

PIN COLLECTING

It's about people, pins, curling

By LINDSEY WALLIS Special to The Tankard Times Editor
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For Roger Degagne of the Winnipeg Pin Collectors Club, the Tim Hortons Brier is about people, pins, and curling, in that order. He gets to see old friends and meet new people from all across the country. It's just like a family reunion. Degagne has been to 15 Briers — Calgary is his 10th in a row — and has collected more than 5,000 pins. "It's a real fun thing to do. Coming to the Brier is something my wife and I enjoy doing together. I've made friends from St. John's, Newfoundland, to Vancouver . . . all these guys are like extended family," says Degagne.



Most traders collect a variety of pins, ranging from the Olympics to sporting pins, as well as media and company pins, but Degagne sticks to Canadian curling pins exclusively. He was a curler for many years and got started trading pins in his thirties. He now has every Brier pin from 1942 to the present, with the exception of one silver pin from the 1971 Brier. Degagne also collects pins from the Scotties Tournament of Hearts and Canadian Olympic Trials. "Curling fans are really special people. Curling has always been a real social sport, you always took it from the ice to the bar," he says. Degagne says he doesn't get to see much curling at the Brier, but enjoys meeting the different people who also collect and trade. Degagne says

his pins are only worth their weight in scrap metal, unless someone is interested in buying, but added that he wouldn't part with his Brier collection for less than \$10,000. He estimates that he has spent more than \$50,000 over the years on travel expenses to the Brier and buying pins that he can't find elsewhere.

Fellow trader Mark Mogen was originally a coin collector but started trading pins at the 1988 Calgary Winter Olympics. "I guess I was attracted to pieces of metal," he says. He is determined to collect all the Brier's sponsor pins this week. "You do whatever you can to complete your sets," he says. "It takes a little creativity and a lot of determination to find all of the pins because many of them aren't given out to members of the public." Mogen's strategy is to start trading early because by the end of the week most of the pins have been claimed and there is little left to trade. "You have to strike while the iron is hot," he says.



Mogen displays the sponsor pins he has and pictures of the ones he is missing in the hopes that a passerby may have one he is missing and either donate or trade it. His secret in making good trades? "You have to show a little emotion (about a pin you want), but you can't show too much because then the price will go up," he says. Mark Mogen started collecting pins at the '88 Calgary Olympics

At every event, there are rare pins that are a challenge to find. This year, one of Mogen's conquests will hopefully be the "Tankard pin" that is only given to participants, dignitaries and the executive committee. The only way to get one is to become friendly with one of the select few who receive it. But that's why Mogen loves these events so much. "It's about the people you meet," he says.

Every collector has a holy grail pin that he or she has been trying to find for years. For Mogen, it is the 1988 Olympic women's curling team pin that was only given to members of the team. "I always hope I'll run across one," he says.

Degagne would love to get his hands on a 1927 Gold Heart Brier pin. That would be a feat, though, as there were only 12 made and an offer of \$50,000 for four of them was recently turned down.

"The longer you collect, the less you need and what you need is harder to get," Degagne said. "It's competitive but it's a fun thing to do...."