

The "Free Guard Zone" Rule 2019-20 will Remain as first 4 stones

(1) The free guard zone is the area between the hog line and the tee line, excluding the house. Interpretation: A stone which comes to rest biting or in front of the hog line after making contact with a stone in the free guard zone is considered to be in the free guard zone. A stone which comes to rest outside the house but biting the tee line is not considered to be in the free guard zone.

(2) Any stationary stone(s) belonging to the opposition that is located in the free guard zone shall not be moved to an out-of-play position by the delivering team prior to the delivery of the 5th stone of the end.

Penalty: A stone that is delivered prior to the 5th stone of the end that results in an opposition stone being moved from the free guard zone, either directly or indirectly, to an out-of-play position is an infraction which shall result in the delivered stone being removed from play and any other stone if moved being replaced as close as possible to its original position.

Interpretation: A delivered third or fourth stone of an end may hit an opposition stone(s) located in the free guard zone on to a stone(s) not in the free guard zone providing that any opposition stone originally located in the free guard zone remains in play. If this action results in an opposition free guard zone stone being moved to an out-of-play position, the penalty described above will apply. You may move your own stone from the free guard zone or remove your own stone from the free guard zone, providing you do not cause an opposition stone to be moved from the free guard zone to an out-of-play position. You may also raise your stone located in the free guard zone onto an opposition stone located in the house and remove it from play.

(3) After the delivery of each of the first three stones of an end it is the responsibility of the skip of the team who is about to deliver to ensure agreement with the opposing skip as to whether or not any of the stone(s) in play have come to rest in the free guard zone. If they cannot agree, they may make the determination by using the six foot measuring stick. If the position of another stone(s) hinders the use of the six foot measure they may reposition the stone(s), complete the measurement and replace the stone(s) to its original position.

(4) A visual agreement by the opposing skips as to whether or not one of the first three stones of the end was in the free guard zone, does not preclude a measurement occurring at the conclusion of the end involving the same stone(s).

Note: The rule states that; no rock can be removed by the opposition; this means that you can remove your own rock from the free guard zone.

Because rocks thrown into the free guard zone cannot be initially removed, teams are forced to play with one or more rocks in front of the house. This creates a certain degree of excitement with more aggressive shots being played.