Getting on Track for a Successful Running Event Season

December 15, 2015

By Mary Helen Sprecher

The running track that encircles your field is many things to many people. It’s home turf, so to speak, for your track and field athletes. It’s an amenity the community uses to walk or jog on in the mornings before the sun comes up. And it’s also a marketing piece for your school. No matter what your track means to you, it represents a significant investment. So in order to keep your investment safe, it’s essential to follow proper maintenance procedures. Professionals recommend doing a routine walk-through of the track. Pay close attention to the surface itself. Make sure it stays free of debris (grass clippings, gravel, litter or anything else that has the risk of being ground in by walkers, runners and others. Use a blower to clear away any light debris.)

If there are fences around the track, look for sagging rails, damage, rust or other problems. If there are gates, make sure they swing cleanly. Often, a gate can look just fine but is actually
dragging on the pavement, or worse, on the track surface, and causing damage.

Does the facility include any sprinklers for cooling or irrigation? They should be directed so that they are not spraying onto the track and overloading it with water. An overly saturated track will eventually damage the asphalt underneath and lead to bubbling, delamination and other severe problems. The only water that should fall on your track should be rain – and it should drain off efficiently.

If field equipment, such as mowers, needs to be moved over the track, make sure the surface is protected first with rubber matting, artificial turf, plywood, etc. (Oddly enough, this is something that is often overlooked because maintenance does not believe they are using ‘heavy equipment.’)

All field event facilities should be kept in good repair. Check everything, including the sand pits, in which the sand should be level with the top of the synthetic surface. (Over time, sand pits lose sand, and it may need to be replenished). Keep sand pits covered when not in use. In addition to collecting rain water, an uncovered pit can collect debris and cause unsafe conditions for athletes.

Maintenance is not one enormous job; rather, it is a series of small sets designed to keep an eye on the overall facility. If you see a spot in your track that indicates a problem is present, get a photo and e-mail it to your track installer, who can advise you. And as always, planning ahead and being careful are the most important things, and the most likely to have a long-term positive effect on the facility.

Recommended: ASBA’s publication, Running Tracks: A Construction and Maintenance Manual
Top Photo: BCF_Folsom Lake College Athletic Complex – Photo courtesy of Blair, Church & Flynn Consulting Engineers, Clovis, California
Bottom Photo: Cameron School District – Photo courtesy of Rettler Corp., Stevens Point, Wisconsin

**From New World Of Coaching**

**S.M.A.R.T. Culture**

Sue Phillips has a unique name for the team culture she has created for her girl’s basketball program at Archbishop Mitty High School in San Jose, Calif. Phillips’ coaching philosophy has enabled her teams to win six state championships.

Read more...