



## Midwest Curling Association: Meeting Minutes

February 28, 2022, via Zoom

The meeting was called to order at 7:03 PM on Monday, February 28, 2022, by Sara Gaum.

In attendance: Sara Gaum (President), Barb Taube Hesterberg (VP), Jeff Wright (Past President), Steve Young (St. Louis), James-Grant Robertson (Chicago), Jane Vahle (Waltham), Shannon Brown (Media/Communications), Larry Vahle (Waltham), Aaron DeGagne (Windy City), Jeff Warner (Treasurer), Adam Miller (Chicago), Steve Wright (Exmoor).

Absent: Lon Peper (Cedar Rapids), Sherryanne Porter (Secretary), Courtney Schmidt (USA Curling), Andrew Wolek (Northwestern), Kate Ross (Des Moines), Walter Burns (Wilmette).

**Situation Summary** by Shannon Brown via email and in-person

No team from the MCA region registered for the MCA Playdowns within the set window. An MN team, who missed the MN playdowns due to COVID, was encouraged by USA Curling to pay St. Louis CC dues then register for MCA Playdowns. According to USA Curling's rulebook, U18 curlers are only required to be dues-paying members of a regional club. This contrasts with other playdowns, which require curlers to be "active" or "league-playing" members. Over the last week, I've had an open discussion with USA Curling regarding the implications of this ruling.

### General Notes

- The word "league-playing" was removed from the USA Curling Rulebook regarding juniors as it acted as a barrier. This change is justified because some US curling clubs do not allow juniors to participate in leagues. In an email to USA Curling, I proposed that U18 curlers live in the region where they playdown. USA Curling does not appear to have the intention of changing its rules.
- U18 curlers must wear matching uniforms at Nationals; however, there is no rule on what logo is displayed. For example, several of our Club's teams have Illinois uniforms, not MCA.
- Before signing up, the MN team knew no teams registered in the MCA region. Based on my research, this is not something you can't view on the registration portal, and only the regional contact should be provided with this information before registration closure.
- The MCA might be setting a precedent by allowing this MN team to attend U18 Nationals in an MCA slot. If a precedent is set, teams from larger, more competitive regions (e.g., MN and WI) could sign up and dominate our future U18 playdowns, which would hinder the opportunity of our MCA juniors.
- USA Curling acknowledges the MCA has the right to name our regional teams to Nationals. They have asked us to discuss the situation and vote on whether this MN team can travel to U18 Nationals in the MCA's slot.

### **Open Discussion** by all board members in attendance

- Young explained that the team reached out to a St. Louis CC Board Member about the situation and explained that USA Curling directed them to sign up in another region; St. Louis CC registration is online and is open to all.
- Two MCA U18 Girls' teams emailed after the fact about participating but did not register by the USA Curling deadline, so they are not eligible for the MCA slot.
- Team Ponzio would not be taking away a slot from an eligible MCA U18 team.
- Brown verified there was no contact between MCA and Team Ponzio prior to Team Ponzio registering.
- Multiple board members expressed frustration that there wasn't a requirement for teams to be active within the region to qualify for U18 Regional Playdowns.
- MCA's primary responsibility is to support curling on a regional level; however, do we prevent a junior team from playing simply because of how the situation was handled?
- Since this decision doesn't directly impact MCA U18 juniors, Wright proposed we defer the decision about what to do with the MCA slot to USA Curling. If USA Curling doesn't give the slot to Team Ponzio, an eligible team from another region is sent (as outlined by the unused slot policy in the USA Curling Competition Handbook).
- Concerned that by setting a precedent, USA Curling or teams from other regions could use this ruling against us in the future to playdown in the MCA; the proposed solution is to update the bylaws to require teams to be active within the region.

### **MCA Vote**

Proposal: Let the only team registered for the MCA U18 Playdowns move forward to represent the MCA region at Nationals. **(Yea 7; Nay 2)**

- Note that 'Yea' votes include board members who would like to defer the final decision to USA Curling, as it's expected USA Curling will send Team Ponzio.

Proposal: Either the MCA votes to send Team Ponzio as their representative or the MCA feels this is outside their purview as the choice impacts an eligible team from outside their region, so the MCA defers the selection to USA Curling for the 2021-2022 season. **(MCA 3; USA Curling 6)**

### **Future Actions**

- Brown will send the decision to USA Curling with the MCA President and VP cc'd.
- Gaum and Brown will work on a statement to be released to regional membership.
- If Team Ponzio is sent, MCA will not actively advertise the team via social media or add their name to the MCA trophy.
- The bylaws of the MCA will be changed to prevent this situation in the future.

**MCA Meeting was adjourned** at 7:52 PM (Gaum).