

Ardsley club place for curling

Sport new to Olympics, but some members of tournament host club already hooked

By Alicia Wincze
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This weekend, Ardsley Country Club has invited people from Canada, Albany, Connecticut and New Jersey to come on down and hurl stones at houses.

And it's handing out trophies for it, too.

Ardsley Country Club is not encouraging the destruction of property. Instead, it has been playing host to one of the more intriguing and enigmatic sports in the country.

The 44th Empire State Bonspiel Curling Tournament came to town Friday and holds its final rounds today.

While curling may not be too familiar to people outside the sport, those who are involved have found themselves hooked since day one.

"A friend of a friend of ours belonged to a curling club and he invited me and my husband down to try it out," said Jean Murphy, president of Ardsley's Ardwick's Curling Club. "I was sick, so my husband went down, and when he came back, he said he had signed us up. He was hooked, and I got hooked soon afterwards.

"It's been the best thing that's happened to us. It's a great team sport and a real family sport to get involved in."

Curling may be an obscure sport, but it is not a new one, having been played since the 1800s. It consists of two teams of four players each who deliver round stones made of granite across a 46-yard-long area of ice to a target area or "house." One point is scored for each stone inside the house and closer to its center than the opponent's stone.

As the stones are delivered, the player's side may sweep the ice particles before the moving stone to help control the direction and speed of the large, 42-pound disk.

"It's a thinking man's sport and a gentleman's sport," Murphy said. "There's no crying or bellyaching if you lose and the people around are always very supportive. There's an actual strategy to the sport, and it's very easy for beginners to pick up, but it's very difficult to get very good at and to master."

Murphy, a Briarcliff resident, has been testing her team's ability to master the sport all weekend, along with other local squads. In the weekend tournament, which is exclusively for ladies, the Ardwick's club has entered three teams, one of which is headed by Irvington resident and event co-chairman Mary Jean Keenan.

"It's a very competitive sport but it's also very social," said



Staff photo/Michael DeChillo

Noriko Whyte (left) and Lily Baggett, members of the Ardwick's Curling Club's No. 2 team, sweep the ice around a moving stone thrown by one of their teammates during the Empire State Bonspiel at Ardsley Country Club yesterday. The ladies-only curling tournament began Friday and concludes today.

Keenan, who has been curling for 30 years. "It's a very friendly group and friendly atmosphere and there are a lot of dinners and social events held during the tournaments. When you're on the ice, though, it is very competitive."

This February, those who

don't know will get a chance to see just how competitive curling is. The games will be a fully contested sport at the Olympics in Nagano, Japan, this year. Those devoted to their sport hope being a part of the Winter Games will bring a little more exposure and a lot more know-

ledge of the game they have come to love.

"I think having curling in the Olympics will make it more visible to people," Keenan said. "Hopefully, from seeing it, more people will start to come around and it will drum up more interest for the sport."