan, whom Durnan defeated, was no wonder for a distance, but as a sprinter they claim he had no equal. In all his previous races he was away out in front going to the turn. But Durnan held him handily from the start and then when his coach, Jimmie Rice, gave him the word, went away at will and came home alone. Undoubtedly Durnan has wonderful speed. It is claimed he has staying power as well. If he has it will soon be time to appoint the reception committee.

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Is Western Canada to have professional hockey? That is a question agitating the minds of the followers of the winter half of Canada's national sport. Quebec has it, so has Eastern Ontario and so has Manitoba. But so far the territory over which the Ontario Hockey Association holds sway has been amateur in name at least. Of course Toronto has had a professional team good enough to play exhibition games with passing teams from the International Professional League, but its isolation has only emphasized the amateur control

elsewhere. Now London, Guelph, Brantford and other places of like size are crying out for the purely professional brand. They are making all kinds of insinuations about the status of towns and players in the big amateur hockey body and generally coming together in the chorus "No more hypocrisy."

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Now, though professional hockey seems bound to come, probably more than one of these towns will find it a costly experiment. Hockey players good enough to earn salaries are limited in number. There are not enough to put good teams in all the places already actively engaged in the business. More professional clubs will not make more first class players but it will raise the price of what players there are. When rivalry between towns gets fairly going the club managers are liable to forget the day of reckoning. And when that day happens along there is trouble. Brant-



The Ontario Tankard  
Won this year by the Barrie Curling Club

ford and London have seen the day both in baseball and lacrosse. Guelph has also had a little experience. But they won't be satisfied till they get professional hockey. And shortly after that they'll be done. Hockey as the O.H.A. runs it, is as nearly amateur as the age will permit. It is as good as the towns can afford. They had better take it as it is.

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Capitals, of Ottawa, are already taking gymnasium work in preparation for their English trip. Sailing on April 5th, they reach England just at the close of the lacrosse season there. For while Canadians are chasing the elusive puck Englishmen are out after the rubber ball. And to think how Canadians kick when a summer shower happens along to dampen an occasional Saturday afternoon.