Organizing a bonspiel

A bonspiel is an opportunity to bring club members together, and to invite teams from other clubs to showcase your curling club. It is a highlight of the year for most curlers. All curlers should consider supporting other clubs by going to their bonspiels if they want outside teams to come to ours.

We generally get teams from Lac du bonnet, Lorette, Springfield and Pinawa and we should consider supporting theirs.

1. Book a caterer or decide if you are going to ask club members to do a pot luck. Good food is some of the feedback we get that keep teams coming back.
   1. It is good for the club’s image and the community to rotate through different local caterers and share the business.
   2. Generally a 1 hour break in the draw will suffice to have time for all to eat. You may ask that the teams that are curling right after meal to eat first.
   3. Do some research on the cost of what the meal will be, as this will be the largest expense of the bonspiel and these costs can drive the entry fee you decide upon.
   4. Do order extra meals as you will always have request for extra meal tickets. Mixed may be a little different in that both spouses may already be curling and thus won’t be buying a ticket for the partner.
   5. Generally you will sell 6 to 10 extra meals in a bonspiel. Just be careful when ordering extra because you are committed to paying for those meals even if you don’t sell the tickets.
   6. Also, know that a good caterer will make a bit extra as well so if you order 6 more meals, but you have 8 or 9 requests you should be safe to sell. It is good to have a conversation with the caterer about this before hand.
2. Prizes
   1. With smaller numbers of entries these days, and once you pay for the meal you won’t have a lot of money for prizes. You will find that if you have around $1400 that you won’t be able to purchase much merchandise. Generally, if you choose to go with prizes bonspiels traditionally give out to the top 4 teams in each event. Some bonspiels in the area have cut this down to the top 3 teams to enable buying better prizes.
   2. Another option and easier on the organizers is to go with a cash per win model. The money generally is spent at the curling club bar and this is a benefit to the club.
      1. Suggestions for amounts, is that the first game of any event win gets $20 and each game forward in the draw sees an increase for games won.
      2. A good rule of thumb when calculating amounts is to strive for the following;
         1. First event winners should double their entry fee.
         2. Second event winners should get 1 ½ times their entry fee.
         3. Third event winners should get their entry fee back.
            1. This means all wins combined added up to double 1 ½ or 1 times their fee.
            2. You may need to reduce these amounts if you have smaller bonspiels.
3. While it is good for the club to earn a profit in a bonspiel, the club makes most of its money in bar sales that weekend. For smaller bonspiels it is better to ensure that your final numbers are not in the negative but organizers should consider putting most if not all money back into prizes, to make the spiels more attractive to return customers.
4. Running a 50/50 each day of the bonspiel helps to raise funds to meet expenses.
5. If you have larger bonspiels and funds are available, consider live entertainment on the Saturday evening. it adds to the bonspiel. You can get a small group or a couple of musicians for a reasonable price as opposed to a full 5 piece band that can cost north of $1K.
6. Always have an evening draw in your spiel, it is what keeps people in the room and the bar busy. A fuller room in the evening adds to the fun of the spiel. Usually there is something happening that keeps people talking the next day about the crazy antics of some.
7. Calcuttas are a fun event that adds to the luster of the bonspiel. It is not a big money make unless you have a larger bonspiel.
   1. For Men’s bonspiel, if you have enough teams to make it worthwhile a live auction at the start of the bonspiel is always a hit and adds greatly to the bonspiel overall ambience. Generally 30 teams or more you can run a live auction Calcutta. Any less you don’t have enough teams and it is over as quick as it starts and hardly worth the extra work. In a live Calcutta you pair teams up to sell as a group. Based on your knowledge of the teams strength, you try to pair up a weaker team with a stronger team.
   2. For smaller events you can run a blind Calcutta, with teams being sold individually.
   3. The percentages of total taken in on the sales are as follows for pay outs.

Club 10%

First in First 25%

Second in First 20%

First in Second 15%

Second in Second 10%

First in Third 10%

Second in Third 10%

1. The entry fee decision lies with the curling club executive but can based on recommendations from the bonspiel chair.
2. The draw- points to consider
   1. It is good to ask an experienced person to make your draw up for you.
   2. Make sure you make time in your personal schedule to work on the draw in the days leading up to the bonspiel. You will need to work on it and put it down and come back to it later in order to spot errors. Teams will be calling to enter as soon as you advertise the bonspiel but you will find that most teams enter 8 to 5 days before the spiel. This leaves you a short period of time to work on the draw. Each draw is different and dependent on how many teams you have. A good working draw takes time.
   3. Bonspiels should have a minimum of 3 events thus providing 3 games guaranteed.
   4. Odd number teams can be accommodated in a draw, but it will mean that 1 team gets 4 games even if they lose. An odd number is no reason to deny a team entry into the spiel.
   5. Curlers will inevitably ask for special draw times for their first game. Make every effort to accommodate because if you cannot they may not enter and that means one or two less teams in your spiel.
   6. Do not have back to back games and do not have teams curling on the same sheet twice unless its later in the event, and not same sheet back to back.
   7. Back to back games in the third event are inevitable, and most curlers understand this. If they did not want this they should have won their games prior.
   8. First event games should have the favourable draw times. Going down from there.
   9. Always run 1, 2 or 3 evening draws. It is good for the bar and adds to the fun of the spiel.
   10. Have a conversation with your ice maker about what they need time for. A good ice maker will want to shave the ice between each draw and this takes time. If he/ she does you can schedule 2 ½ hours between start times. This will allow time for extra ends, cleaning and shaving. Though will still be very tight in times. It is better to allow times for this than having games delayed later.
   11. Include breaks in your draw times for meals, live Calcutta events etc.
   12. If a team curls late in the evening they should not have to curl first thing the next morning unless it is third event.
   13. Strive to ensure that teams don’t have to play each other twice, unless it is in the final of the third event. This would never happen in the first or second event.
   14. Ask someone to spot check your draw. A fresh set of eyes can help spot problems. They should be looking for double booked sheets, back to back games, teams having to curl each other twice. They should look that losing teams are not doubled up where they are sent to. I.e. Loser to B1, etc. should only have 1 team sent to that spot. You should also look that there are no more games than you have sheets for, and this can happen. There is nothing worse than having to change your draw around in the middle of a spiel to correct errors. There is nothing that infuriates participants more than showing up for a game and not being able to play at the assigned times. People will study the draw for their possible game times so they can do other things in the weekend. Changes to those times are annoying. A solid draw is imperative and errors may be the reason people do not come back next year.
   15. When putting names into the draw, try to have a balance on who curls who based on your personal knowledge of how strong the teams are. You can consider separating strong teams at the top and bottom of the draw on the first event. Do not have the strongest team play against the weakest one in the first game of the spiel.
   16. If your bonspiel is a real big one, i.e. 64 teams you could consider a D event which is really a split third. So if you lose first game in the first event you go to B event. If you lose your second game in the first event you go to the C event. If you lose your game in the B event you then go to D. This is a way of still providing 3 games but have better prize give aways and keeps the competition a little better in C. Generally this won’t happen it just included here for reference.
3. All games should be played in accordance with Curl Canada rules of play. As the bonspiel chair you may be called to settle on ice disputes about a ruling. If you don’t have a good understanding of the rules of curling you should appoint a club member who does and will be around to assume this role. There are no umpires in bonspiels and needing this is very rare but it does occur. You may have to decide on a very close measurement, what to do about a burned rock etc. Illegal brooms can be a contentious issue. This is rule that you may want to bone up on.
4. Provide each team with a letter that gives specific bonspiel information.
   1. You should include meal time and location. If there are extra tickets available.
   2. Information about the Calcutta or other raffles you may have.
   3. You may want to speak to the 5 rock rule or broom issues if you so choose.
   4. Always include what you expect for deciding tied games. Some bonspiels will call for skip rocks. Just know that the rules of curling do not allow for this, so if you want your bonspiel to be a competitive event you should state that a tie will be decided by an extra end.
5. At the end of the bonspiel provide a report for the executive that includes an income/ expense report along with any recommendations you may have for future bonspiels. Also report on any controversy that may have occurred during the spiel.