

# A Wee Biteen O' History of the Shamrock Bonspiel

Curlers have been competing in Montreal West's **Shamrock Bonspiel** to win the unique curling stone trophy for about 40 years. It is said that the stone on the trophy was one saved in 1964 when our club burned down.

In the late 1960's and early 1970's the club's big bonspiel was first called the Rodeo Roundup, then the Fishermen's Fling for a couple more years. As it takes place in March around the same time St. Patrick's Day festivities are held, the club settled on the name of the Shamrock Bonspiel. It was THE bonspiel of the year starting in the mid 1970's.

How big was the Shamrock Bonspiel? Howard Davidson and Ed Jones, both current members who ran the event a few times, had this to say about the bonspiel:

*Up until about 20 -25 years ago it was a 2-week event. It took a lot of planning and many volunteers to make it the success it always was. The whole club pitched in to help. The committee responsible for running it usually started their planning in October. Contact was made with other clubs reminding them of our bonspiel coming up months ahead.*

*At its height, there were **80 teams** entered in 2 different categories. At 4 players a team, that amounted to **320 players**.*

*64 men's teams in the Open Section  
16 senior men's teams*

*At that time, it was a men-only competition. The vast majority of the teams were from outside clubs. Most of these were from the island of Montreal and surrounding area. However, there were clubs from Ontario and some from border states like New York.*

*During this period, many curlers from our club often played in the bonspiels held in various other clubs. While our players were out enjoying the other clubs' bonspiels, they reminded the other clubs about our bonspiel and asked them to join us. It was the thing to do in those days.....you come to mine and I'll go to yours.*

*With so many teams, scheduling the games was a very complicated task. There was special consideration given to the teams further away by scheduling their games on weekends only in an 'accelerated' draw.*

*Food was served and small prizes were awarded after every game. On the first Saturday, a big party was held with a roast beef supper (3 seatings) for the curlers and their wives and girl friends. This was followed by dancing until 2:00 a.m. which made curling the next*



*morning very difficult for some of the teams. Some breweries and liquor companies were very generous with their donations which made for some very happy 'Happy Hours.'*

*Before the start of the final night's competition, the finalists were always piped onto the ice and were given a shot of Drambuie to wish them well in their try for the championship. The competition for the expensive prizes such as TV's was very intense.*

*Raffle tickets for the draw always sold well with the top prize being over \$1,000. The raffle usually netted the club as much as \$3,500, quite a large amount even at today's dollar value.*

*This was a very big money maker for the club. The bar had to have 4 or 5 bartenders to service the crowd."*

But, things have changed in the past 25 years as they have in all large bonspiels in most clubs.

How has it changed?

It is still held during the St. Patrick's Day time period so it is still called the Shamrock Bonspiel although in the year 1995 there was a temporary name change. This was the year the Lachine Curling Club was celebrating its 100th anniversary. As their most important celebration dates would have clashed with our normal Shamrock Bonspiel dates, we changed our dates to 2 weeks earlier and changed the name for this one year to the Montreal West Bonspiel.

But, things have changed in many other ways....

It was around 1998 that the ladies started to curl with the men and we finally had a mixed competition. In 2002 we had our first all-women's team curling in the Senior Section. Seven years later, in 2009, an all-women's team won the Open Championship for the first time. Debby Ship's team not only won that year but repeated their victory in 2010.

However, the number of overall competing teams was in sharp decline. In 2000 we were down to 38 teams. Then in 2001 that number was 30 teams. Incidentally, the winner of the Open Competition that year was Brian Wilde from our club. Yes, that is the same Brian Wilde you see on CTV Sports.

In the next few years, the number of teams continued to decline until 2005 when there was no Shamrock competition.



Shamrock Senior's Trophy



Thanks to Gary Barker, a former President of our club who now curls with the day curlers, the competition was revived in 2006 under a new format. Twenty-four teams competed with an A, B, C and D sections format. Teams were from our club only and an invitation was extended to our Sunday rental leagues to join the bonspiel.

The same format continues to this date. The Irish theme was emphasized a few years ago as each of the teams was required to assume an Irish name, and it is always remarkable to see how creative our teams can be.

As you can see, the Shamrock Bonspiel has quite a history and is still an important event in our curling season.

*Jim Matchett 2015*

**Recent Winners of the A division**

<p><b>2013-14</b> <i>O'Zoned</i> Rob Philion Alex Hall Scott Grafton Adam Freilich (skip)</p>	<p><b>2012-13</b> <i>O'Harders</i> Steven Fagen Chris Morrin Zack Wise Steve Holdaway (skip)</p>	<p><b>2011-12</b> <i>MWCC</i> James Clark Marc-Andre Lussier Steve Holdaway Zack Wise (skip)</p>
<p><b>2010-11</b> <i>The Grafton Street Sweepers</i> Anna Grafton Don Sproule Dave Coombs Claude Gagnon Scott Grafton (skip)</p>	<p><b>2009-10</b> <i>MWCC</i> Andrea Miller Alex Hall Anne Mitchell Debby Ship (skip)</p>	<p><b>2008-09</b> <i>MWCC</i> Andrea Miller Cathy Doucette Anne Mitchell Debby Ship (skip)</p>
<p><b>2007-08</b> <i>Canfir.</i> Mark Zawislak Pierre Cadorette Paulo Fernandes Rob Williams (skip)</p>	<p><b>2006-07</b> <i>MWCC Ladder</i> Danielle Kalika Robert Philion Kim Moskalewski Jr. Kevin Alladin (skip)</p>	<p><b>2005-06</b> <i>Rolling Stones</i> Phillip Comeau Marc-Andre Comeau Dougie MacDonald Yvon Comeau (skip)</p>