

Curling in an arena: a “how-to” guide

Required Equipment:

- Removable hack assemblies (2 per curling sheet)
- Pebbling can + appropriate sprinkler head (back-pack style containers are easiest)
- Zamboni or similar ice-resurfacing machine
- Circle-scribing tool
- Portable scoreboards (optional)

Ice Preparation: Hockey players and general skaters do not require the extremely flat ice surface that is necessary for curling. Therefore, the ice-resurfacing process must be slightly modified to accommodate the needs of curling. The edges of the ice surface (within 15 feet of the boards) tend to be the least flat due to normal skating patterns. Talk to your Zamboni driver about techniques he may know to shave the ice so that it can be made flatter before you start (a diagonal criss-cross pattern like on a baseball infield seems to work pretty well). After the ice is “leveled” to your satisfaction, have the ice re-surfaced with a normal Zamboni flood. After this flood freezes, use the Zamboni to do a dry-scrape along the length of all the sheets (not diagonally) as they normally would drive. Make sure they scrape the entire ice surface (not just the sheets) because it provides much better traction for people wearing shoes, and it tends not to sweat and accumulate humidity the way “shiny” ice does.

Sheet Location: Positioning your 1-4 curling sheets in the middle of the arena can avoid the major flatness problems found in any arena. An international-size arena is 100 ft x 200 ft. If you are playing in an arena of this type, the hack location (end-to-end) is easy to locate: it is approximately even with the outside hash-marks on the edges of the face-off circles. If you need more accuracy than that, it is best to measure.

Drawing the Houses: The easiest way to draw temporary houses is to make a scribe tool for drawing circles. This tool consists of a piece of 2x2 lumber, with large “Magnum-44 markers at 1-ft / 2-ft / 4-ft / 6-ft distance from a pivot screw. These scribe marks then become a template for using really large / fat permanent magic markers to mark the circles so that they are visible from the other end of the sheet. Remember to use a pesticide-spray container to apply a fine mist over the markings to ensure that the ink doesn’t get all over people’s pants when they slide through. If you are only doing 1 or 2 sheets, it sometimes makes more sense to put in the house at 1 end only. Then you don’t have to worry about sliding through the house at all. You will also require fewer hacks to do it this way.

If you can convince your arena employees to paint actual houses on the ice, all the better (use standard ice-painting techniques).

Pebbling: The ice can be pebbled as it would be in any curling facility. Fill your tank with hot Zamboni water (the hotter the better). Use a standard curling pebbling sprinkler head to ensure that you get the correct pebble size (these are available in catalogs, as are complete pebbling cans). The back-pack style are easier to hold, but are more expensive. It is helpful to pebble a large area of ice behind the hacks so that new curlers get used to sliding on that surface before they step onto the sheet. If you are installing practice-hacks in the arena away from the actual curling sheets, pebble those areas also.

Hack Installation: see separate instructions

Questions? Contact Iain Hueton @ Torian Designs. Phone 801-627-4119 email ihueton@yahoo.com

Hack-Rack

Quick-Freeze Hacks for Arenas & Curling Clubs

The Hack Rack was originally designed for curling on arena ice where there is no permanent curling equipment. However, it can also be used in dedicated curling facilities to shorten the sheet and allow junior curlers to throw from shorter distances.

How does it work? The Hack Rack is an aluminum plate that has a series of slots and tabs that melt into the ice surface and produce a firm bond. Under normal use, the Hack Rack will not come out of the ice unexpectedly.

How long do they take to freeze? If the Hack-Rack assemblies are stored in an arena environment, and placed upside down on the ice during ice-resurfacing (to pre-cool the rubber), they will be frozen and ready to curl in less than 5 minutes.

Which rubber hacks work with the Hack Rack? The Hack-Rack is designed to accept Marco, Thompson Superhack, and the new Olson Canada hack. The Hack-Rack comes fully assembled with Marco Hacks, or it can be ordered without hacks (the necessary mounting screws are included).

Where have Hack-Racks been used?

- 2000 US Curling Championships (Ogden, Utah)
- 2001 World Junior Championships (Ogden, Utah)
- 2001/2002 US Olympic Trials – Curling (Ogden, Utah)
 - 2002 Olympic Curling Competition (Ogden, Utah)
- regularly used by Ogden Curling Club, San Francisco Bay Curling Club & Cleveland Skating Club

Price (without hacks): \$45 US each (+ \$8 shipping, within lower 48 states)

Price (with 2 Marco Hacks): \$100 US each (+ \$8 shipping, within lower 48 states)

Installation: Store the Hack-Rack assemblies in a warm room when not in use. When ready to install:

1. rush them out to the ice surface
2. place in required location and immediately stand on hacks until water pools in the cut-out
3. place 1 or 2 stones on the rubber hacks until all visible water is frozen

Alternatively, dip the metal frame portion in hot water immediately before installing to ensure firm adhesion and freezing. Then complete steps 2 & 3.

Removal: Grasp the frame of Hack Rack firmly at the rear, and pull straight up (use 2 hands to avoid bending the frame)

Need additional information?

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Hack Rack Installation Instructions

So, how to install these things?? First things first: a little lesson in thermodynamics. All materials have properties which affect their performance when they undergo significant temperature changes. For example, aluminum is significantly more conductive than steel, so it takes a lot less time to freeze into the ice. At the other end of the scale, rubber is an excellent insulator and does not like to change temperature.

We typically lay the hacks out on the ice (rubber-side down) to get them good and cold during the Zamboni run so that only the metal plate will be heated and cooled during the installation process (if the rubber starts off at room temperature, it takes much longer to cool off). If you are installing the hacks on the ice in a real curling rink, be careful to stay away from any painted areas of the ice because removal of the Hack-rack often lifts a small chunk of ice (and paint) with it. So, if you want the hacks to freeze in quickly and solidly, do the following:

- find 2 large Rubbermaid / Tupperware containers (20 gallons) that allow the hack mount to sit flat in the bottom (Walmart or Kmart have them)
- place one container inside the other container (nested / stacked). This produces an air gap and provides an insulation layer so this bucket of warm water doesn't make nasty marks on your ice.
- Fill the container 1/3 full with hot water
- Install the container lid so you don't spill on the sheet
- Take the container out to the hack location on sheet 1 (the hacks can be sitting rubber-side down near their intended location on each sheet, behind the house). Keep the water container off the actual sheet playing-surface to avoid the possibility of marring the ice where it really matters.
- Dip the first hack into the water (rubber-side up) with the rear metal edge deepest in the water. It's important to get the whole metal plate wet and hot while avoiding getting the top surface of the rubber hack wet at all (otherwise loose pieces of ice will break off the rubber during the game).
- Hold the unit in the water for 10-15 seconds, shake off the excess water, and quickly place it in position on the sheet
- Stand on the hacks to squeeze water onto the sheet and make sure that the aluminum tabs have sunk all the way into the ice. Then place a curling stone on each rubber hack to hold it down as it freezes (since we had the hacks on the ice prior to this process, they will not warm up your stones at all).
- Wait 5-10 minutes (or until all water around the Hack-Rack has frozen) and curl on!

Where to install the hacks: sheet / rink diagrams typically measure 6-feet from the back line to the beginning of the "ramp" on the rubber hack (the lowest portion of the ramp).

Bonspiels & Competitions: easy removal of the Hack-Rack is less important in this application, so best results are achieved if the Hack-Rack is installed before the last or second-to-last flood (1/8"-thick flood is adequate).

To remove the hacks, simply grip at the rear with both hands and pull straight up. It is very important to pull with both hands to avoid bending the Hack Rack. Some ice-chipping may be required to remove it after a flood.

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