



Photo courtesy Robbins Flooring



REC FACILITY FLOORING TO ACCOMMODATE ALL ACTIVITIES

by Jamie Darpel

Enticing students to take advantage of all the activities offered at the university rec center to increase usage is an ongoing challenge for rec center directors. Not only do the activities and sports have to appeal to students and staff, the facility also has to be designed to accommodate all of those activities as well. Facility directors and administrators need to consider the crucial role flooring plays in making accommodations appealing to a variety of students.

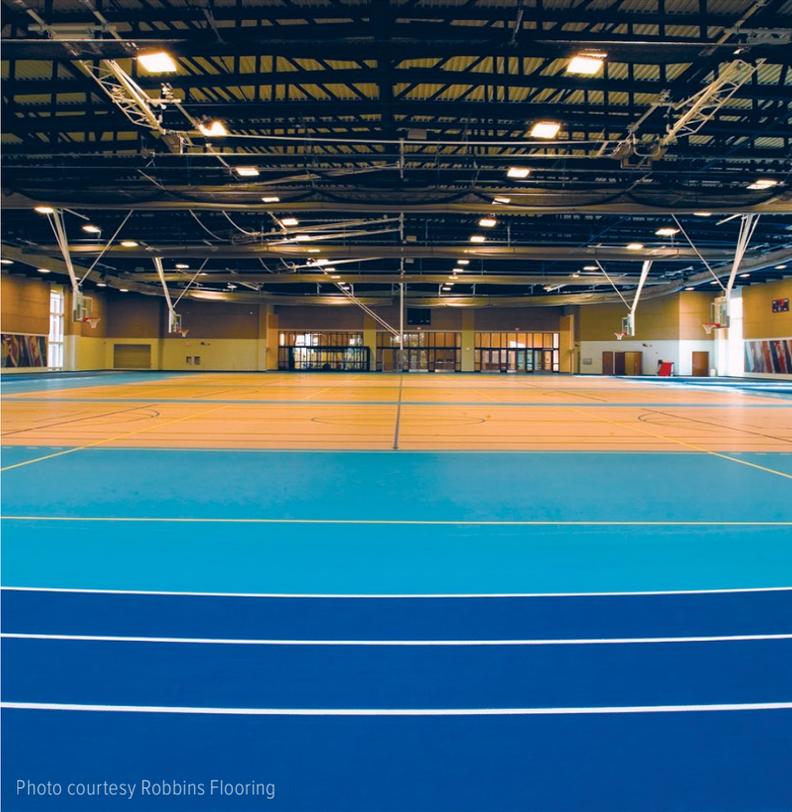


Photo courtesy Robbins Flooring

Hundreds of Thousands of Steps

In a true multipurpose rec center, choosing the right flooring can have a powerful effect on the overall success of the facility. With the rec center serving the university in a multitude of ways—and sometimes the community also—equipment, students, and shoes of every kind will come into daily contact with the floor.

Hundreds of thousands of steps will be taken on an annual basis. And with that much usage you need to make sure your floor can hold up under the stress to prevent unnecessary maintenance and repairs.

When Macalester College in St. Paul, Minnesota, opened their new state-of-the-art athletic and wellness complex, The Leonard Center, in 2008, the 53,000-square-foot facility not only provided new space for student fitness and intramural sports, but it also qualified the small NCAA Division III liberal arts college to host regional and national athletic competitions. With this opportunity, choosing the floor surfaces that accommodated all activities and competitions took an even higher precedence.

“When you try to do multiple sports on one surface, you sometimes run into issues,” said Assistant Director of Athletics Facilities Rob Osterman. The Leonard Center hosts numerous Macalester Scots athletes and intramurals whose sports include track, volleyball, basketball, tennis, baseball, and softball.

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Finding a True Spike-Proof Product

Due to their need for versatility and a highly durable surface, Macalester looked at several synthetic floor options which tend to be a better fit for multipurpose facilities. They knew they would need multiple surfaces with a seamless transition to one another to accommodate the variety of activities. And since the facility would now host track and field competitions, damage from cleats was a major concern for the Macalester athletic department.

During their research of several products, they discovered a true spike-proof product that does not allow the floor to be penetrated by cleat spikes or other heavy equipment. Macalester contacted their local dealer to learn more about their options. They ultimately chose the spike-proof Pulastic SP 160 for their interior multipurpose space fused with Durathon Elite Track for their track surface.

The fusion floor also allows runners to seamlessly segue into other sports without having to stop the action and remove their spikes. "The Durathon track has been extremely helpful to our track team in that it's a fast surface; they like to use it in practice and for their competitions," observed a Macalester track coach. "You can high jump off it, you can pole vault off it, and the track and field team is very hard on surfaces. When you have surfaces that don't allow spikes, it becomes dangerous because they come in hard, they slip, the injury rates go way up."



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Working with a Local Dealer

In addition to the synthetic surfaces, dealer Anderson Ladd also installed flooring from the same manufacturer at Macalester for the racquetball courts and dance studios.

When making a selection of sports flooring, it is also important to choose a local experienced dealer that exclusively works with the manufacturer and specializes in the installation and finishing of sports flooring surfaces.

Currently, most users are doing the majority of their own research online before they contact the dealer or manufacturer (70% of users to be exact). With so many options to choose from this can be overwhelming and even frustrating. Facility directors or other decision makers must know the difference in flooring, even when every sports floor manufacturer says the same thing.

And, most decidedly, there is a difference. All sports flooring is not created equal, so it is even more important to work with a local knowledgeable dealer that can answer all questions and even allow coaches, athletic directors, or facility directors to “test drive” products in local gymnasiums.

Test Drive New Products

While ordering from the cheapest online alternative may appear to be the smartest way to purchase commodity products, making a decision based solely on limited research and the lowest price could result in a purchasing decision that ultimately costs the college or university far more in the long run.



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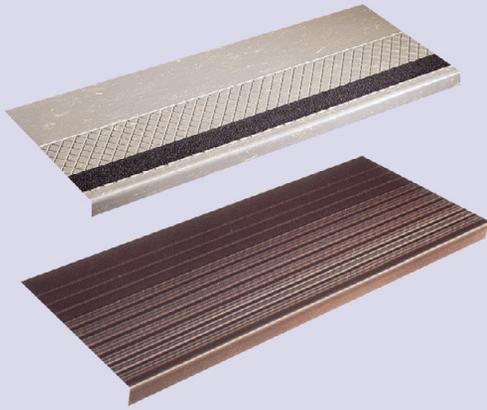
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