

Aurora's Jordan Keon skips his team to the 2024 Ontario Curling Club Championship in Whitby

Aurora resident Jordan Keon's magic on the curling rink has continued this Fall and the skip has his eyes on the national prize.

Keon, along with teammates Ryan Werenich, Curtis Samoy, and Trevor Talbott, captured the Ontario Curling Club Provincial title on Sunday by defeating Team Dupuis 8-2 in the championship final at the Whitby Curling Club.

Team Keon, affiliated for decades with the Richmond Hill Curling Club, dashed the title hopes of Team Dupuis. The squad from Cornwall has been the second-place finisher at the Provincials for two years in a row.

Keon described this year's pathway to the provincial title and expressed a degree of satisfaction with his newly-configured team's high-caliber performance in Whitby.

"It was pretty cool. We brought in Ryan Werenich this year. I've known Ryan for over twenty years. We made some changes to last year's team. I was the skip for the first time and even with that big change and integrating a new teammate, we were still successful. We went through our qualifiers undefeated and lost only once in the championships. We're not getting any younger and we've been competing nationally since 2011 so to win again at this level was very satisfying."

Success at the provincial and national championships is old hat for Keon.

"Our team has qualified five times for the Canadian club championship. The first time we competed for a national title was thirteen years ago and we finished second. We won it in 2022 in Alberta at the West Edmonton Mall."

Keon reflected with great fondness on the uniqueness of competing in and winning a Canadian curling championship at the West Edmonton Mall.

"It was an amazing experience. The venue was incredible—we didn't leave the Mall for nine days. The hotel was there. There was a grocery store right there. They made the Mall's skating rink into a curling rink and the organizers brought in one of the best icemakers in Canada, so the ice quality was great, too."

In addition to the convenience of the Mall and the ideal ice conditions, Keon also remembers the big crowds that watched the event: "The curling rink was smack dab in the middle of the Mall and it was rammed due to Black Friday sales events that were running that weekend. There were so many people watching the championship."

Buoyed by great memories in Edmonton in 2022 and an excellent performance last weekend at the provincial championship in Whitby, Keon's team qualified for the 2024 Everest Canadian Curling Club National Championship being hosted by the Barrie Curling Club from November 18-24.

Keon, who has also distinguished himself as a Provincial Baseball Championship Head Coach with the Aurora-King Jays Major Mosquito squad in 2016, knows the pressures of Provincial and National Championships and believes his team has the right stuff to re-capture the Canadian title in Barrie.

"We hope so. We're attending to our logistics this week so we can be away from our families for a week. We looked at the field—many of the teams we competed against in Edmonton—and we know the teams from big curling provinces like Manitoba and Alberta will be very good. They are club curlers, too, but we have the experience and success at the national level working for us. It will also be nice to have our family and friends in the stands in Barrie as well as members from our curling club in a more traditional arena setting."

In addition to Keon's own successes on the rink and on the diamond, his quartet has much championship pedigree. Ryan Werenich is the son of legendary Canadian curler Ed "The Wrench" Werenich. Samoy and Talbott have invaluable experience in the crucible of national competition. Keon also noted a big factor in his team's favor is their long connection to the Richmond Hill Curling Club.

The lifelong resident of Aurora has been affiliated with the Richmond Hill Curling Club for over twenty years and discussed the attributes of the recreational facility located on Elgin Mills Road East: "I started curling there when I was in high school. It's a great community that has so many personal connections for me. Curtis and I have been curling together there for fifteen years. The club also has a very competitive league—one of the best in Ontario. It really provides the best of both worlds—a good balance of community recreation where we can have a beer afterwards with friends and family and high-level competition that prepares the club winner well for the provincial championships."

By Jim Stewart