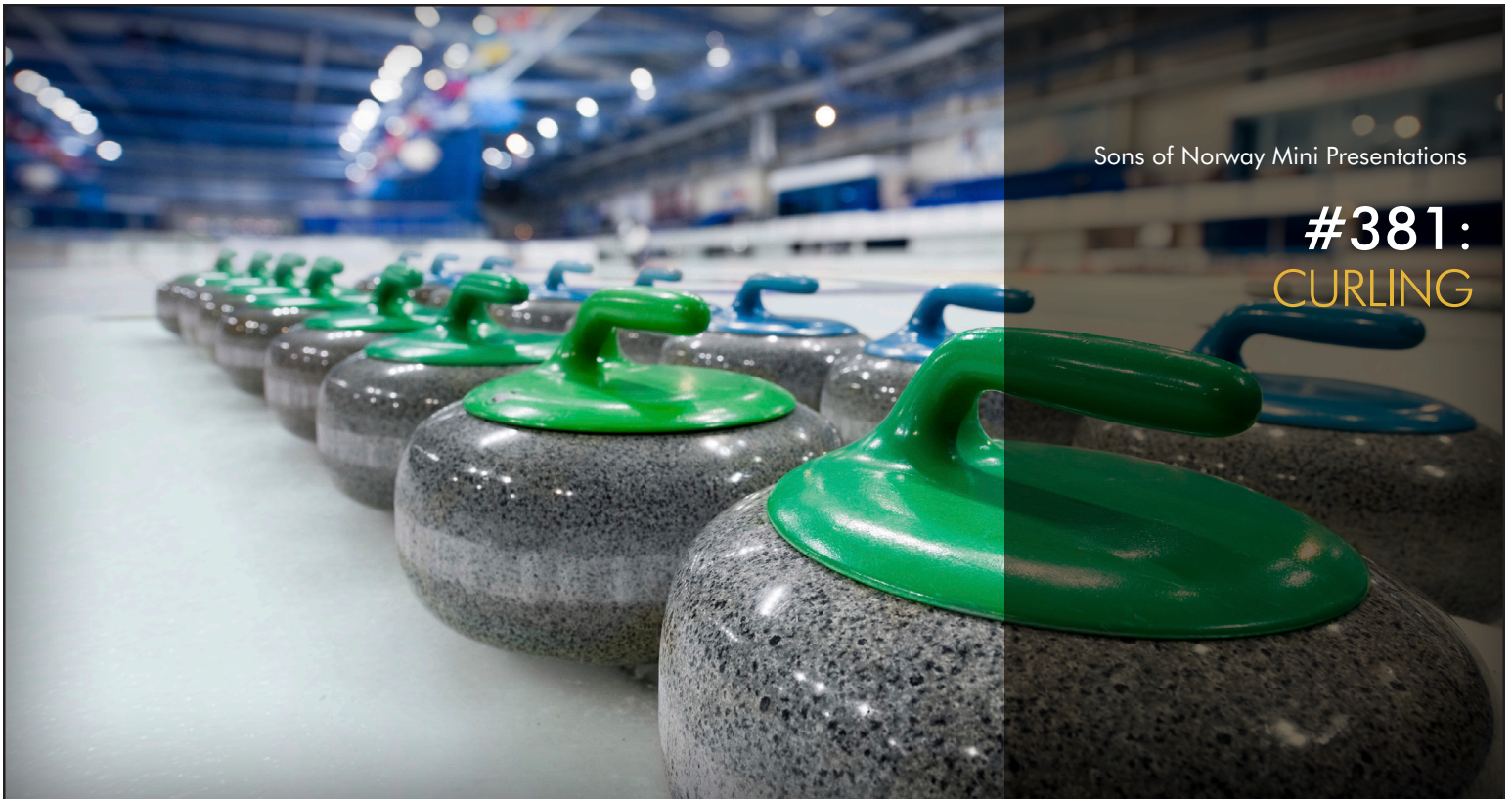


#381: CURLING



Curling is a sport in which players slide stones across a sheet of ice in order to reach a target 145 feet away. There is much more to this game than this simple explanation but the overall idea has stayed the same since its beginnings in the 16th century. Today, the Norwegian men's national curling team, thanks to their fashion forward uniforms, has helped transform the game into a popular sport to watch and play.

Not typically associated with fashion trends, the sport of curling is a game of tradition and skill. The sport dates back to medieval Scotland when participants used brooms to push flat-bottomed river stones over frozen ponds. Back then the game was based more on luck than strategy. Supposedly introduced by Scottish emigrants, the game became popular and well established in Canada. The Royal Montreal Curling Club, established in 1807, is the first established sports club in North America.

Since then Canada has been a strong contender in the world of curling. With such a long winter and so much ice Canada has had plenty of room to practice. However, Norway is a tough competitor with a strong history and superiority in outdoor winter sports.

The Norwegian team, named Team Ulsrud after skip (captain) Thomas Ulsrud, has restyled the world of curling by attaining media attention at the 2010 Vancouver Winter Olympics with their colorful trousers. The team went on to win the silver medal in Vancouver but did not place in the 2014 Sochi Olympics. Canada has been a strong rival for Norway but in 2002 Norway took home the gold.



Thomas Ulsrud, skip of the Norwegian curling team, at the Vancouver 2010 Olympics. © BY-SA 3.0 ([license](#)). Photo by: Bjarte Hetland ([Wikimedia Commons](#))

The game can be compared to shuffleboard but with one minor difference, it is played on ice. Two teams or four players each face off by sliding a granite curling stone or rock across a curling sheet of ice aiming at a 12 foot diameter target called the house. Points are accumulated by

determining which stones come closest to the center of the house which consists of four different rings that can be compared to a bull's-eye.

Special shoes and brooms have advanced the sport into a game of accuracy. The stone curls as it slides down the ice hitting small bumps along the way called pebbled ice. For this reason sweeping is a method that reduces friction under the stone and decreases the stone from curling. Curling brooms made of corn straw were used up until the 1950's when they were replaced with artificial brooms made with hog or horse hair. Curling slider shoes made with a Teflon sole have also been added to help the thrower and sweepers maneuver around on the ice.

Curling pants are often made from stretchy materials in order to allow for deep bends and quick movements. The Norwegian team took curling uniforms to a new level. The team revealed their colorful fashion trend at the Vancouver Olympics in 2010 and has since



created a cult status, with 550,000 followers on a Facebook page called, The Norwegian Olympic Curling Team's Pants.

The Norwegian men's national curling team has transformed the popularity of curling. Team skip Ullsrud said that something needed to happen in order for the sport to gain more attention. Their decision to wear the colorful pants came when 2nd player, Christoffer Svae was trying to find a pair of pants to wear for the 2010 games. He said, "I found the website Loudmouth Golf clothing that sold these kinds of pants. I ordered five pairs and the rest is history." The pants became a hit with the crowds and after all agreed that any publicity is good publicity, the team went ahead with the new fashion trend. "It was the most brilliant thing we ever did. It's a trademark now. Whenever we travel together we get recognized because we're the team with the crazy pants," said Ullsrud.