

rarely if ever any types of injuries in curling. Numb fingers or a runny nose would likely not abide to an injury. However there can be injuries off the ice which can occur. Robyn was cut by her lab partner's scalpel before she went away to last year's nationals. She curled with two fingers for the week.

Perhaps the most difficult thing about being an athlete is trying to balance school and your sport. "We try to bring our books but we don't really get a chance to look at them. We have to cram when we get home, but our profs are really good about it." This balancing act is bound to affect their grades. Suzanne says, "I would like my marks to be higher but I like to curl more. I'll take what I can get."

Suzanne says that the reaction to their celebrity has been very positive. "Most people offer congratulations or 'I saw you on TV.' You don't realize how much you affect people until you come home. It's great to have all the support." Robyn says, "We must have had over 100 e-mails just from UPEI." Success has not changed the way their closest friends are around them. "They're still the same old people." But do they like all of the attention?, "Yep."

After playing as long as they have, both Suzanne and Robyn have come accustomed to best conditions to play in. They claim that the best ice to play on is at a "national event in the arena." Suzanne says, "Ice conditions can vary at the Charlottetown Curling Club from one side to other. It might curl less on one side than other. It's consistent at nationals with lots of curl, it's fast and can make pretty much any shot you want."

When it comes to temperatures Suzanne, the skip, likes the heated arena while Robyn, the second and sweeper, likes the cold rink for obvious reasons. "I just stand there and freeze all the time. I like it to be hot."

Since the two have some years of international experience they reflected on the Canadian game verses the rest of the world. "Canadians have always been stronger; they don't always win but they are always strategy smart." Robyn said, "Others are starting to get better like Sweden, Scotland, and the U.S." Curling originated in Scotland during the 1600s but is known worldwide as Canada's other winter pass-time behind hockey.

I inevitably had to get to the question. What team Robyn and Suzanne want to defeat more than any other? I barely got it out before Suzanne answered, "Colleen Jones. Who do you think?" To which Robyn answered, "Yeah." They laughed after saying this but they want nothing more than to beat Jones' rink. They defeat-

ed her earlier this season at the Canada Cup of Curling. With the season almost over their opportunity will come later this year.

Although Jones is the current and defending champion, who is the best in women's curling? Robyn responds in chagrin, "Probably Colleen Jones." To which Suzanne says, "I'd hate to say it but she has to be, I guess." The best all time? "Sandra Schmirler." "Me too." Schmirler, a former Scott champion and 1998 Olympic Gold medalist skip from Saskatchewan lost her battle to cancer in 2001. She is, perhaps, the most respected women's curler of all time.

Going back to the question of Colleen Jones being the best curler right now, Suzanne said, "It's so weird because Colleen Jones might not win if she had a different team. It just has to be all four players. Like she could play with my team and be terrible or I could play with her's and be terrible. We just work well together, like she does with her's."

The overall Scott tournament experience for the two was very rewarding, even if they didn't come away with the grand prize. "We want to go back. We really enjoyed it."

In relation to their other international experience in juniors, Robyn and Suzanne said, "It felt a little different at the Scott. Everyone's a little older and there's better competition."

With all the pressure of playing in their first Scott and being on top of the standings Suzanne felt the most anxious with the thought that she along with all 47 other women would compete in the Ford Hotshots shot-making competition. Each player would take six different shots of varying degree trying to get the rock closest to the button to earn the most points. "I was the most nervous about that during the week [rather than] playing in the games." Suzanne made it all the way to the final against Alberta's Brenda Bohmer. The grand prize was a new 2003 Ford Focus ZX5, a Nokia 6310i phone, and a Bluetooth-enabled wireless car kit. To her amazement, Suzanne beat Bohmer 21-10 in the final and will be receiving her new car in a few weeks.

When P.E.I. went on their 10-game winning streak there was an influx in national media attention surrounding the two young women. "They were pretty good about it. After the game they'd take five or ten minutes to interview us or before the game. There were a few phone calls to our hotel room."

Another thing that curlers must contend with at national events is microphones and television cameras. Suzanne

said, "I don't mind them." "I never have to wear one. Second's don't usually wear mics," said Robyn about the issue. A lot has been made of the fact that the team doesn't show much emotion on the ice and rarely talk. Suzanne said, "We might be more talkative when we don't have them on."

Recordings of their games has been a very good training tool for the team. Suzanne said, "It's good to hear all the commentating. If they have any good suggestions that we can use to improve in any way, it's good to hear."

Robyn and Suzanne both see their first Canadian Junior title in 2001 as the most memorable moment in their curling careers thus far. They cite their coach Paul Power as being a great influence on them and owe much of the credit they have attained to him. Coach Power has put them on the track to someday realizing their ultimate goals which are to win the Scott, the Worlds, and Olympic gold. To get into the Olympic trials they must finish first or second at a Scott or the Canada Cup (they finished third in both this year). The trials consist of ten teams with the winner going to the Olympics in 2005.

After a grueling tournament like the Scott it's reassuring to know that family and friends are close by. Suzanne and Robyn says that this keeps them grounded; with the assurance that everything is going to be fine. "It's not really a physical sport. You need to be in good shape but it is more of a mental game." Two games a day which run in excess of three hours each with a short meal break in between is quite trying. Robyn says she's dead tired by the end of the week. Suzanne says she sleeps for three straight days after returning home from a national event.

Beside their parents, Robyn said their biggest fan would have to be her friend Natasha's dad (The Cadre's Natasha MacKinnon). You're likely to see him at most of their games on P.E.I..

When I asked the two star athletes what they think they would be doing if they were not curling, Robyn said, "In the winter, probably nothing." Suzanne, "Try

to do better in school." Suzanne is a former gymnast who gave that up to concentrate on curling but doesn't know what she would be doing if not curling. During the summer Robyn plays some golf, one of her favorites although she admits to being not the greatest golfer. Suzanne plays softball during the summer.

By this point in the interview both were pretty giddy after so many questions. There was a lot of laughing going on which made a game of world association a lot of fun.

WORD ASSOCIATION

PAUL POWER. They laughed out loud at first. Suzanne: "Big Kid." Robyn: "Yep," Suzanne: "Definitely a big kid... He's going to kill us."

COLLEEN JONES. Suzanne thought about it for a few seconds and said: "Fierce!"

SANDRA SCHMIRLER. Robyn: "Probably one of curling's greatest." **SUSAN McINNIS** Suzanne: "Enthusiastic."

P.E.I. Suzanne: "A good place to live! I don't want to move away... ever. Robyn added: "If I could avoid moving off of P.E.I. I would." Suzanne: "Yep, me too."

ROBYN. Suzanne laughed out loud and said, "So many words. On the ice the best curler ever! Consistent. Off the ice: fun. You're great Robyn... in all aspects!" **SUZANNE.** Robyn said, "On the ice she's an amazing curler. There's not really a shot that I'd be scared to have her throw. And off the ice she's my partner in crime!" Suzanne adds, "The best roommate ever!" **FAVOURITE COLOURED ROCKS?**

Suzanne said, "Red. But it doesn't bother us to play with yellow. It just seems that we always play with red... but no superstition. Some rocks have a different feel than others. No two rocks are exactly the same."

It was a pleasure to interview Robyn and Suzanne. Hopefully I will have a follow-up story when the two return home with the Island's first Scott Title. Thanks, ladies and best of luck!

