

Eau Claire Women's Curling League

Historical Background

October 13, 2021

The Indianhead Curling Club (forerunner of the Eau Claire Curling Club) was organized in the mid-1950's as an outdoor winter men's league. Within a year, the group quickly moved indoors to the original County Fairgrounds Exhibition Building in Altoona. As numbers expanded, more leagues were created and a "mixed League" for couples was eventually organized that bounced between Friday and Saturday nights. While many of the new women members hadn't curled before, they quickly learned the game techniques and strategies in the mixed league, and developed the skills to play a variety of positions. However, a league just for women wasn't established until the late 70's. By that time, individual women were organizing teams to compete in "bonspiels" (tournaments) at other clubs around the state, so the idea of adding a women's night on Mondays gained traction. Most of the women in the mixed league persuaded friends to come try the sport, and the new league was inaugurated with 6 teams, with the most experienced curlers from the Mixed league taking the Skip and Vice-skip positions. While many women curlers weren't particularly competitive, the league provided plenty of exercise and created lasting friendships with the socialization following all curling games. The club also sponsored a Women's Bonspiel, with many other state club rinks and local teams participating. However, a national recession a few years later resulted in a loss of one third of the club membership, and the Bonspiel disappeared, along with several teams.

The league continued on with a smaller membership, eventually switching from Monday night to Tuesdays to allow a new men's league to form, then welcoming another fledgling men's league to join them on the unused sheets of ice on Tuesday evenings. (The men were so impressed with the meals the women enjoyed after each game that they organized their own meal schedule. The practice eventually spread to all the men's leagues.) Women competed across the state not only in Bonspiels at other clubs, but in State Competitions, with the Dixie Roe team winning the State Olympic Playdowns in 1997 and qualifying for the National Olympic Qualifier in Hibbing, MN, and the Mary Welch rink placing 4th in the 2000 Senior Badger Women's competition. (Dixie was also on the 2002 Mixed team that won the Wisconsin State Playdowns and qualified for the Mixed Nationals in Seattle, WA.)

By the mid-2000's, however, the Women's League was down to ten members, so different teams were organized each week to vary the competition. In November, 2007, the Nora Fuller rink laid a rare 8-End (scoring all 8 possible points in one end of the game) during the evening's play, only the second 8-End in the Club's history. That winter the entire group participated in an interview by National Public Radio the week before the Wisconsin primaries about our views on the Democrat's political competition between Hillary Clinton and Barack Obama (an unprecedented event in the club's history!). By 2010, the women voted to put the league on hiatus.

Nora Fuller (Curler from 1974 to 2020)
Cell – 715-456-0581
fullernl@uwec.edu