

World Curling Federation

Update on Sweeping and Equipment – 16 November 2016

This update is provided following the first WCF event of the 2016-17 season contested under the new sweeping rules and specifications for sweeping equipment.

It is based on observations during the recent World Mixed Championships, Pacific-Asia Curling Championships and feedback from athletes, coaches, officials, manufacturers and media reports following two months of competitions at CCT, WCT and Grand Slam events.

Most importantly, newly produced equipment conforming to WCF Specifications for Sweeping Devices appears to have had the desired effect of significantly reducing the excessive directional effect in evidence during the past season.

The WCF will continue to carefully monitor all facets of sweeping and equipment and if necessary, take appropriate measures.

Conforming Equipment

The specifications for sweeping equipment are posted on the WCF website and are publicly available. These specifications include technical components, design characteristics and equally important, statements of principle.

It is not sufficient to simply produce equipment meeting most of the specifications, such as using the approved fabric, correct amount of foam or a base plate within the proper dimensions. Sweeping equipment conforming to WCF Specifications must fully conform to all specifications AND display a valid WCF Product Code.

A register of currently valid WCF Product Codes is maintained on the WCF website and teams should frequently consult this site to ensure they are using conforming sweeping equipment.

As a reminder, ANY modification or manipulation of a conforming sweeping device results in that device being deemed non-conforming.

Responsibility for using conforming equipment

While it is the responsibility of the manufacturers to consistently produce sweeping equipment which both conforms to the WCF Specifications for Sweeping Devices and is the same as their respective approved designs, it is ultimately the responsibility of the athlete to ensure they begin each game using a conforming sweeping device.

The penalties to athletes and teams for using non-conforming equipment are severe. Therefore, should an athlete have any doubt as to whether a sweeping device is conforming or not, they SHOULD NOT compete with that device until they are able to confirm that the device conforms.

Athletes should take special care to ensure their sweeping equipment remains conforming throughout a game. Examples of how a sweeping device may become non-conforming through normal use are torn fabric, loose stitching, shifted or torn foam or a damaged or broken base plate.

Athletes should also remember that the fabric on the WCF conforming brush heads, pad and covers is intended to be used only on one side. All brush heads, pads and covers must only be used in the original form produced by the manufacturers and no fabric should be inverted for use on the opposite side.

The WCF recommends an athlete SHOULD NOT attempt to adjust or manipulate a sweeping device which has become non-conforming through normal use in an attempt to make it conforming, as it could be construed that the equipment is being manipulated for an advantage.

If an athlete becomes aware of a potential concern with their sweeping equipment or if there's any question regarding the continued conformance of a brush head, pad or cover during a game, it should be brought to the immediate attention of the head official.

At a WCF Championship or Event, if it is determined by an official that a sweeping device has become non-conforming through normal use and the athlete has promptly identified the situation to an official, the athlete may be allowed to replace their brush head, pad or cover without penalty.

The WCF recommends other competitions requiring WCF conforming equipment take a similar approach in dealing with equipment which becomes non-conforming through normal use.

Inspection of equipment

During the course of a WCF Championship or Event, equipment may be inspected to ensure it conforms to WCF Specifications for Sweeping Devices.

The WCF may collect sweeping equipment used at a competition and that equipment may be retained for further testing, both to ensure conformance and to increase understanding about equipment performance and durability.

Similar to the processes used for drug testing, selection of equipment for post-competition conformance inspection could be random, intelligence based or focused on the medalists.

Equipment testing by athletes

Many equipment manufacturers have their sponsored athletes and teams conduct performance testing on their products during training sessions. The WCF encourages manufacturers to conduct performance testing of both approved equipment and prototypes in order to ensure products are not capable of producing undesirable results or over-effective performance.

Considering the consequences to athletes of using non-conforming sweeping devices in events requiring conforming equipment, the following is important advice to athletes and manufacturers:

- it is critical that manufacturers ensure athletes and teams testing their equipment understand that using prototype or concept equipment during a competition could result in disqualification or suspension.
- it is essential a manufacturer confirms with the teams whether equipment being tested is conforming or not.
- regardless of whether sweeping equipment being tested is built to WCF specifications, it must fully conform to WCF Specifications AND display a valid WCF Product Code currently listed in the registry on the WCF website, in order to be used in competition.

Enforcement of sweeping technique

Performance testing at the Sweeping Summit demonstrated that establishing and enforcing allowable sweeping techniques was unnecessary.

In the first WCF Championships with the new sweeping and equipment rules in place, early feedback from athletes and officials is positive and not having to be concerned with sweeping technique is a welcomed departure from last season for both athletes and officials.

The only remaining rules pertaining to sweeping technique are that no debris may be deposited in the path of a moving stone and that the final sweeping motion must finish to either side of the stone.

This provides clear direction to athletes and is much simpler for officials to monitor and enforce, if necessary.

Interim Analysis

To date, conforming equipment has not been shown to have an adverse or undesirable effect and once again, sweeping effectiveness appears to have a direct relationship with the degree of athleticism and sweeping skill of the athlete.

Top sweeping athletes are more likely to have a greater influence but curlers of all abilities can expect to have some impact when using the conforming equipment.

While analysis is ongoing and monitoring will continue, after two months with the new, conforming equipment in competition, the general consensus is the sweeping rules and equipment specifications have returned the primary responsibility for shot making to the thrower while continuing to maintain the relevance of the sweepers.