

CURLING ADDICTS FINALLY GETTING THEIR FIX

After almost a full year without their drug of choice, thousands of Canadians will finally be able to get their fix, starting this weekend.

Live curling is back!

Like a heroin addict having his or her supply suddenly cut off, Canadian curling fans who might spend up to 12 hours a day in front of their television sets watching the world's best curlers in action were forced to go without when COVID-19 swept the globe last spring. The competitive season was nicely under way, with Kerri Einarson of Gimli, Man., winning the Scotties, and Brad Gushue of St. John's, NL taking the Brier. Next stop for both: The Worlds!

Einarson and her rink, in fact, had already travelled to Prince George, B.C., for the 2020 world championships when the event was cancelled. Gushue and his mates got the word about their competition's Glasgow, Scotland cancellation before they had to leave the east coast.

Since then, in the world of curling, almost nothing. No Grand Slam events, a handful of modified provincial playdowns, nothing on TV except reruns for former curling championships. It's hard to get excited about Kevin Koe trying a double-angle raise takeout when it happened two years ago and you have already seen the shot, and memorized the rock splatter, four or five times.

But starting this Friday, 16 of the best women's rinks in Canada will gather in a 'bubble' at the Markin McPhail Centre in Calgary and play for more than a week to determine a 2021 Scotties' champ. TSN and veteran broadcaster Vic Rauter will be on hand to call all the shots, and for thousands of Canadian curling fans, it will be like a salve on a sore wound, a warm drink to ease a sore throat. It will be like a starving man given a big steak with fried mushrooms or a crying baby sucking on a bottle of warm milk.

Two weeks later, starting on March 5, the men will go at it at the 2021 Brier. Same site, same rules.

The addicts — primarily elderly Canadians, according to viewership data — will get their fix, as long as the 'bubble' works the way it's intended. No infections, no interactions with people on the outside — a clean setting to allow the sport, and its fans, return to some sort of normalcy.

As for the Scotties and Brier winners? The women's worlds, originally scheduled for Switzerland in late March, have been cancelled, while the Brier champ returns to the Markin McPhail Centre in April for the world championships.

Curling addicts everywhere are hoping for great ice, tight competition, good TV reception — and no infections.

- **Patti Dawn Swansson**, aka the River City Renegade, on the person who took a post-fight swing at **Mike Tyson** while the former champ was signing autographs following his recent fight with **Roy Jones Jr.**: "No arrests have been made, but police are searching for a man who's lost his mind."
 - **RJ Currie** of [sportsdeke.com](https://www.sportsdeke.com): "Some words of advice to any San Antonio Spur contemplating divorce. Remember the alimony."
 - **Joel Beall** of [golfdigest.com](https://www.golfdigest.com), on course conditions at the 2020 Memorial tournament: "Its greens (were) playing like trampolines with rough so tall and thick that search parties are still looking for **Danny Willett** after a missed fairway."
 - Toronto media guy **Gord Stellick**, on Twitter: "There is no truth to rumour that next COVID protocol step has NHL players to be dropped off by parents 30 minutes before game time with skates tied up and skate guards on."
 - **Steve Simmons** of Sunmedia: "The McGill hockey team turns 144 years old on Sunday. And no, **Jaromir Jagr** hasn't been there since the beginning."
 - **RJ Currie** again: "COVID shutdowns forced **Cirque de Soleil** to declare bankruptcy. There haven't been so many clowns not working this side of the Jacksonville Jaguars."
 - **Headline at dark.com**: "The drop kick remains in the NFL's official rule book. Not sure about the PGA."
 - **Dwight Perry** of the Seattle Times: "Sure sign you're in a hard-core Steeler fan's bathroom: Terrible Towels, Steel Shower Curtain and a toilet upgrade affectionately known as Super Bowl II."
 - Bengals rookie QB **Joe Burrow**, via Twitter, on EA Sports College Football being resurrected after seven years: "All I ever wanted was to be on the cover of this game, and as soon as I graduate they bring it back."
 - **Bob Molinaro** of pilot [online.com](https://www.online.com) (Hampton, Va.) on the bright side of ex-Mariners ace **Felix Hernandez** — who just signed with the Orioles — opting out of the 2020 season: "With 500 days between starts, he should be well-rested."
 - **Dwight Perry** again: "This 135th edition of Groundhog Day at Gobbler's Knob in Pennsylvania broke with tradition last week when: a) it was done virtually because of COVID-19; b) **Punxsutawney Phil** emerged with an N95 mask on; c) they changed the prediction to six more years of bad Jets football."
- Care to comment? Email brucepenton2003@yahoo.ca*

