

penton col. w/o nov. 22/21

GUSHUE, EINARSON FAVORITES AT CURLING TRIALS

Other than hockey, no sport in Canada receives as much television coverage as curling, which is why millions of eyeballs will be viewing the action from Saskatoon in late November as Canada's best curlers get together to determine who will wear our country's maple leaf on their sweaters at the Beijing Olympics Feb. 4-22.

Here's one amateur handicapper's view of how things might play out:

Men

4-1 — Brad Gushue, Newfoundland/Labrador: Won three of the last five Briers; good form lately on the cash circuit; has experienced Olympic pressure (and won gold) before.

6-1 — Brendan Bottcher, Edmonton. Basically a coin-flip runner-up to Gushue in this analysis.

10-1 — Matt Dunstone, Regina: Best of the up-and-coming young guns.

12-1 — Brad Jacobs, Sault Ste. Marie: Has Olympic experience to fall back on.

15-1 — John Epping, Toronto: Always solid, but this field is too tough.

20-1 — Kevin Koe, Calgary: Yesterday's man, but on any given day ...

25-1 — Mike McEwen, Winnipeg: If Koe is 'yesterday's man,' then McEwen and Co. are last week's men.

30-1 — Jason Gunnlaugson, Winnipeg: This risk-taking skip needs a bit more experience.

75-1 — Tanner Horgan, Kingston, Ont: Too much power in this field for youngest skip in the field to conquer

Women

7-2 — Kerri Einarson, Gimli: Two-time Scotties winner is co-cream of the crop in this field alongside . . .

4-1 — Tracy Fleury, Winnipeg: Hot recently on the cash circuit. Rest of the rink is the remains of the squad dumped three years ago by Einarson.

8-1 — Rachel Homan, Ottawa: Olympic rep in 2018. Still one of Canada's best. Would love redemption for her poor sixth-place showing in South Korea.

15-1 — Laura Walker, Edmonton: Best of the rest after the big three.

20-1 — Kelsey Rocque, Edmonton: Young rink will be a future threat, but needs more seasoning.

25-1 — Jennifer Jones, Winnipeg: Would be a favourite if this was the 2010 Olympic trials.

30-1 — Krista McCarville, Thunder Bay: Veteran could surprise, but lacks competitive toughness.

40-1 — Casey Scheidegger, Lethbridge: Talented rink could be rusty after taking almost a full year off competitive curling.

50-1 — Jacqueline Harrison, Waterdown, Ont: Field too tough for this pre-trials qualifier.

Canada prides itself on being the No. 1 curling nation in the world, but Homan's rink finished with a 4-5 record and out of the playoffs in 2018, while Koe, runner-up to Sweden in the round-robin, lost a semi-final game to eventual gold medal winner John Shuster of the U.S.

Redemption is required to restore our country's status.

- Columnist **Steve Simmons** of Sun Media: "COVID-19 has changed just about everything, which means there are more tickets available for pro sporting events than there's ever been before. Used to be next to impossible to find Leafs tickets: Now, it's where do you want to sit?"
- Comedy writer **Alex Kaseberg**, after new kicker **Chris Blewitt** missed three of his first five kicks with the Washington Football Team: "And you don't even want to know how badly their new punter, **Joe Shank**, is doing."
- A blast from the past (forwarded by **Don Pottinger** and **Dan Sutherland**): "**Don Meredith**, Dallas Cowboys quarterback once said: 'Coach **Tom Landry** is such a perfectionist that if he were married to **Raquel Welch**, he'd expect her to cook.'"
- RJ Currie of sportsdeke.com: "Wrestling's Bella twins, **Nikki and Brie**, stars of the reality show Total Divas, were inducted into the WWE Hall of Fame. Surprising isn't it, seeing reality and wrestling in the same sentence?"
- Sportswriter **Jerry Krasnick**, on Twitter: "Not to say my fantasy football options are limited this week, but I'm on the verge of using Jake from State Farm as my starting quarterback."
- **Peter King** of nbcports.com, on **Aaron Rodgers** taking Covid-19 advice from podcast host and comic **Joe Rogan**: "(It's) the same as Rodgers walking into the third row of the stands at Lambeau Field before a big third-down play and saying, 'You've been a season-ticket holder for a long time, and you love football. What should we call on third down here?'"
- Late night TV host **Trevor Noah** of the Daily Show: "Is **Aaron Rodgers** trying to prove that COVID is fake or that CTE is real?"
- **Bruce Jenkins** of the San Francisco Chronicle: "I hate to call **Aaron Rodgers** a liar, but a photo of him just moved across the wire, and his pants are on fire."
- **RJ Currie** of sportsdeke.com: "Duke basketball bench boss **Coach K** is retiring at the end of this season. Just try spelling **Mike Krzyzewski** and see if you get irritable vowel syndrome."
- Headline at theonion.com: "Titans limit post-surgery **Derrick Henry** to workload of 20 one-legged carries per week." *Care to comment? Email brucepenton2003@yahoo.ca*