



A TALE OF STONES

CURLING THROUGH THE AGES

On the occasion of the 30th World Curling Championships, held in Lausanne from 11th to 17th April and which saw a win for the Norwegian team, the Olympic Museum presented a display devoted to this sport, the history of which goes back several centuries.

From its rather unorthodox beginnings on the frozen lochs of Scotland to its potential entry into the great family of Olympic sports, the sport of curling has changed greatly. Even if the essence of the game has not altered, it has, however, evolved, due partly to the change in the playing area. In fact, it is the ice which has changed ; maintained impeccably today, it no longer holds any unpleasant surprises, making way for more tactical play and finesse on the part of the players, who have as a result quietened down considerably, and are now paragons of calmness and concentration. As for the curling stone, it has kept its original form and weight (40 pounds) and is still shaped and polished from a special granite "ailsite", found on the small island of Ailsa Craig in the Clyde estuary in Scotland. And it is also in Scotland, in Stirling, where the oldest of these stones is kept, one on which the date inscribed is 1511 ; a fact which shows, if proof were needed, the geographical origin of this sport.

A favourite pastime of the Scots who developed the first rules in 1831, this game has gained followers all over the world. Included in the programme of the first Winter Games in 1924, curling reappeared this year as a demonstration sport in Calgary, and judging from the results, a decision should soon be made by the IOC as to its possible inclusion in the official programme of the Olympic Games.

The main aim of this exhibition, on loan from the Swiss Sports Museum in Basle, was to show us the history of curling through rare and precious documents. Old watercolours and photographs, but especially an astonishing series of objects and particularly medals — belonging to the Scottish collector Sheriff David Smith who attended the preview of this exhibition — and numerous stones, showed in detail how the sport has evolved through the centuries and in different countries.

In his constant quest to bring together art and sport, Mr. Jean-François Pahud, Director of the Olympic Museum, had asked two artists, Swiss painter Sybil Kaufmann-Bezzola and the Canadian Pierre-Leon Rivard to produce two lithographs which added a contemporary touch to this historical presentation.

