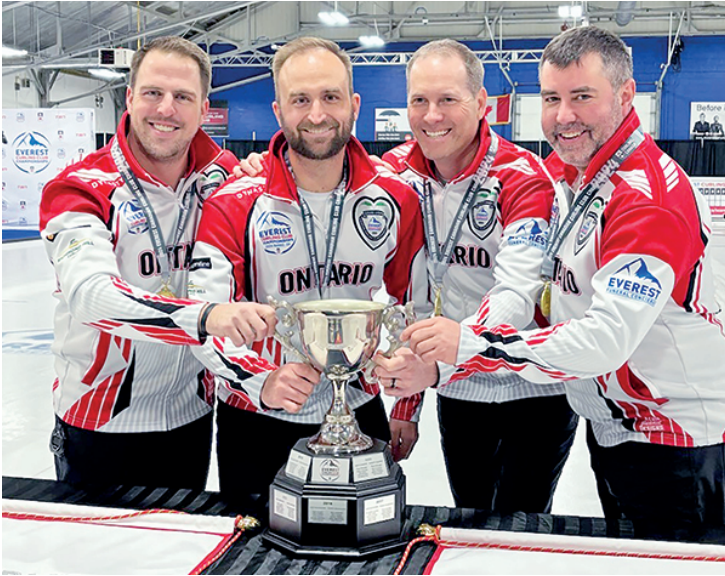


Team Keon sweeps away the competition to capture second Canadian Curling Club title in three years



Team Keon, representing Ontario and skipped by Aurora resident Jordan Keon, captured the 2024 Everest Canadian Curling Club championship at the Barrie Curling Club on Sunday afternoon.

It was the second national championship in three years for the Ontario champs who were representing both the province and the Richmond Hill Curling Club.

Keon, Ryan Werenich, Curtis Samoy, and Trevor Talbott captured this year's national title in convincing fashion by winning all ten of their matches during the seven-day marathon. The quartet simply ran the table in Barrie and their consistently strong starts culminated in a 7-3 win over Team Wasylik of Manitoba in the matinee final.

The skip explained the key to victory over Manitoba.

"We scored three points in our first end and got off to a quick start as we did throughout the tournament. We had a few hiccups along the way in the final, but we carried it through. The key was playing ahead for nine of our ten games, especially against Manitoba."

Team Keon advanced to the championship with a narrow 7-5 win over Northern Ontario in the Sunday morning semifinal. Keon acknowledged, "We played our weakest game versus Northern Ontario, but we felt in control despite not playing as well as we could."

The foursome's control of their opposition started with Monday night's emphatic 5-1 victory over Manitoba which set the tone for the tournament and foreshadowed the championship final. Keon noted the circular nature of the tournament and the familiarity his team had with their finals opponent.

"They were at the championship event we won in Edmonton on 2022. They're very good junior curlers. We matched up well with Manitoba in the opening game and we expected to see them again in the final. It was a nice and fitting way to win this championship."

Team Keon steamrolled both its competitors on Tuesday with a 9-5 win over Yukon and a 9-4 win over Alberta. On Wednesday and Thursday, the Ontario Curling Club champions defeated Newfoundland/Labrador 10-5 and New Brunswick 8-6, respectively.

Keon and his crew had their closest brush with defeat in Friday afternoon's tilt with PEI when they edged the islanders 4-3. The skip noted that, "PEI might have been regarded as one of the weakest teams by record in the tournament, but their guys played really well against us."

"It turned out to be a defensive, low-scoring game. It was the only game where the other team scored against us in the opening end. We just missed scoring three in the opening end and ended up trailing 1-0."

He added that one of the keys to his team's dominance in the Barrie bonspiel was the series of quick starts they generated.

"We outscored our competition 22-1 in the opening ends. Curling is much easier to play when you're ahead. There's less risk-taking."

The fearsome foursome followed up their matinee victory over plucky PEI with a 7-5 win over British Columbia on Friday evening to set the stage for a rematch with Alberta on Saturday morning. The sweepers from the Richmond Hill Curling Club left no doubt as to which team was surging to the semis when they trounced Alberta 11-5 to earn their showdown with Northern Ontario on Sunday morning.

During the seven-day endurance test at the Barrie Curling Club, Keon's team was able to recreate the magic of 2022 when it captured the Canadian championship at the West Edmonton Mall in scenic and dramatic fashion--surrounded by Black Friday shoppers and thousands of curling fans on the famous landmark's giant skating rink. The skip compared the victories: "The biggest difference personally was in Edmonton [where] we had a different skip and I was playing third. In Barrie, I was the skip throwing the last shot. Having a great curler like Ryan [Werenich] on our team this year made a big difference, too. From a team point of view, it's nice to be considered one of the top curling teams in Canada after winning the championship two of the last three years. It was really satisfying for us to win as we did. We went 10-0 in Edmonton, too."

By Jim Stewart