

HURDLING ATHLETIC FIELDS

Think adding athletic fields to a school construction project is an afterthought once the buildings are done? Think again. The school buildings, with many classrooms and specialized areas, are often thought of first and foremost as the most difficult part of a school construction project. However, in terms of completing the project on time and on budget, the athletic fields can become a major hurdle if careful attention is not paid to them throughout the contract and construction processes. Incorrectly or poorly constructed fields can lead to extensive rework, not to mention injury to athletes who play on them.

Most people think of the sports facilities of a school as a grass field that simply has to be level. But much more is involved in the process of constructing a playing field. Let's look at some planning considerations.

Complexity

For some school districts, a simple grass field with bleachers may suffice. For a large urban high school, a stadium complex with all the bells and whistles may be required. Most fields must be multi-purpose to accommodate sports like football, soccer, track and lacrosse, as well as band events. Each of these events has different field dimensions and specifications. Other events may require areas of concrete where slopes, corners and edges must be carefully examined to prevent injury.

Playing Surface

Should the field surface be grass or synthetic materials? If grass, what kind of grass is best for sports fields? Density, ability to hold a uniform color, ability to recover from damage, and

water requirements are key issues. Drainage of the surface and subsurface must be accomplished throughout the entire construction process. If grass is going to be used as the surface, some grasses can be installed as seeds, sprigs, or sod. While there are advantages and disadvantages to each, most often it's the construction schedule that determines the method of planting.

According to Dennis Chapman, of Chapman Services, "Constant research is being done on new cultivars [species] of lawn and sports field grasses." Recently, Chapman Services installed Tiffsport Hybrid Bermuda on

planting window occur? Consideration of the planting window during the design phase of building construction will help to resolve timing issues and allow full use by students of the facilities when needed most. When the schedule is limited, solid sodding is the quickest way to establish turf. If there's enough time, sprigging and seeding may be the way to go.

Many of the new turf varieties are developed so they do not produce a viable seed. Popular varieties, such as Tiffsport and Tiff 419 cannot be seeded and can only be established by sprigging and sodding.

Sports Fans and Emergency Access

Access to the field may need to be regulated when tickets to events are required. Additionally, emergency vehicles may need to access the field. This means fencing and gating will be essential. And let's not forget the viewing and line of sight issues of the sports fans, such as physical obstructions or impairment from looking directly into the sun. When designing a sports facility, these are aspects sometimes overlooked, but are part of what constitutes a top-notch playing field.

In its mission to deliver owners a quality product of the highest standard, American Constructors continues to look for ways to improve the construction of athletic facilities. Last year, the football field at Running Brushy Middle School, built by American Constructors, was called the best football field in Central Texas by turf grass specialist Dr. James McAfee of Texas A&M University.

American is set to begin construction of an 11,000-seat regional athletic stadium project for the Round Rock Independent School District. Playing surface, cost, maintenance, and lines of sight were all key points of consideration during the design of this facility.

Poorly designed or constructed athletic facilities can detract from the student experience, be costly to repair and even dangerous to use. Getting it right requires good design and experienced craftsman. A well-thought-out, quality athletic facility is a source of enjoyment and pride for the entire community.



two fields they constructed for American Constructors. "We are involved in research and are constantly monitoring research data on new grasses. In my opinion, right now Tiffsport is the best sports field grass on the market."

Timing

How soon will the field be needed for use and when does the optimum



The ENR 400

It's official. American Constructors has been recognized as one of the industry's leading construction firms in America!

In the May 20, 2002 edition of *Engineering News-Record*, American Constructors was ranked #390 out of 400 top contractors in the United States. That's no small feat when total construction revenues were \$201 billion.

VALUE ONE: The Right Subcontractor

Good subcontractors are the lifeblood of a successful construction project. The construction environment has never been more competitive, requiring project delivery to be faster, more efficient and, as always, under budget. Because subcontractors can literally make or break a project, it's vital that the Project Team have subcontractors who will contribute to the success of the project. As the general contractor, part of our job is to attract the best pricing from top quality subcontractors.

Historically, subcontractors have been selected using one criterion: price. The lowest bidder got the job. As owners get closer to the selection process, this is changing. Make no mistake, price is a factor in the hiring of subcontractors, but a price is only as good as the reputation and expertise that stands behind it. Some of the criteria evaluated when selecting subcontractors includes:

- ✘ work history and reputation;
- ✘ quality workmanship;
- ✘ the ability to provide adequate manpower and meet defined schedules;
- ✘ safety record; and
- ✘ contract price.

All of these factors affect the overall cost and completion of the project. But one stands out as truly essential: the subcontractor's ability to provide adequate manpower and meet defined schedules. A subcontractor over-committed or inexperienced with fast-track schedules ultimately delays other subs, which in turn increases the cost and, potentially, the completion time of the project for the entire Project Team. Inefficient manpower also affects the quality of the work, especially when poor workmanship results in remedial work, increased maintenance and warranty callbacks.

A strong working relationship typically results in repeat business for everyone involved in the project. Subcontractors who are committed not only to American Constructors, but to other trades on the job and the goals of the owner, always rate higher than competitors who do not demonstrate the same commitment.

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PROJECTions

is published for the friends and team members of American Constructors.

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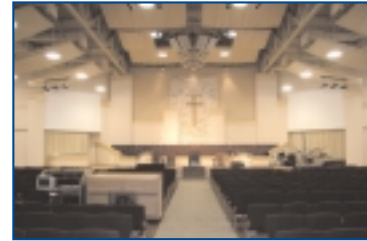
Forces of Nature

American Constructors has been hard at work on the multiphase master plan for the First Evangelical-Free Church of Austin (FEFCA). Scott Cooper and Marty Burger set the pace with pre-construction services, and Terry Sheehan and R.C. McMillan handled project management and supervision.

The project's architect, John Jackson, of Jackson Galloway, PLLC, sang many praises for the American Constructors team, most notably, "Ultimately, the way American Constructors reacted to the difficult issues proved to be more important than the solutions."

Part of the project's overall design concept was to incorporate the site's natural beauty. By shaping and arranging steel, stone and wood into canopies and porticos that surround lush and peaceful landscape, including massive live oak trees, FEFCA's new look encourages worshippers to enjoy and reflect on the forces of nature at work in the world.

Phase One of the project was completed in March of 2002. It consists of 88,000 s.f. in three buildings: the Christian Life Center, which temporarily houses the main worship sanctuary, the three-story Christian Education Center, and a small chapel. The existing chapel on the site was transformed from a residential library that once belonged to a prominent Austin Judge, John Phillips. The chapel now serves as a more intimate chapel and optional prayer space.



Inside view of the Christian Life Center and main worship sanctuary.



Entrance area in the Christian Life Center.



Streetside view of Christian Life Center.

No Slowing Down

Despite talk of an ailing economy, there are no signs of decline for American Constructors. In fact, it's just the opposite. Eight challenging projects, some of which are already underway, have our staff busier than politicians during an election year. Among them are: a new junior high school for the Del Valle Independent School District and a new 11,000-seat soccer and football stadium for the Round Rock Independent School District. In California, after years of lobbying the 1,087-acre Playa Vista development at the former Hughes Aircraft Plant (north of Marina Del Rey and south of Los Angeles) is underway. Our first project there is an 85-unit condominium complex for Standard Pacific Homes.

With a jam-packed agenda, American Constructors has had to increase staff. Administrative employees, four new engineers, and a project director have been hired. To complement our ensemble cast, the American Constructors college intern program, now in its third year, allowed the hiring of six summer interns. New project director Gary Keil brings over 25 years of construction experience to the firm, 15 of which were in healthcare construction and construction management. As an advocate for strong team building, Gary will serve as a liaison between owners, architects, and other team members to assure that quality projects are delivered on time and within budget.

American Constructors would like to welcome all new employees and offer our very best wishes for long and prosperous relationships.



Where-oh-where are the shut-off valves?

Did you know that while some shut-off valves are less critical than others, they are all likely to be damaged by everyday activity? Accidents happen, and that's when it's vital to know where the shut-off valves are located.

Prevent potential flooding, fire, and loss-of-life disasters by periodically reviewing the locations of emergency shut-off valves (gas, fire sprinkler, water, irrigation sprinklers, etc.) with your staff.

Biggest benefits?

- ✘ It will take less time to respond to an alarm;
- ✘ Increased building safety;
- ✘ Protection of life;
- ✘ Decreased damages, resulting in lower repair costs.

In a life-threatening emergency, knowing right where those shut-off valves are could save the lives of many, including yours, and prevent millions in repair costs.