

Ray Agro's own Brett Winfield to compete at the Brier

This month we will take a short break from Agronomy to bring you a special treat. We're excited to share the story of our very own Brett Winfield, who will be competing in the Tim Horton's Brier held in Kingston, Ontario Feb 29th – March 8th. He will be playing for team Yukon and we're gearing up to cheer him on and hope you will join us.

Brett was born in Calgary in 1994 and moved to an acreage west of Stony Plain at the age of 7. He graduated from Memorial Composite Highschool and completed his Bachelor of Business Administration in accounting at NAIT in 2019. He started with Ray Agro in the summer of 2017 in the blending plant and is currently working in accounting and operations. Brett married his wife Adrienne in 2017, and they welcomed their son Linken in 2019.

Brett began curling at a young age at the local Westridge Curling Club and remembers watching televised curling events growing up. Although he is only 25, he has many accomplishments to his name with 4 provincial titles, 4 all star awards from juvenile, junior and college levels. He took home silver at the 2018 Alberta Boston Pizza Cup, a bronze at the 2019 Canadian College Curling Nationals and struck gold at the same competition in 2014.

I asked Brett what it means to him to be playing in the Brier. *"As a junior player I dreamed of playing the Brier, like any young curler does. But as my career transitioned into the college arena and as I got married and started thinking about a family, my dreams of playing in the Brier slowly faded. So, to now be on my way to the big show is quite surreal. I think I'm really just grateful to have this opportunity."*

At the same time, he grounds himself in the basics and keeps things in perspective. *"At the end of the day it's still the same game and same shots as practice, or even men's league."*

I asked Brett how an Alberta boy finds himself playing for team Yukon. Well it turns out, a couple of his former teammates from juniors and college who hail from the territory recruited him to be the fourth member of their team. The rules state that at least 3 players must have a home address within the province, with up to one out of province player allowed.

Brett joins a young group of men who also have multiple personal accomplishments in the sport. Thomas Scoffin (Skip), 25 years old, is a competitive and confident leader, rarely showing emotion on the ice. He skipped Canada to a bronze medal in the 2012 Youth Olympics and holds the record for most appearances at the Canadian Junior National Championships (7). Trygg Jensen (Third), 22 years old, is quiet, competitive and tremendously fit. He holds multiple medals at the Canadian College Curling Nationals and several Canadian Junior National Championship appearances. Joe Wallingham (Lead), 23 years old, brings comic relief to the team and helps keep the guys loose when the pressure mounts. He has also been to multiple Canadian Junior National Championships (many playing with Trygg). Brett who is 25 years old himself, welcomed the opportunity to play with this distinguished group of players, taking the role of Second and brings leadership to the group, particularly in the area of communication, ensuring everyone is on the same page when they're on the ice.

Joining this team would be the first step on his journey toward the Brier, winning the provincial championship in Whitehorse would be the second. And that they did. They swept the competition, going undefeated and were declared the outright Yukon men's champions, sliding them into their spot on the national sheet.

Over the next month, the team will be preparing both mentally and physically. However, preparing for the Brier presents some challenges given the geographical distance of the team members, so each member focuses on what they need to do individually to be their best. They will spend the next few weeks sharpening their skills independently.

The competition in Kingston will be fierce, with the best in the world competing. Jacobs, Epping, and Gushue have all qualified and are ranked 1, 2, and 3 in the world respectively. Not to mention reigning champion Kevin Koe (Alberta) who has won the Brier 4 times and is a 2-time World Champion. Brett holds a simple, straightforward mandate for the event, "to represent our team, our fans and the Yukon well. This obviously includes a good showing on the ice, but also to carry ourselves with humility and kindness off the ice".



Team Yukon L-R: Thomas Scoffin (Skip), Trygg Jensen (Third), Brett Winfield (Second), Joe Wallingham (Lead)

The foursome will very likely be the youngest team at the Brier, but with so much talent on this team, age is of little concern. All four have experience playing in high profile events. Plus, they will have an extensive cheering squad to encourage them over the week-long event. Brett's wife Adrienne and son Linken, along with his parents, grandparents, sister-in-law and her boyfriend will be in the crowd to offer their support. And of course, all of us at home will be tuning in to see our friend and colleague make his debut at the men's national championship. The first of what we expect to be many trips to the Brier. Brett isn't looking too far ahead, however. When I asked him, what might lie beyond this year's Brier, he responded "I'm lucky to have a super supportive and encouraging wife who tells me to keep playing competitively". But for now, he adds, "I'll take it one season at a time".



Brett and his biggest fan, son Linken

From all of us at Ray Agro

Good Luck Brett

and HURRY HARD!!