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Andrew Stopera, of Briarcliff Manor, a member of the Ardsley Curling Club, won the gold at the U.S. Curling Junior Nationals.

Stopera reaches Junior Worlds after clutch shot

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ARDSLEY - The score was tied. It came down to one last throw.

Andrew Stopera had been to the U.S. Curling Junior Nationals four other times. There was always pressure. This, though, was different.

This time Stopera was the skip — the captain — of his team. The guy who threw 20 stones each game and otherwise called out instructions as the “strategic guy.”

“It’s good and bad times,” he said of the position. “If it’s going well, it’s good.”

The final throw was his.

Team Stopera (teams are named after their skips) was tied with Team Connolly. A bad throw would mean another second-place finish.

The 19-year-old from Briarcliff, a 2015 Hackley grad and current Northwestern University sophomore, had returned home from Junior Nationals with bronze in 2013 and ’16 and silver in 2014 and ’15, the last of those a particularly painful one-point loss

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break from training this week at the Ard-
ley Curling Club.

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playing at age 7 and where banners hang
that honor, among others, his dad, Bill,
who was on the 2012 U.S. men's national
championship team and on the 2016
men's national club championship team.

The younger Stopera's win, which oc-
curred Jan. 21 in Fargo, North Dakota,

will send him and his teammates to
Seoul, South Korea, for the 10-team Ju-
nior Worlds.

Stopera leaves Friday for two days of
practice in Seattle before the 10-day
competition, which begins Feb. 16.

The U.S. will vie for the World title
against South Korea, Canada, Scotland,
Switzerland, Sweden, Norway, Italy, Tur-
key and China.

This will be Stopera's second competi-
tion outside North America.

He competed as lead thrower and sec-
ond thrower on another U.S. team at last
week's World University Games in Ka-
zakhstan, where the U.S. finished sixth

and where, during downtime, he toured
the area with teammates, visiting its "un-
believable, huge, beautiful" mountains.

It shouldn't be a surprise one reason
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He's taking his 10-week college winter
quarter off to compete but the season
and demands extend well beyond that.

"It's kind of 12 months a year," he said,
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he's on ice six to seven days a week, Sep-
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ments so far with his main team since
September), and spends the summer in
the gym.

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to a team that had previously beaten

But there was no disappointment this time. His stone needed to stop closer to the button, the center of the scoring circle on the ice, than Team Connolly's had and it stopped right on the button.

Hugs and cheers followed that throw, which made Stopera and teammates Luc Violette and Ben Richardson, both from

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