

Tenth annual Pond Spiel takes over Island Lake



By Brian Lockhart

Around 100 curlers braved the elements including a strong wind whipping across the lake to take part in the tenth annual Great Canadian Pond Spiel hosted by the Orangeville Curling Club at the Island Lake Conservation area on Saturday, February 2.

It was the game played the way it used to be played before curlers realized you could take part in the sport in the comfort of an arena setting.

The ice conditions are no way near the smooth sheets they normally play on at the curling club but each team had the same disadvantage on the ice.

It also required bundling up in several layers to keep warm. Fire pits provided some warmth for observers and a tent provided some shelter from the wind which was crossing the lake from the west at a pretty good clip.

‘This is the tenth annual event,’ explained Club president Rhiannon Kenny. ‘There’s three draws with eight teams per draw. They play in round robin style. They play two games out here on the lake and one back at the Club. It’s a full day event. We have shuttle buses bring teams back and forth from the Club.’

While many Club members took part, there was a large contingent of players from other clubs around the province from as far away as Ottawa who wanted to experience old fashioned outdoor curling on a frozen lake.

‘There are a lot of repeat participants,’ Kenny explained. ‘People come one year and they come back the next year. We started at 8 o’clock and the last game starts around 3:30 so we’ll be out here all day then everyone’s back at the club for dinner.’

Getting the ice ready for a day of curling is a lot of work and volunteers start the project a week in advance.

No only must the ice be cleared and marked, a tent has to be set up, tables brought out on to the ice, and fire pits put in place.

Then there’s the matter of bringing all the curling rocks, which weigh 40 lbs. each out to the lake.

‘It’s interesting for sure ? it really levels the playing field,’ said Club member Brad Hains of curling on the open ice. ‘It’s really a guessing game of what the ice is going to do. It’s a great fundraiser for our Club and people have a lot of fun.’

Hains was one of the volunteers who help set up the ice on the lake.

?This morning we were hear around a quarter-to six. We had a team of ten of us to prep the ice and set up the scoreboards and bring the rocks out to the ice. All the rocks get delivered and the Conservation Authority was nice enough to keep them in the barn so we showed up and slide them all out to the ice. We had ten volunteers this morning and we had six last Saturday and a couple of us did some work during the week. It takes about a week to get everything ready.?

To be in compliance with

Conservation Area rules, the target circles could not be painted in the ice. Rather they were scratched into the ice.

Curlers had to 'read' the ice with all the bumps caused by the natural setting to make a shot.

At the end of the day, scores were tallied and one team got bragging rights for the day.