

Parade

SUNDAY, JANUARY 30, 2022 | PARADE.COM



AMERICA'S CURLING HEROES

How a
humble
Midwestern team
made curling cool, charmed fans
on *The Voice* and became Olympic stars

PLUS
Alan Ritchson is the
new Jack Reacher, p. 2

WALTER SCOTT ASKS...

ALAN RITCHSON

The *Titans* star, 39, segues from TV's superhero series to the action crime drama *Reacher* (Feb. 4 on Amazon Prime Video). Ritchson plays the hard-hitting former military police investigator of the title who is arrested for a murder he didn't commit and takes on a small town to prove they have the wrong guy.

Jack Reacher seems to be a somewhat mythical figure. He does represent this larger-than-life, almost superhero quality in the wish fulfillment he provides us as a culture. This mysterious stranger sweeps in and takes care of our problems and brings justice where maybe the law couldn't or is too slow, so he does represent a mythical quality.

Did having a dad who was a U.S. Air Force chief master sergeant inspire your performance? Growing up and being around soldiers and enlisted military men, there's a formality to the way that they greet each other, the way that they stand, the salute, the handshake. There is a posture that my father carried that was an easy translation into Reacher's body language. It is something that I only see in military men and women. I wanted to honor that.

Tom Cruise got flak for being too short for the Reacher role in the 2012 movie. Do you think part of your casting was because you're a big guy? Reacher is a bit of a unicorn; he is so highly intelligent, but he also has this brutish physique. We were trying to get that right. I usually walk around a little lighter. I spent about eight months putting on a little size naturally and eating a lot of food.

Your introduction to TV was on American Idol. Music was my first love. Singing was something I felt decent at, and it felt like it just made sense to pursue that. I had never thought about acting. *American Idol* took me to L.A. for the first time, where I was exposed to acting. I asked someone if they could help me get auditions and they did, and I started working.

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UMA THURMAN'S SUSPICION

Thurman, 51, follows her role in the Netflix supernatural series *Chambers* with the eight-episode thriller *Suspicion* (Feb. 4 on Apple TV+). She plays Katherine Newman, a prominent American businesswoman whose 21-year-old son is kidnapped from a New York City hotel. When four British hotel guests become the main suspects and find themselves in an international maelstrom of publicity and pursuit, it becomes a cat-and-mouse game to find the guilty party. The series is based on the Israeli TV drama *False Flag*.

WHEN TOMMY MET PAM

It was a whirlwind courtship for *Baywatch* star Pamela Anderson and Mötley Crüe drummer Tommy Lee, who married in 1995 after knowing



each other for less than a week. But the real bombshell was the graphic sex tape they made on their honeymoon, which was stolen and leaked to the public. Now Lily James, 32 (*Mamma Mia! Here We Go Again* and Netflix's *Rebecca*), and Sebastian Stan, 39 (*The Falcon and the Winter Soldier* and *I, Tonya*), star as the infamous Hollywood couple in the limited series *Pam & Tommy* (Feb. 2 on Hulu). "I think audiences will be incredibly surprised by just how much Lily's been able to bring that character to life as a fully formed person, as opposed to an impersonation," says director Craig Gillespie.



HALLE BERRY IN SPACE

Berry blasts off in the sci-fi thriller *Moonfall* (in theaters Feb. 4) as Jo Fowler, an astronaut who travels into space to try to stop the moon from crashing into Earth. Here are five facts you may not know about the Cleveland native, 55, who won an Oscar for her role in *Monster's Ball*.



In 2002, she became the first—and still only—Black woman to win the Academy Award for Best Actress.

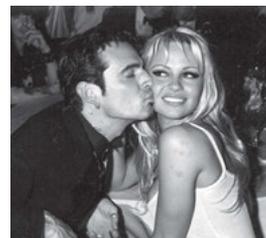
► She's a former Bond girl, playing Jinx in *Die Another Day* opposite Pierce Brosnan.

► Berry turned down the role of Annie in *Speed*, which went to Sandra Bullock.

She's the first actress to play comic book characters from two different comic franchises: Storm in Marvel's *X-Men* films and the title role in DC Comics' *Catwoman*.



► She made her directorial debut with the movie *Bruised* (now available on Netflix), also starring in the film about a mixed martial artist.



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Ask Marilyn

By Marilyn vos Savant

You wrote about handedness. But how do we define it? I write with my right hand, yet I do everything else with my left hand. Am I right-handed, left-handed or ambidextrous?

Matt Mason, Ames, Iowa

Handedness is defined by fine motor control, so you are weakly right-handed. (This is unusual for righties.) The more you do with your right hand, the more strongly you are right-handed. The same goes for left-handers. (But in contrast, they are seldom strongly left-handed.) Only people who can write equally easily and well with either hand (without having developed the practice as a fun skill) are truly ambidextrous. They are very rare, but about 1 percent of people claim ambidexterity.

Send questions to marilyn@parade.com



The CURLING CRAZE

It's not just Olympic teams hitting the ice with brooms in hand (see page 6). Curling has taken off across America, from the Granite Curling Club's junior program in Seattle and barbecue bonselpiels (another name for a curling tourney) in Kansas City, Mo., to Chaska, Minn., where deaf players take the ice. Here, we take a closer look at curling's popularity. —Sue Campbell

Southern Wisconsin curler Kristin Smith, a member of Team Lawless, which won a silver medal at the 2019 senior women's nationals, loves the camaraderie of league play at the local level. Her favorite tradition is "broomstacking," sitting down after a game with teammates and opponents, eating, drinking and socializing. "It's part of the polite nature of curling—it's good for kindness," she says.



Kristin Smith, 60, Susan Dukes, 56, Kathy Pielage, 59, and Tracy Lawless, 58

185
Curling clubs in USA

23,500

Curlers registered with the U.S. Curling Association

The Feb. 'Spike'

The rise in online traffic around "curling" during an Olympic year



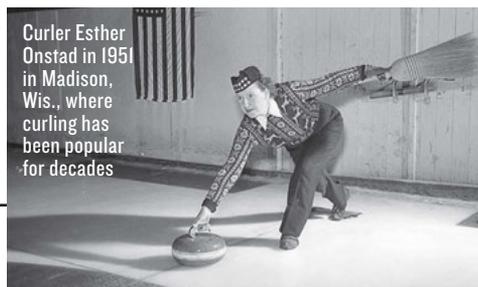
Miyo Konno, 61, Aryn Grause, 32, coach Doreen Deaver, 51, Berit Tomten, 37, and Ashley Duranleau, 33

Seattle's Miyo Konno first tried curling 20 years ago. Then USA Curling Hall of Famer Nancy Richard took Konno under her wing. "I learned so much that I figured I should impart some of that knowledge to the younger curlers at Granite Curling Club of Seattle." Konno's teammates are half her age, she says, and "everybody has to like their seat on the bus to keep it rolling," meaning each player must embrace her position for the good of the team.



In 2010, while binge-watching the Vancouver Games, Brooklyn-based 20-something actor Husani Blaze had an aha! moment: "I realized curling is a thinking sport! This is chess on ice," he says. In 2018, he tried curling for the first time and loved it. He eventually

joined the board of the Brooklyn Curling Center, which aims to build a team. He has big dreams: "I've never played on dedicated ice, and I've never played in a tournament," Blaze says. "But I'm aiming to compete in the 2030 Games."



Curler Esther Onstad in 1951 in Madison, Wis., where curling has been popular for decades

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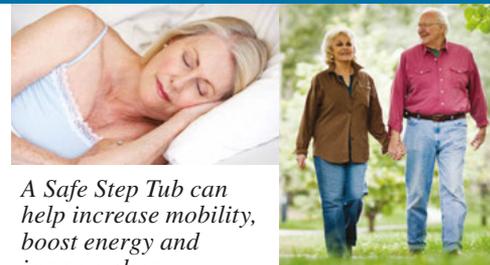
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AMERICA'S



TEAM

As the 2022 Winter Olympics heat up, the U.S. men's curling team—a talented Midwestern bunch of not-so-average Joes—continues to captivate a nation with an appearance on *The Voice* and new fans every day.

By Sue Campbell

Cover and opening photography by Marc Morrison

Sitting around a table in an ice arena in tiny Eveleth, Minn., the U.S. men's Olympic curling team eats sandwiches on hoagie buns and soup from Styrofoam cups. Chris Plys is wearing a flannel shirt, and mustachioed Matt Hamilton sports an orange beanie over his shoulder-length hair. Team captain John Shuster fetches extra mustard packets for his crew as conversation ping-pongs from the day's schedule to *The Great British Baking Show*.

You might not guess this unassuming group of 30-some-things—Shuster, 39, the skip; Plys, 34, vice skip; Hamilton, 32, second; John Landsteiner, 31, lead; and Colin Hufman, 37, alternate—are fierce competitors, let alone Olympians. Three of them were on the 2018 history-making team that brought home the country's first-ever Olympic gold in curling, the sport where players slide stones on ice toward a target area. (See "Curling 101" for an explanation of all the terms.)



The team gave *The Voice's* Blake Shelton a "stateside captain" shirt.

And as the 2022 games approach, these humble players are a little stunned to discover that they've become a bit like "rock" stars—fans are increasingly interested in their clothing and facial hair, Hamilton went to dinner with Brian Baumgartner (Kevin from *The Office*) and a new documentary about the team called *American Rock Stars* is streaming on Peacock.

A Humble Sport

In spite of the recent hoopla, low-key humility goes hand in hand with curling, which hits the limelight only every four years when the Olympics roll around. "Curling is like a giant frozen Slip 'N Slide—the kids' game," Shuster says. "That's cool... isn't it?"

True, the sport lacks the sparkle of figure skating, the reckless speed of alpine skiing and the derring-do of snowboarding. Curling's appeal is quieter, rooted in Midwestern decency. Clubs in the region are mostly owned by municipalities and aren't fancy, like some out East. Junior league memberships in Superior, Wis., where Shuster lives, cost just \$75 for the season.

CURLING 101



The stones are made from granite and weigh 38 to 44 pounds.



Players "sweep" the ice with curling brooms to warm it up to reduce friction and control the rock's distance and direction.



The clock tracks "thinking time" (38 minutes of strategy and discussion allowed per 10 "ends," or rounds).

Curlers are trained early on to score honestly, to value sportsmanship over winning and to not only shake hands with opponents after a game, but also sit down and share food, drink and conversation—a tradition called “broomstacking.” Teams decide strategy cooperatively. It’s polite.

This team embodies that ethos. All of them curled as kids, Landsteiner and Shuster starting around 8 years old, when they could barely control the 40-pound rocks of granite sliding down the ice. Hamilton used to “sweep his own rock,” meaning he’d throw the stone, grab a broom and steer the rock toward the target, essentially playing three positions by himself. He saw curling as a way to beat boredom during long winters in Wisconsin, where he grew up. One state away, Plys played hockey for a time—“That was the cool sport in Minnesota, the state of hockey,” he says. But his parents were hooked on curling, so he and his siblings had no choice but to participate.

Having family in the game is common. Hamilton’s sister, Becca Hamilton, is on the U.S. women’s Olympic team, and the two sometimes practice together. Shuster’s already starting his two young sons on the ice, plus they’re Dad’s fans. “They get really upset when we lose,” he says.

Indeed, the game can be frustrating as players try to control and place rocks on an unpredictable surface with strategy and precision. Listening to Team Shuster play, you can hear the occasional Minnesota expression “Uff da!”—which doesn’t have an exact translation but is akin to “Jeez Louise!” And when things get really bad, they say, “Cripes!” After their appearance on *The Voice* in December, a viewer even wondered on social media if this U.S. team was in fact Canadian because of their accents.

There haven’t, so far, been big sponsorship deals for the team, though Plys jokes—sort of—about being open to representing a major beer label. They travel on the cheap, sharing hotel rooms or Airbnbs, squeezing in and really getting to know each other, especially during COVID restrictions, when they formed a self-contained bubble.

They all value their tight bond and have tried to use their platform to boost diversity in their sport and to raise money for

JOHN LANDSTEINER The lead throws the first two of the total eight stones per end (like a baseball inning) and sweeps the rest of the end.

CHRIS PLYS The vice skip throws, sweeps and discusses strategy.

JOHN SHUSTER The skip (team captain) sets strategy and makes decisions about play. He’s the one you hear shouting “Hard!” “Sweep!” or “Whoa!” to the sweepers controlling the movement of the stone.



COLIN HUFMAN The alternate replaces an ill or injured player.

MATT HAMILTON The second throws and sweeps.

fighting hunger and funding cancer research. But they also simply appreciate their laid-back time together, having a beer as they discuss a game or watching episodes of *Seinfeld* to unwind.

“We’re a team and there’s nothing else to do,” Hamilton says of life traveling to tournaments. “They gotta be your boys!” Plus, he says, if there’s any tension among players, it leaks out on the ice during play. This team won’t let that happen.

In fact, Hamilton and Plys (who replaced Tyler George after the 2018 win) pass time playing the occasional friendly prank,

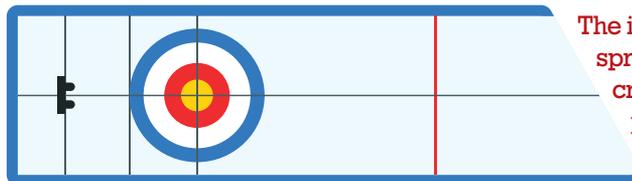
continued on page 8

MARC MORRISON

The rings that players target are called the house.



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most often on their coach, Sean Beighton. Once, they got into his room, turned all his shirts inside out, refolded them and put them away. They mismatched his socks and taped his soap dispenser so it wouldn't pump.

"It was nothing *bad*," Plys says.



The 2018 Olympic team included Tyler George (second from left) and Joe Polo (right).

"There were just, like, 14 things," Hamilton adds.

"I'm not sure he likes it that much," Plys says, thoughtfully.

"But he tolerates it," Landsteiner says, laughing, and admits that he himself hates to be pranked after a bad incident involving plastic wrap and a toilet seat.

"You make it clear you're always willing to go farther," Huffman says.

"So there's no retaliation," Plys adds.

Even their pranks are performed with strategy.

The Focus on Gold

The whole team's ability to stay focused is superhuman, but Plys, they agree, is the master. "I get comments: 'I wish you'd smile,'" he says. "I smile. I smile all the time after the games."

Landsteiner says it's their experience that helped them get to the Olympics. All of their competitors have practiced to

continued on page 10

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from page 8

the point that they can throw perfectly. "But to do that in a game, it's about controlling emotion, and there's no practice for that," he says. "The only way to do that is by having experienced it."

They're looking forward to reliving that experience at the 2022 Winter Olympics in Beijing (Feb. 4–20 on NBC, Peacock and NBC Sports). Shuster recalls the last win in Pyeongchang, the dream-turning-to-reality quality



Plys throws and Landsteiner and Hamilton prepare to sweep at the Olympic trials in November.

of it and how much, in that moment on the podium, the team leaned on each other and shared in it together.

One of the things he's most excited about this year is walking in the opening ceremonies with Huffman, who, unlike the rest of the team, is a first-time Olympian. "To represent your country—even if for some of us it's the second or third or fourth time—it never loses its luster. It's the greatest honor you can have as a sportsman," Shuster says. "Thinking about Colin experiencing that for the first time..." He shivers. "It raises the hair on my arms." And Colin Huffman's eyes—all the eyes around the table—show a little sheen.

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Finally . . . a better mobility solution than Scooters or Power Chairs.

The **Zoomer's** versatile design and 1-touch joystick operation brings mobility and independence to those who need it most.

If you have mobility issues, or know someone who does, then you've experienced the difficulties faced by millions of Americans. Simple tasks like getting from the bedroom to the kitchen can become a time-consuming and potentially dangerous ordeal. You may have tried to solve the problem with a power chair or a scooter but neither is ideal. Power chairs are bulky and look like a medical device. Scooters are either unstable or hard to maneuver. Now, there's a better alternative . . . the Zoomer.

My Zoomer is a delight to ride! It has increased my mobility in my apartment, my opportunities to enjoy the-out-of-doors, and enabled me to visit the homes of my children for longer periods of time. The various speeds of it match my need for safety, it is easy to turn, and I am most pleased with the freedom of movement it gives me.

Sincerely, A. Macon, Williamsburg, VA

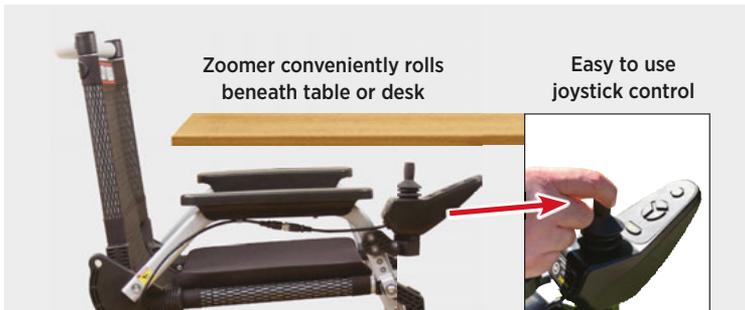
After just one trip around your home in the Zoomer, you'll marvel at how easy it is to navigate. It is designed to maneuver in tight spaces like doorways, between furniture, and around corners. It can go over thresholds and works great on any kind of floor or carpet. It's not bulky or cumbersome, so it can roll right up to a table or desk - there's no need to transfer to a chair. Its sturdy yet lightweight aluminum frame makes it durable and



comfortable. Its dual motors power it at up to 3.7 miles per hour and its automatic electromagnetic brakes stop on a dime.

The rechargeable battery powers it for up to 8 miles on a single charge. Plus, it's exclusive foldable design enables you to transport it easily and even store it in a closet or under a bed when it's not in use.

Why spend another day letting mobility issues hamper your lifestyle? Call now and find out how you can have your very own Zoomer.



Ready to get your own Zoomer? We'd love to talk to you.

Call now toll free and order one today! **1-888-379-1419**

Please mention code 116462 when ordering.



The Zoomer and Zinger Chairs are personal electric vehicles and are not medical devices nor wheelchairs. They are not intended for medical purposes to provide mobility to persons restricted to a sitting position. They are not covered by Medicare nor Medicaid.

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