Revival of the M.F. Gress Cup

On January 25, 2025 an event was revived 46 years after the last time this competition was held. The Gress Cup! Back in the 60’s and 70’s an Agriculture Business (M.F. Gress and Sons) in the town of Viscount, Saskatchewan started to put on a one-day curling, cards and supper competition. This local business brought all the farmers and community men together in the area for a one day curling playdown. These communities included Viscount, Plunkett and Glynfield, these communities all had curling rinks back then but unfortunately, they are all closed down now. The day included curling, playing cards and eating good food provided by the curling club hosting the event, the hosting curling club was determined by who won the Gress Cup the year before.

Now, how the Gress Cup was revived, it started with some relatives of the original men who curled many years ago, as these men were sharing their memories of the stories they grew up listening to. These men were enjoying a beer after a curling game at the Garrison Curling Club in Calgary Alberta, and while reminiscing they posted some of their memories on Facebook. And as we all know Facebook has many connections with friends and family, and a friend from Plunkett was reading their posts and thought he would challenge the Viscount friends to a rematch for the Gress Cup. This all started out as some fun back and forth banter but soon turned into something bigger.

Well things snowballed from there, and the joy of Facebook is that these posts reached many people that also had connections to the original Gress Cup. Soon plans were being made on where to hold this event, and as all of the local curling rinks had closed down, a curling rink had to be found. Down the road south of Plunkett and Viscount was the Watrous Curling Rink, a beautiful facility to host an event, so the date was booked, January 25, 2025.

Next teams were formed, 1 from Plunkett and 1 from Viscount, unfortunately Glynfield couldn’t field a team this year, so it would be a playoff between Plunkett and Viscount for the title in 2025. Planning for the day started with snacks and the bar open from 1 – 7, thinking, if a handful of people came to watch this 1 game being played, they would be lucky. As time went by and more Facebook posts of the memories associated with the Gress Cup were being posted, the followers were growing bigger and bigger. All of a sudden, a quick count of 100 people said they were coming to witness the big game, so the Plunkett community people, with help from the other communities, decided to provide a meal as well just like the old days. Then it was decided to bring a bit of the past along with a Bagpiper to pipe the boys onto the ice, a memorabilia table with pictures and old curling rocks and straw brooms, a 50/50 draw as a fundraiser for the Viscount Daycare and a donation box being put out to cover the costs of the supper with any left-over proceeds going to the Plunkett Community Hall.

Now we knew around 100 people said they were coming but you really have no idea if those people are going to show up, but what happened was unbelievable, about 150 people showed up to witness an 8 end game between 2 curling teams (a few of these curlers hadn’t curled in 30 to 40 years), a bagpiper, teachers that coached and taught the curlers, relatives of Mr. Gress (the man that started it all), men that use to curl in the original Gress Cup and people that were just there to reunite with old friends and reminisce about old times. Some came from as far away as British Columbia, Alberta and all over Saskatchewan, it turned out to be a big reunion enjoyed by all with talk of doing this event next year again with teams from all three communities competing.

For me the day reminds me of growing up in a small town with a curling rink that was the center hub of the town, bringing everyone together. We started curling when we were 10 years old and every lunch hour we would run down the street to the curling rink to curl 4 ends before 1pm when school started again.

January 25, 2025 was magical and a huge success, truly one of my fondest stories about curling and how this sport brings people together. Plunkett won the game and got their name put on the original trophy, so I guess that means Plunkett is hosting again next year. Everyone who came visited, told stories, had snacks, supper and a few beverages, couldn’t have asked for a better day. It was just like the old times when the curling rink was the gathering place in all the small communities.

And the Facebook reminiscing continues and the planning for next year has begun!