

Proposal for Fair Play in Curling

Summary

The 2016 World Curling Sweeping Summit set objectives to ensure fair play by minimizing the directional influence of brooms on stones, prioritizing delivery skills, and standardizing sweeping equipment. Recent developments in broom technology, particularly new foams like BalancePlus RS 2.0 Firm and Goldline Pursuer, have sparked controversy. While compliant with current World Curling specifications, these foams' outer "skin" appearance enhances sweeping performance that may not fully align with the Summit's goals and prior rulings. This highlights ongoing challenges in equipment regulation, testing inconsistencies, and the need for updated, transparent standards to preserve curling's integrity.

To address this, **the group listed below, including teams, companies, and manufacturers, advocates for rule changes prioritizing fairness and integrity.** This initiative aims to align the sport's top athletes, equipment providers, and governing bodies in a collaborative effort to create a new, universally accepted foam (i.e., density, type, composition) standard for men's, women's, and mixed doubles curling (top tier teams competing on the World Curling Tour, National and International events). We aim to work with all stakeholders, including BalancePlus, to ensure fair and transparent equipment standards for the betterment of the sport.

Background

Coming out of World Curling's Sweeping Summit in May 2016, [World Curling stated the following were the objectives](#) of the summit:

- Determine which existing combinations of materials, construction and design allow sweepers to have a directional influence on a swept curling stone;
- Determine which combinations of materials, construction and design, enforceable sweeping technique(s), or both **"eliminate or significantly reduce the ability for a curling broom to have directional influence on a swept curling stone"**; and,
- Recommend applicable standards for sweeping equipment and rules for sweeping to the WCF General Assembly.

Additionally, they extensively surveyed the curling community, gathered almost 5000 submissions, and identified what influences a curling broom should have. They identified that:

- The delivery should be the most critical aspect of a successful curling shot;
- Sweeping should never be able to slow a stone down or make a stone “fall back” against the curl, and,
- Sweeping should have only a marginal ability to directionally impact a stone.

Importantly, their post-summit statement also indicated that:

*The brush head construction should include a hard plastic base of minimum and maximum dimensions, foam of a specific density and thickness and no other internal components **or features**, such as foil, inserts or ridges.*

Recent developments

The evolution of sweeping technology in curling has recently shifted to focusing on the foam contained within the broom head. In recent years, manufacturers have engaged in an arms race to maximize broom performance by introducing a variety of new foams.

Complicating matters, World Curling has faced difficulties in selecting testing facilities for both approving and spot-testing foams. First, it worked with a facility that did not provide comprehensive feedback and then, subsequently, with a facility for years that ultimately proved to be producing incorrect results.

A new testing facility provided accurate, timely, detailed results; some of their findings were surprising. They identified that Hardline’s “competitive” foam and Goldline’s “Impact Pulsar” foam had an out-of-scope compression modulus.

Additionally, independently requisitioned testing done through the same lab but not requested by World Curling showed that BalancePlus’ “RS” and “RS XL” foams were out of scope, falling below the minimum threshold on their durometer readings.

In the summer of 2024, [World Curling addressed these issues](#) by revising its specifications for foam. They made the following revisions:

- The compression modulus specification was dropped entirely, as it was determined that it was not a good indicator of a foam's relevant characteristics.
- They specified how much foam could compress with a set amount of force. If the foam compressed too much, it would be considered too soft, and if it didn't compress enough, it would be too firm.

Additionally, they indicated that this was considered a short-term solution. They would allow companies to revise their foams based on the new specifications but stated a deadline of January 1, 2025, for any new approvals. After that date, no new foams would be considered until after the Olympic cycle. World Curling would work towards developing a new specification to give the market long-term stability.

BalancePlus introduced their "RS 2.0 Firm." BalancePlus' website states that "this foam has the ability to hold rocks straighter, increase curl, and drag rocks farther." Goldline Curling had been sitting on similar technology for several years, believing it was out of scope. Seeing this technology approved by World Curling, Goldline introduced their "Pursuer" foam to ensure that players using its products could remain on an equal playing field.

RS 2.0 Firm and Pursuer are currently at the heart of the existing controversy.

Current Controversy

Despite being certified as compliant with the existing specifications, we believe the BalancePlus RS 2.0 Firm and Goldline's Pursuer foams [may not fully align with World Curling's stated](#).

We believe they conflict with World Curling's specifications in two ways. First, from the original summit, aiming to:

eliminate or significantly reduce the ability for a curling broom to have directional influence on a swept curling stone.

Secondly, from their technical statement:

*The brush head construction should include a hard plastic base of minimum and maximum dimensions, foam of a specific density and thickness and no other internal components **or features**, such as foil, inserts or ridges.*

While there is insufficient testing to agree on the cause of the performance, existing evidence suggests that the core issue is that both RS 2.0 Firm and Pursuer feature a skin.

Due to the foam type and process used, this skin is formed naturally during manufacturing. It acts as a tough, flexible outer shell over a softer foam core. This mixed composition allows the foam to meet the existing World Curling specifications while enhancing performance on the ice.

Based on initial testing, the skin is believed to behave similarly to the Hardline insert - a feature previously deemed non-compliant.

Key Initiative at the Grand Slam of Curling Event in Guelph

A critical step in this process will occur at the upcoming Grand Slam of Curling event in Guelph, where key teams and manufacturers are proving their commitment to fairness.

Team John Epping agreed not to use BalancePlus' newly developed [black foam, "2.0 Firm."](#)

Goldline Curling teams, including Team Homan, Team Wrana, Team Inglis, Team Skrlík, Team Ramsfjell, and the company have committed to using their [Evader](#) foam ([not the newly developed Pursuer foam](#)), which matches the current **Hardline Curling competitive foam**. Hardline Curling teams have agreed to continue using the current competitive foam.

To address BalancePlus' lack of an equivalent high-performance agreed-upon foam, a proposed solution involves World Curling granting **BalancePlus and Team Epping a**

rule exemption, allowing them to use a competitor's foam with the BalancePlus head. We collectively advocate that BalancePlus be given an extension for approval of a compliant foam comparable to the Goldline Curling Evader and Hardline Curling competitive foam in the short term until further testing and collaboration with the players is developed.

Team Epping, in particular, is being asked to switch their approved equipment days before a Grand Slam event for the betterment of our sport, which deserves to be acknowledged by our collective voice.

Plan of Action: Steps to Achieve Fair Play

To build momentum for change and ensure a unified message at the Grand Slam of Curling Masters event from January 14-19, the following steps will be taken:

1. Secure Commitments from Stakeholders

- Collaborate with **BalancePlus**, **Goldline Curling**, and **Hardline Curling** to align on not using any foams with a suggested skin feature.
- Encourage all teams to adopt the shared goal of advocating for transparency and collaboration from World Curling on equipment testing and specs.

2. Organize a Unified Players Equipment Agreement

- Draft a collective statement from top players supporting updated equipment regulations.
- To show widespread support, we will continue to collect signatures from players at the Grand Slam event.

3. Build Awareness and Support at the Event

- Arrange informal discussions with players, coaches, and manufacturers to explain the initiative and build consensus.
- Position participating teams and manufacturers as leaders in promoting fair play.

4. Propose a Two-Day Broom Testing Camp

- **Objective:** Finalize a new set of broom and foam standards to be adopted with World Curling after the 2026 Olympic cycle.
- **Testing Camp:** Host a two-day event during the World Men's Curling Championships in Moose Jaw, Saskatchewan.
 - Participants: Representatives from all major manufacturers. Select teams and players will provide practical, on-ice testing and feedback. World Curling representatives will oversee and help with discussions.
 - Tests Conducted: Evaluate foam densities and their impact on sweeping performance under gameplay conditions. Conduct other meaningful tests, including durability, compression, consistency, and fairness evaluations. Compare equipment to decide acceptable thresholds for a fair, universal standard.
- **Outcome:**
 - Collaboratively establish a fair and balanced set of foam density/compression tests and broom performance standards.
 - Finalize a proposal for new rules to be adopted by World Curling after the 2026 Olympics.

The camp will serve as a cornerstone for stakeholder collaboration, ensuring the new regulations reflect input from manufacturers, players, and governing bodies.

5. Establish/Finalize a Players' Council

- Begin forming an association to unify players and teams advocating for long-term changes.
- Develop a mission statement outlining the group's commitment to fair play and integrity.
- Use the Grand Slam event to meet and recruit initial members.

6. Advocate for complete transparency from World Curling on product testing moving forward

- To date, World Curling has considered all test results as confidential.
- *All* test results should be made publicly available when testing for new product applications and when spot-testing equipment from the field of play.
- Goldline Curling has agreed to share a summary of testing they have requisitions *through World Curling's current test facility* over the last 18 months to support this advocacy.

Company	Model	Thickness in mm (uninstalled)	Durometer (avg)	Thickness when compressed @ 779N (e.g. 175lbs force) in mm	Compression % @ 779N (e.g. 175lbs)
Specification:		≥ 12.7	60-80, ± 2	n/a	65% - 86%
Goldline	Impact Pulsar	12.72	65.9	9.65	75.86%
Goldline	Impact Evader	15.4	67.1	10.675	69.32%
Goldline	Impact Pursuer	13.3	79	8.7	65.41%
Hardline	Recreational	14.65	62.1	10.73	73.24%
Hardline	Competitive	15.4	67.1	10.675	69.32%
BalancePlus	RS	13.53	51.7	11.4	84.26%
BalancePlus	RX XL	13.73	52.9	11.57	84.27%
BalancePlus	RS 2.0 Firm	14.4	81.3	9.63	66.88%

Proposed Timeline

- **48–24 hours before the event:**
 - Finalize agreements with teams regarding using softer foams and removing the new believed skin feature.
 - Distribute the unified player statement for review and signature collection.
- **At the Grand Slam event in Guelph:**
 - Conduct informal discussions with stakeholders to reinforce the initiative.
 - Collect signatures for the unified player statement.
 - Leverage media opportunities to highlight the collective commitment to fair play.
- **Following the event:**
 - Refine the proposal for World Curling, incorporating feedback from the Grand Slam event.
 - Begin preparations for the Moose Jaw testing camp.

Curling’s rich history and integrity depend on maintaining a level playing field. The rapid evolution of sweeping technology has highlighted the need for updated equipment regulations that reflect the values of fairness and balance. By uniting players, teams, and manufacturers in a shared commitment to foam standards, we can ensure the sport remains competitive, equitable, and true to its roots.

The actions proposed in this document represent a critical first step toward creating meaningful change. With the collective leadership of all stakeholders involved, we can send a clear message to World Curling that it is time to modernize equipment standards to protect the integrity of the game.

Together, we can safeguard curling for future generations while fostering trust, collaboration, and innovation within the sport.

Supported by:

Men's Teams

Team Carruthers
Team Dropkin
Team Dunstone
Team Edin
Team Gushue
Team Hoesli
Team Jacobs
Team Kleiter
Team McDonald
Team McEwen
Team Mouat
Team Muskatewitz
Team Ramsfjell
Team Whyte
Team Y. Schwaller

Women's Teams

Team Einarson
Team Fujisawa
Team Gim
Team Ha
Team Hasselborg
Team Homan
Team Inglis
Team Kitazawa
Team Kim
Team Lawes
Team Skrlík
Team Tabata
Team Tirinzoni
Team Wrana
Team X. Schwaller

Equipment providers:

Goldline Curling

Hardline Curling

Other brands in the Curling/Sports Industry:

Gravity Management Inc.