

Keeping up with the Jones

The ups and downs of being a national curling champ

Jody Grant S&L Editor

Everyone has a dream they hope to realize. For Jennifer Jones, the waiting is over. This year, after 11 years of anticipation, hard work and disappointment, the outgoing U

change in the rules dashed their plans. Under the old rule, Team Canada always traveled to the Worlds the year after winning the Canadian title. This allowed for conflicts between travel and school for the athletes on the team. However, the policy has been changed and now the

fellow U of M student Dana Malanchuk and two U of W students, has been winning everything — women's competitions as well as junior.

"We are a junior team and we're really not expected to win (in women's competition)," Jones emphasizes. "We beat the

travelling and even a part-time job which she works on Wednesdays. Yet the athlete stresses that it hasn't been easy, especially since she endeavors to keep her GPA above the 3.5 mark. In fact, school is a major concern for Jones, both now and in the future. She plans to attend

back." Aside from the Canadian championships, Jones is looking forward to travelling to Europe in January. The team will stay in Switzerland for two weeks to compete.

International competition reminds Jones of the



Focusing in on the win: Jennifer Jones isn't your average university student

of M student led her Manitoba curling team to the national championships and won. Now, Jones holds the impressive title of 1994 Canadian Junior Women's curling champion, an honor which has changed her life.

"For all of us it was our lifetime dream to win Canadians," Jones expresses. "You win Canada and it's like this

Canadian winners will be attending the international competition the same year. Unfortunately, Jones and her teammates are stuck in the middle of the transition period and consequently will miss their chance to go. Jones says they aren't too disappointed.

"The (Canadian championships) are far superior

reigning world ladies champion in bonspiels and we're not expected to go and win these."

By winning bonspiels, Jones has won over \$15,000 in cash prizes. Yet the avid curler says it's not the money that keeps her in the sport.

"All the money in the world would never replace winning the Canadian championships...it was the most amazing moment of my life and I'll never forget it."

For Jones, the money that she wins doesn't stick around for long anyways because of her travel expenses and tuition. The curler has gone away every weekend since the beginning of October and says not only is travel expensive, but it makes keeping up with schoolwork difficult.

"I'm just flying in, in the morning, and then rushing to school," Jones says. "It's very hard to be awake and actually put effort into school."

By loading her five classes onto Tuesdays and Thursdays and attending curling practices those same nights, Jones has managed to organize her schedule to accommodate the

"There's a lot of pressure to put across a good image because you're representing your country."

law school in the next few years and knows curling will interfere.

"Once this year is done I don't know if I'll play as competitively," Jones stated when asked about her priorities. "I think I have to concentrate on school...or I'll be (at the U of M) for the next 20 years!"

This is Jones' last year as a junior and the last chance for her and her teammates to play together as a junior team. As Team Canada, the players are guaranteed an automatic berth into the semi-finals in this year's Canadian championships but Jones says it's hard to set goals when you've already won. In the past, the team has focused on simply doing better than the year before. This year, the situation is completely different. It's difficult to do better when you're already the best.

"Because we've achieved what we've wanted to achieve as a team we want to go to Canadians and we just want to play well," Jones expresses.

Will the team make it two consecutive years as the best junior curlers in Canada?

"Experience has taught us a lot...we've grown as a team," Jones explains. "Playing in all those competitions has given us a lot of confidence." The curler went on to say that her team will be at a distinct disadvantage if they are unable to participate in the round-robin at the beginning of the national competition. "It's hard to play cold," she stated.

Jones says she tries not to put too much personal pressure on herself because the pressure of being a member of Team Canada is enough.

"There's a lot of pressure to put across a good image because you're representing your country. It's more the pressure of being Team Canada and wearing a jacket with a maple leaf on the

opportunities that are opening up to her now that curling is recognized as an official Olympic sport. The prospect of becoming an Olympic athlete has crossed her mind and, although she admits it would be another dream come true, she isn't sure where or if it lies in her future. Right now, she feels school has to be tops on her list of priorities.

"To go to the Olympics would be amazing but I want to graduate before I'm 35," Jones maintains.

All her recent fame and glory, hasn't smothered Jones' appreciation for the simple things in life like rest and relaxation.

"Sometimes I just wish that I had a normal life and didn't have to worry about everything. There's just this pressure on your shoulders all the time. I know it's worthwhile but sometimes it would be nice to sleep a little bit more."

"All the money in the world would never replace winning the Canadian championships..."

whole country that you represent for a year...it's an amazing feeling."

As Canadian champs, Jones and her teammates were supposed to travel to the World Championships this year but a

than any world competition," Jones remarks. "After you win that, of course you want to go to Worlds so I'm disappointed to a point...but I've done what I've wanted to achieve."

And Jones continues to achieve. As part of Team Canada, the third-year psychology major is obliged to travel every weekend to take part in competitions all across Canada. Her team, which consists of

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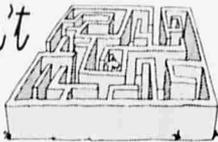
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