



Try a different winter sport!

When the temperature drops, people all over the world get involved in winter sports. The most famous is probably skiing, both as a participatory and spectator sport. A huge number of people go ice-skating, sledging and even – if this can be called a sport – making snowmen! Teenagers are particularly good at another sport, called snowball fighting...

However, there are many winter sports that are not so well-known. Among them is curling, a game where players slide ‘stones’ (actually an 18-kg polished rock) across a sheet of ice towards a target area. It originated in Scotland in the Middle Ages, has been an Olympic sport since 1998 and was accepted into the Paralympics in 2006. It requires a great deal of skill and it can be very fast and exciting. Both men and women play it.

If that does not appeal to you, how about trying skijoring? If you love both horses and snow, this could be a good combination. Just put on your skis, attach yourself to long reins and your horse will pull you over the snow in competition with other like-minded skijoring enthusiasts. If you haven’t got a horse, a very large dog is just as good!

We mentioned snowball fighting before. Well, it is not exclusive to the student population of school playgrounds in winter: in fact, it is taken very seriously in Japan, where this sport was invented (they call it Yukigassen), and in other countries as well. Two teams face each other across a wall of ice and eliminate opponents with a well-aimed snowball. Building that ice wall can take longer than the actual game, but it is a sport that everyone can enjoy – as long as winter provides enough snow. Have you ever heard of the Up’ards and the Down’ards? These are the names of the two teams that play a game called Ashbourne Shrovetide Football. It is not like ordinary football and, as the name of the teams suggests, it has something to do with going up and down. What makes it unusual is that the goalposts are three miles apart, one at each end of the town of Ashbourne in England. Hundreds of people take part and it is normally played in February or March, a time when Ashbourne, which is near the Peak District National Park, is very cold and snowy. Weather conditions, of course, just add to the chaos.

It seems that every country that has what we might call a hard winter has strange winter sports. If you love winter and have warm clothing, you may find some unusual, fun and safe sports near you that you didn’t know existed. Just look!



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