



China: Learning To Win

When you prepare to conduct research (as I am this Fall) you have to read and learn what other researchers and practitioners have done in your field. You do this to learn what was done and what questions were asked and what answers were found to those questions. It turns out China has a rich research base investigating what Chinese elite curling teams do to win and why they lose. This article gives you a flavor for the way Chinese researchers and sport psychology consultants learn how Chinese teams perform well.

Chinese researchers have conducted research into shot decision-making and execution; team development; umpiring effectiveness; junior and senior teams' causes for success and failure; competitive contrast between China and their opposition; performance metrics and the differences between genders and ages in competition; competitive confidence and anxiety and competitive preparation. One must persevere to locate the primary research article in English but it is well worth it.

What we learn from the volume and type of research dating from 2006 onwards is that national team performance matters to China. Curling is important to showing the positive aspects of Chinese identity and performing well and honorably is very important to the Chinese. Research efforts show us that universities are focused on understanding why and how curling performance can improve and conversations about growing curling's positive impact on Chinese society are ongoing.

From a sport psychology perspective we see that the fields of kinesiology and physical education are well represented areas like expertise, motor control and sport psychology predominate. What we learn from these findings is that curling is valuable to the Chinese and is helping them understand 'shot-calling', team chemistry, team selection and sport behaviors that work. Research happens when the thing being investigated is seen to have value. Clearly curling is of interest to researchers and reading the comments of China's coach at the last Olympics one learns the seriousness with which the Chinese approached international competition.

Since 2006, Chinese women have won Silver, 2008, Gold, 2009, Bronze 2011; Junior men have two third match play offs and a bronze in the mixed doubles, 2011 at the World championship level and women's Bronze at the Vancouver Olympics. As a relative newcomer to international curling China is making progress and the energy in the research being done to learn how to perform better suggests that Chinese curling will be a competitive force at the World and Olympic level in the foreseeable future.