



SASKATCHEWAN STORIES

Dash competing for Canada at the World Wheelchair Curling Championship

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Gil Dash felt a sense of relief when he was officially named to Team Canada for the upcoming World Wheelchair Curling Championship.

“It felt like a great accomplishment to be able to get a real maple leaf to wear on my back,” said Dash.

The event, which begins in Richmond, B.C. on Mar. 4 and runs until Mar. 12, will be the first time the Kipling, Sask. product will represent Canada on the world stage. His chance comes with the Canadian foursome of skip/lead Mark Ideson, fourth Jon Thurston, lead Ina Forrest and fifth Marie Wright, who is from Moose Jaw and regularly curls with Dash.

“That’s not bad for two out of five players on the national team from across Canada (to be from Saskatchewan),” said Dash. “The team that I am playing with has a lot of experience and they are good so I am feeling very good, pumped up and looking forward to it.”

After the gold medal game at worlds on Mar. 12, which Dash hopes his team is playing in, he and Wright will head to Moose Jaw for the 2023 Canadian Wheelchair Curling Championship, set for Mar. 19-25. Canadian athletes are selected for the World Championship, separately from the provincial and national playdowns in Wheelchair Curling.

At the national event in Moose Jaw, Dash will skip one of the two teams representing Saskatchewan, with Wright playing third on the same team. Darwin Bender and Moose Gibson will also be on the team, which will be coached by Lorraine Arguin, a long-time supporter of wheelchair curling in the province. Cheryl Pederson, Rod Pederson, Russell Whitsitt and Stewart McKeown will make up the province's second team.

"She's so dedicated," said Dash of Arguin. "She's a good curler and she's spent many hours with the wheelchair program helping us."

Along with Arguin, another advocate for wheelchair curling in the province has been Dr. Robert Capp, who worked at the Wascana Rehabilitation Centre in Regina when Dash was there in 2006 after an injury while ski jumping in Kimberley, B.C.

It was in 2009, with the influence from Dr. Capp and Arguin, that Dash took up wheelchair curling, which played a large role in his recovery.

"Curling helped me get out there, helped me physically and mentally," he said. "Through curling, it also helped me get to First Steps Wellness Centre which is a spinal cord gym. That physically and mentally helped me very much.

"Life after a life-changing incident was tough to deal with at the beginning. It gave me a good outlook to do things."



After playing some curling growing up in Kipling, Dash had to adjust to the new style of the game and his hard work paid off as he was named to the provincial team not long after taking up the sport. He has been part of gold-medal winning provincial teams in 2012, 2016 and 2018.

In 2016, he was scouted by members of the Canadian management team for the wheelchair curling program. He was put into the "National NextGen Program," which includes athletes who have the potential to represent Canada on the world stage in the next five to eight years.

"I got to go to a few camps and it's kind of went from there," said Dash.

Now, in 2023, he finally gets the chance to wear the maple leaf and represent his country after years of dedication to the sport.

“The achievements and accomplishments over those years, to now get named, is where that really good feeling of accomplishment sets in,” said Dash.

Along with the goal of winning a world championship and national championship this year, Dash has his sights set on an even bigger goal, a trip to the Italy Paralympics in 2026.

“That is a goal and it’s going to be a hard-fought thing to get there,” said Dash. “There’s going to be many other curlers that want to go as well.”

And as Dash works to achieve his goal, he encourages others to get participate in sport whenever possible, as he knows firsthand the benefits it can provide.

“There’s been ups-and-downs in the sport, there’s ups-and-downs in life,” said Dash. “Sport has helped me to be how I am today by knowing that you need to train hard, you need to work hard to get good at anything.

“It’s helped me look at life that was as well. To realize things aren’t the end. Just because one thing happens, it doesn’t mean there can’t be some good come next.”

Canada opens the World Championship tournament on Mar. 4 against China. The group will continue round robin play against the U.S. and Latvia on Mar. 5, Japan and Norway on Mar. 6, Italy and Scotland on Mar. 7, South Korea and Sweden on Mar. 8 and Denmark on Mar. 9.

The top six teams after the round robin advance to the playoffs Teams ranked first and second earn a semi-final spot. The quarterfinals are Mar. 10, with the semis going Mar. 11 and medal games on Mar. 12.

