

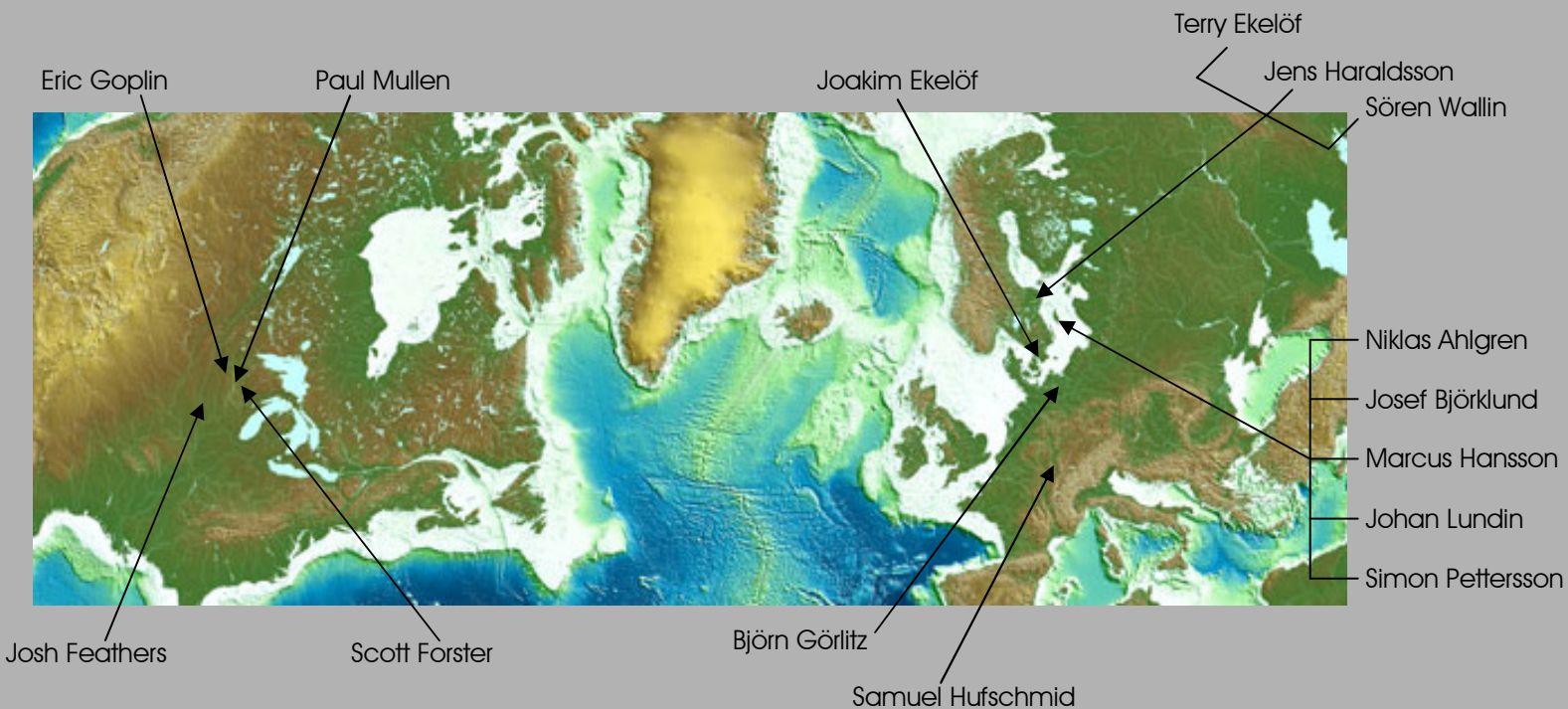
TM

Kubbnation

the magazine for the game of kubb

The Most Important Throw In Kubb **The Drill**

the interviews...in entirety



THE DRILL

THE MOST IMPORTANT THROW IN KUBB - THE INTERVIEWS...IN ENTIRETY

The following are all the responses from the 15 players interviewed for the article about drilling kubbs. We cannot thank them enough for taking their time to answer the questions. The hope is that this article will help players improve their kubb throwing skills and give a better insight to the game.

The article started with the idea of interviewing a handful of people and a two or three page article in *Kubbnation Magazine*. That handful doubled, then tripled, and the two to three pages ended up being seven pages. There is some great insight specific to the drill, their teams, other teams, and kubb in general. All the words are theirs. This includes parenthesis, quotes, etc. Enjoy. We know we did.

Niklas Ahlgren - Katthammarsvik, Sweden

How long have you been playing kubb?

In the middle of the 1990s almost everyone in Sweden (and especially on Gotland) had a kubb game in their garden. That is when I started playing. Our team first entered the World Championship in 1997. We were called "Team Spendrups" and we drank a lot of beer while playing. Some of us took it more serious than the others. The beer drinking came to an end when we played Team Ekeby one year and almost beat them. We were drunk and could hardly stand upright and Team Ekeby were super serious kubbnerds.... We started thinking "how successful could we be if we play sober".

We sobered up and changed the name to Elefantbajs 2000. We won bronze in 2004, silver in 2005 and beat Team Ekeby in the finals 2006.

How long have you been the inkastare for your team?

I saw the drilling technique performed by someone on the world championship. It was in the end of the 1990s and I went home and practiced the technique a lot. I think I took over the kubb tossing for my team in 1999 or 2000.

Do you have any special techniques or strategies (do you build a wall along the sideline and then try to keep sliding them against it, do you try to have lay so they are not sideways, etc)?

In the beginning of the drill technique you didn't have to have a strategy when tossing the kubbs. It was enough just to get them to stay as close to the midline as possible. All the other kubb tossers were spreading the kubbs all over the field. Eventually, the team that could drill the kubbs would win.

In time, more and more people started to learn the drill technique and I had to have a strategy to get the most out of drilling. I started to toss the first kubbs as close to the corner of the midline and sideline. That is because the rules of the World Championship say that you have to raise the kubbs inwards if they are on the line. In that way you get the kubbs really close together. If I have to throw more than 3 kubbs I will try to get the first ones in a good position in the corner and I will try to bounce the rest on to the first ones. The strategy varies slightly depending on the surface.

Do you think the top inkastare can get any better in the future?

I think there will be more and more people doing the drill technique really well. That will raise the overall standard of play at the World championships. If there is only one person in your team who knows the technique you could lose a game to a lesser opponent if that kubb tosser, at the moment, is playing badly.

The top kubb-tossers could get better at doing less mistakes and not doing the mistakes at a crucial moment. Last World Championships I made approximately 10 mistakes but we still made it to the Finals.

Fortshritt 99's (In my opinion the best team in the world even though they haven't won the WC yet) kubb-tossers made one mistake. That was against us in the quarterfinals and it immediately led to our victory.

For you, at what outcome, are you happy with your performance?

I am happy with my performance if I have placed the kubbs so that there is a realistic chance one stick could knock them all down. And, of course, I am never happy with a loss.

Josef Björklund - Hemse, Sweden

My name is Josef Björklund and I am 22 years old. I have my roots from Rone on Gotland. I am "kubbas" of Menage à trois.

How long have you been playing kubb?

I've played kubb as far as I can remember, but it was a few years back that I really started to practice to get the right spin.

What is your strategy when you throw the kubbs?

When I throw the kubbs they jump a little to the right towards the line and when I throw the second one it stops against the first one and so on. Eventually it starts to create a tight clump. I do a little different sometimes, it depends on how many kubbs that are in play.

What does it take to be a good inkastare?

I think it's important to practice on very many places, because it's harder and softer everywhere, then you learn how to adjust it with a couple of throws.

Joakim Ekelöf - Landskrona, Sweden

What is your strategy/technique when you throw the kubbs?
The technique may differ depending on how the cluster looks like and where the cluster is placed on the playfield. Sometimes you would like the kubb to roll from left to right and sometimes the opposite. If I would like the kubb to roll from left to right when it has landed I angle the back end of the kubb "the end closest to my body" to the right in relation to the front end of the kubb. If I would like the kubb to roll to the left I angle the back to the left in relation to the front end of the kubb. If I would like to place the kubb close behind the kubbs already lying on the field I dip the front end and angle the kubb towards the ground and throw the kubb looser than normally. It takes a lot of practice to be skillful in the drilling technique and I believe that many people are more skillful than me, so don't take my tips as general rules.

Does it change when you have a lot of kubbs (say 8 or more)?

It depends on the ability of the team, you should never throw more kubbs short than you are sure to strike with six sticks. The only exception for that rule is when you are facing a very good team, then you sometimes need to try to play over the ability of the team. The extra kubbs, which you think that the team won't be able to strike should be thrown to the base line in a cluster. This skill is very important to have when you play with teammates that suck on kubbs. Under normal conditions in Team Ekeby all kubbs are thrown short.

Terry Ekelöf - Stockholm, Sweden

Can you tell me more what you think about the drill?

The fun part of angling the kubbs is that I think that most inkastare are not aware of that you can angle the kubb different depending on how you want it to go. I think most inkastare just accept the fact that it bounces in a certain direction and adjust his or her inkast to that fact. However according to me the bounce drill throw is not the ultimate

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inkast, best would be to throw them without a bounce (I don't know if that is possible at all ground conditions - certainly not in Rone where it almost always is kind of dry and hard in the ground). In wet or damp-soft ground it is possible to throw them so they stick where they land.

Josh Feathers - Des Moines, Iowa

When/where were you introduced to the drill technique?

The first time I saw effective drilling was while watching a Worlds match on Youtube. I was studying for the 2010 U.S. Nationals at the time. I was just pausing, replaying, and re-watching the technique, thinking to myself "How is that happening?" The inkastare was able to drill them behind the woodpile and somehow bring them forward after the drill, backing the kubbs into the pile. I have yet to see anyone recreate that technique in the United States.

Do you have any special techniques or strategies (do you build a wall along the sideline and then try to keep sliding them against it, do you try to have lay so they are not sideways, etc)?

I was taught the technique by a stranger at the 2010 U.S. Nationals. I had problems perfecting the technique until the player gave me the following advice: "When drilling a kubb, don't land the shuttle, you want to crash the plane." For some reason, that really helped me understand the angle at release, which is more important than rotation. I still use this quote to teach new people and have found they show improvement immediately.

For most throws, I am aiming for the right corner. Why the corner? First, it is furthest from the king, but still is close for attack. Second, if the kubbs are on the line, you are forcing them all into a group, as a kubb on the line goes in bounds by rule. And lastly, if a kubb gets away from you, most likely it goes out of bounds, and you can get another rethrow at making the shot better. In my experience, a punishment kubb is only slightly worse than a kubb that gets away from you. Most teams will place the kubb on their baseline, in which case, you don't afford them a line if you don't topple it. A kubb that skips and jumps inadvertently will normally go to 6m, which, if you don't topple it, affords a 2m line for your opponent. I'll take a re-throw every time over a bad kubb throw.

If I am throwing 1 kubb (maybe 2 depending on the situation) I aim for the center-point between the king and the centerline pin. There is the slightest chance the kubb will cozy in right behind the pin, and act as a barrier to a shot. For 2 or more kubbs, however, I still suggest the corner, as the risk is worth the reward.

When throwing a large pile of blocks, my first kubb I will try to place it ON the centerline, close to the pin, so that it is forced in bounds. I then try to 'skip' my kubbs in right behind it. I feel that depth in the court kubbs is more important than having the kubbs close to the centerline. Building a fence of kubbs on the centerline affords no options for doubles (or more). My first kubb pretty much just acts as a marker for my other throws, and acts as a cushion to kubbs that would otherwise roll out of bounds.

Do you think the top-level inkastare can get any better in the future?

Kubb is a situational game, and the inkastare has a habit of getting into repetitions, even though new situations will arise where these habits may be the less-strategic move. What do you do when a penalty kubb is placed on the left of the pitch...do you still throw to the right corner? Do you change the way you throw when the ground is dry vs. soft? Do

you have different technique when throwing 2 kubbs vs. throwing 10 kubbs?

Personally, I think changing your strategy to accommodate various scenarios, tailoring your game to your partners talents, playing to your opponents weaknesses, and un-conditioning yourself out of routines will help an inkastare be ready for any situation. While changing strategies is important, there is still one thing that should remain the same: 90% of the game should be played on 10% of the field.

For you, at what outcome, are you happy with your performance?

I am happy when my opponent has no options for kubb placement. Taking away the only defense your opponent has against field kubbs is a significant advantage. Generally, your opponents choose which end to stand a kubb on, unless you have a nice group with kubbs on the line, and huddled up together in the corner. I will generally watch the opponent right the kubbs, not to make sure they are following the rules, but more to count the kubbs they were able to make a decision on. I have found that the lower the options I give an opponent, the higher amount of kubbs our team can take down.

Scott Forster - Eau Claire, Wisconsin

Why do you prefer your technique of legs shoulder width apart and tossing from the middle of your body?

This position/throw gives me the best balance...which as a result, gives me the most accuracy.

How did you figure out/find out about grouping the kubbs in the front right corner?

I watched a video of the world championship, and it seemed logical to work the corner when placing the kubbs. Placing the kubbs in the corner eliminates the error of having the kubb land sideways.

What is your technique in placing the kubbs? Do they move at all after they hit the ground?

Once the initial kubb(s) land in the corner, each additional kubb gets easier to throw because the thrown kubbs can be used as a wall. So essentially I try to drill the first kubb(s) with no movement. Then, the following kubbs would roll to the right after they hit the ground.

Eric Goplin - Minneapolis, Minnesota

Why did you switch to drilling?

I switched to drilling because it allows us to control the entire phase of our turn during a game, not just the part where we throw batons. Previous to drilling, throwing out field kubbs was like a controlled crash and seemed entirely out of our hands. The hope was kubbs wouldn't land too close to the king or roll to the baseline. It was like tossing a football and trying to control where it would roll to a stop. Drilling gives our team much greater control of where the kubbs land. By putting the field kubbs just on the other side of the center line and grouping them together, drilling creates a 4 meter shot with the hope of knocking over multiple kubbs on a single shot.

Where/When did you first see it?

I'd seen it before, but first saw drilling done well at the 2010 Nationals where Team Default clearly had it down cold and used it all the way to the finals.

When did you start using it?

After the 2010 Nationals I started playing around with drilling at BBQ's at our Minneapolis backyard training compound. I would set up four

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batons in a square and try to land a kubb inside from 4 meters away without disrupting the batons. Therefore my drilling technique has evolved as a higher arch shot of landing a kubb in a specific spot, as opposed to driving the kubb into the ground and having it roll up against another kubb like some of the top teams here in the Midwest and in Europe.

How important is it to have a good drill?

With so many teams getting really good at kubb, the fact of the matter is a good drill is the difference between legitimately contending to win a tournament or not. Currently - with very few exceptions - it separates the top tier teams in the midwest from the rest of the field. Personally, come spring when the snow finally thaws here in Minneapolis, I work on drilling almost exclusively for a few weeks before picking up the batons.

Björn Görlitz - Berlin, Germany

I think you actually know that you have to rotate the kubb, right? My aim is to get one corner of this kubb in the ground. Like a knife. But how do you get this? You need at least a stable fly. You have to rotate the kubb like a sparrow. The javelin guys do it too, because they want to have a stable fly.

So it's the same for us. The rotation comes not from the arm or the hand. For me its only one digit. The longest one. I put this finger under the kubb and then I move from bottom to top. It's hard to explain. You have to think something like that: Your finger is under something very heavy and it will clamp you, if you don't pull it out from bottom to top. Funny to explain it in English. I think you need a translator for this. I have five different types of drilling.

My starting drill should lie exactly on this point where the kubb touched the green. No roll to right or left. I try to hit the right line in the right corner. For this you have to change the rotation to very low. The kubb should fly stable, but with less rotation.

Then I normally use the right spin drill. The kubb jumps to the right and will stopped from the first one. So all kubb are really close together. For that you need a lot of spin and you have to change the direction. The kubb lays a little bit cross in the air and the first has to fly straight. But you need a lot of rotation otherwise the kubbs don't stop and roll too much. You can find a video on our Facebook site: facebook.com/Fortschritt99
Scroll down to the first video.

This is a main tutorial and if you could practice this, you should be better than 90% of the guys in Sweden. If you get this you can try a little bit more, because there are a lot of possibilities. Jump to left, jump on the bunch or roll few inches straight.
I'm not sure, if it helps but a try is better then nothing.

Now to your questions:

How long have you been playing kubb?

Fortschritt99 exists since 99 and in the first years we were a soccer team. In 2004 we started with kubb and in 2006 we went for our first time to Sweden. After this experience we changed our main sport to Kubb. 2008 (second place), 2009 (third place), 2010 (third place), 2011 European champion and out in Quarterfinal for 2011 WC.

How long have you been the inkastare for your team?

We have three good inkastare in our team, but in the last four years I was the inkastare for our team. Only for the left to right drill I asked sometimes one of my team member Christian Thum.

Do you have any special techniques or strategies (do you build a wall along the sideline and then try to keep sliding them against it, do you try to have lay so they are not sideways, etc)?

See the first sentences.

When are you satisfied with your turn?

Best case is, if the person who turns up the kubbs can't do anything. The kubbs are on the lines or really close to them and they can't choose the alignment direction.

It's also perfect, if you have only one kubb in first position and the rest is behind. Then you can use the stick and the kubb for hitting on the same throw

Do you think the top inkastare can get any better in the future?

For sure there will be an improvement. It depends on the underground. In Sweden it's really easy to make a good drill, because the rough is really bouncy. But you have to do it on all grounds.

We really believe that the size of the kubb field has to change to 10 or 12 meters in the length. And maybe you play with 12 kubbs in total. It's much harder to drill this kubb and you have a lot of situation where you can go a little bit closer to the king, because it's sure that you miss some attempts. We have played this version for the last two years and it's much more exciting.

Do you practice your throw a lot?

Drilling is like car driving. If you have this moment, where you say: "Ah now I understand it.", then you can make a break for 6 months and you can do it after few minutes again.

Anything else?

Progress in Europe:

Since the last year this game has really good standing in Switzerland. Its really popular everywhere and they understand it as a sport not as a game for the family.

They train a lot, and in the winter they play Kubb too. They are really good and I would say that 2 of the 10 best players in the world come from Switzerland. It was not big surprise for us, that they got the third place this year at the WC. And they have a nice homepage with a world ranking and really good ideas for the future. Find more information here: kubbmaister.ch

We from Fortschritt99 decided that we will create the first kubb organization in Germany. At the moment we are trying to build our own homepage and our own events. But this is future.

Marcus Hansson - Visby, Sweden

What was the team competition like? What did you have to do?

It wasn't really a team competition when we decided that I should be the one to toss the kubbs. As a tradition the team always gets together for a barbeque and training the night before Kubb VM starts. We all live in different parts of the country so we don't have a lot of training opportunities with the complete team.

And because all members of Team Ekeby are about as good at tossing the kubbs, we choose the one which is in the best shape for the day. And this time it was me!

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When you throw out the kubbs, what is your strategy/technique (do you like to have them hit and move right, etc.)? In video I took, it really looks like you focus on keeping the same angle of your hand and wrist each time as well.

My basic strategy is to get the kubb to move from left to right after it hits the ground. To make that happen I need to spin the kubb and throw it with the right angle. I turn my hand and wrist in the same angle as I want it to land with.

Is there a feeling of pride to be the inkastare for the team? When you had your barbeque, were you hoping to be the inkastare on Saturday?

I had no expectations at all to be the inkastare this year actually. Never thought that I would hold for the pressure, especially in the Finals. But it worked out pretty good! I feel very proud to be the inkastare in Team Ekeby, mostly because you play a very important role for the team.

Hopefully I will keep my position as inkastare until next years Kubb VM. We will know after next years barbeque!

Do you like to build a wall of kubbs along the sideline and then bounce the kubbs (from left to right) against that wall to group them as close as possible as you can?

Yes, I like to build a wall or a pile of kubbs close to the sideline so you prevent the kubbs from going out of bounds. I can even bounce the kubbs from right to left if I want. That is very useful if I get a gap between the kubbs and the sideline.

Jens Haraldsson - Stockholm, Sweden

One thing I really noticed at the VM is all the different forms of people when they throw. I noticed that with yours, you are trying to put a ton of spin on the kubb and that you bring your arm up high as well. I would like to compare your throw with a player here who puts his legs shoulder width apart and puts his arm in the middle of the body and raises his arm that way to drill. Could you talk about your strategy for tossing kubbs and what you are trying to do when you throw and after the kubb hits the ground?

Here is what comes in to mind when thinking of my drill technique:

Ever since I saw the drill technique on VM for the first time I have tried to copy it, or rather find my own way to do it right. I have tried many different grips, spin speeds, arm movements, tossing angles and so on. To be honest, I haven't found the perfect way yet. I still make small changes in many aspects. I also think you have to adjust with respect to the condition of the pitch you're playing at, or maybe I haven't found the universal technique that is not dependent on conditions.

First of all, I hold the kubb as far down on one end as possible without losing stability of the grip. This is because I want to have a good throwing angle of the kubb already in my hand, in other words: to shift the center of gravity to that end. Then I place my fingers spread out on three of the edges; thumb and index fingers for stability on one edge each, long and ring finger on a third edge for spin.

The throw is more like a push, since I don't want to affect the movement of the kubb with my wrist more than necessary. The wrist will twist a bit when the spin fingers rotate the kubb, but the wrist should be as steady as possible. Sometimes I tilt the wrist, inwards or outwards, and keep it in that position throughout the whole throw (no sudden tilt upon the release of the kubb or something). In technical terms the center of gravity of the kubb is shifted to the forward right or forward left (in combination with the first shift caused by my grip position). In this way I try to direct the roll of the kubb after it hits the ground, to the right or to the left. This could be a way to pile up from either side or to have the kubb roll in to an empty spot in the middle of

a pile that is hard to hit by throwing straight in to it.

On hard pitches, for example dry and bouncy ones, it's important to minimize the movement energy of the kubb, by not throwing too high or hard. This will minimize the risk of uncontrolled bouncing of the kubb after it hits the ground. I usually spin the kubb fast which increase the movement energy of the kubb, this is a risk, but with a clean spin (no wobbling) this should not cause the kubb to bounce off. I usually spin it fast because I feel that I have more control of the kubb in that way.

When I swing my arm, I usually continue the movement after the kubb is released from my hand, and raise the arm high. This is also for stability reasons, to have a clean pendulum movement. Maybe there's an analogy here with golf; you want to hit through the ball, rather than hit on it.

When you decide where you want to place the kubb on the pitch, it's good to think of the depth perspective rather than to have every kubb as close as possible, this will increase the possibility to get doubles or multiples later when you throw the sticks.

Samuel Hufschmid - Basel, Switzerland

I have played kubb since 2005. I was in travelling in Sweden and picked it up there, but didn't have a set after I returned back to Switzerland. Then I started in 2007 to play, and since 2009 I participate in tournaments.

Since I have played kubb, I'm the inkastare. But first, I had a horrible technique. Then I analyzed some players and changed my technique to the way I do it now.

What is your strategy?

The strategy is simple: First, I try to build a wall just along the sideline. Then, I try to make the kubbs jump to that wall - by trying to make them rather jump too far (out, so I can throw again) than not far enough (they would stay not close enough to the others). For the second turn, I mostly have already a big wall - so it's pretty safe that they're not jumping outside.

Can the elite get better?

Better: of course. Much better! For me it's clear, that soon, we will have to change: only one try per kubb, not two tries. Otherwise throwing the kubbs is getting too easy and too important for the game.

Anything else you would like to share?

One more thing: In Switzerland, we play with totally different kubbs. They are much smaller and they have sharper edges. So I was very surprised about my performance in Sweden. But the biggest compliment goes to my Team SMP Basel United. Everyone did so well and I hope we go again this year. We still have to beat Team Ekeby!

Johan Lundin - Visby, Sweden

I think that when I have my good day I am top 3 inkastare in the world. But overall I'm maybe only top 10-15. I'm not going to rank them in any order but here is a top five list of inkastare that I think is top 5 all the time. Josef Björklund plays for Menage a Trois, Tobias Eneqvist plays for SMISK!, Tom Thomasson plays for Berras Sorkar, David Nilsson plays for Gloria Victis, and Joel Andreasson plays for Auh-laug-eth. A rookie that I think can become a very big player and inkastare is Marcel Genal plays for Tallult89, the team that was so close to beat Team Ekeby

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that it was sad to see Ekeby get the win. He is a new player, only played for 2 years and is a good friend of mine, I played with him on the Swedish Championship.

I haven't tried to make the kubbs roll both ways but I know that the inkastare in Elefantbajs 2000 is a master of this. Its pretty cool to be able to do that. But I haven't felt that I need to do that, so I haven't test to do it at all.

For me that can change my techniques on how I throw its up to the field, some fields are good for making a wall and others you have to get the "bounce back" for best result.

Can the elite get better?

All players can always get better, no one is perfect. And players always come up with new techniques or the rules change so you have to readjust your play.

What does it take to be a good inkastare?

I think to be a good inkastare you must learn to throw pretty even all the time, and now how to clean up the mess when a kubb doesn't land where you planned. I was not as even as I wanted to be this year but at the same time I didn't train that much either. A quality I have that I think is good to have is that I'm pretty good at knocking kubbs that are not over line so both that kubb and the kubb I'm knocking with places good and over the line. But its like everything else...train, train, and more training.

Paul Mullen - River Falls, Wisconsin

Talk to me about kubb placement?

No matter who I am playing with or if I am the inkastare or not, we really look at each specific turn and ask ourselves, what is our best chance to get as many kubbs down in any given turn. Things change depending on who is in control of the game, pitch conditions, and where you are throwing your kastpinnar from.

Simon Pettersson - Hemse, Sweden

What is the most important trait for an inkastare?

The most important trait for an inkastare is to train a lot, be focused, and have the right grip around the kubb.

How long have you been playing kubb?

I've been playing kubb since I was around 6 years old, so about 12 years.

What is your technique?

My technique is that I throw them as close to the middle left or right side pin, because then you can often only raise them in one direction, hence they stay in one group and are easy to kill.

When are you satisfied with your turn?

I'm actually only satisfied when the other team barely can put them up because they're so close to each other, and when I get applause.

How much do you practice?

When I was younger I trained several hours everyday, but lately I haven't had the time to train as much as I would like.

Anything else?

My last comment is that if you train enough, anyone can become good at throwing kubbs!

Sören Wallin - Stockholm, Sweden

His 2011 top four includes:

Niklas Ahlgren "Wizzard of Drill 2011"

Björn Görlitz "Master of the Margins"

Josef Björklund

Simon Pettersson

Simon and Josef are the first examples of young talented players that have done nothing but use drilling while growing up. There are several great guys in a group just beneath those mentioned above. Anybody can do one or two rounds of top results and gather a pile of woods. These guys do it all the time, year after year. Very impressive!

What does it take to be elite?

To be an elite inkastare, it takes Gladwell's 10,000 hours of practice. It's craftsmanship, and as such, it only comes with practice and experience from competing at high(est) level. No short cuts, sorry!

The better inkastare, the more versatile, the better you handle any situation at hand, any bumpy or slippery surface. I think improvement lies in that direction, and I think Niklas A. and Björn G. show the way. As always, there's no limit but time about what man can do. These guys will keep getting better, and all youngsters who want to compete with them will push both themselves and these guys to reach new levels.

Being inkastare develops your game in the same way it develops you being the point guard in basketball or quarterback in football. It makes you "think the game", develop "court sense" and thus helps you to improve your tech, both at throws and when drilling.

A Björn Görlitz grouping from the 2010 World Championship (Photos: Sören Wallin)

