



Berkshire School Tennis Facility

Green is the New Black

by Mary Helen Sprecher

Mary Helen has been the technical writer for the American Sports Builders Association for more than 20 years, and has written articles on a variety of athletic facilities, including tennis courts, track and field facilities, athletic fields, stadiums, indoor wellness centers and more. She is a contributing editor to Racquet Sports Industry Magazine, the Managing Editor of Sports Destination Management Magazine, and a freelance writer. Mary Helen is the 2012 recipient of PTR's Media Excellence Award.

Think beyond paper and plastic for a moment. What are you doing to keep your courts green?

There are a lot of ways to make a facility more eco-friendly. Some are drastic changes that can be implemented only in the design or reconstruction phase, but some that are smaller in scope, can still have a significant impact. And, say builders, those you can add now.

On the Ball

These days, most clubs have trash containers and recycle containers for staff and members to use. Add one more, though, for used tennis balls. The balls can be donated to schools, where they are used on the bottom of student chairs and desks to protect

floors and minimize noise. Rehab hospitals, nursing homes and others can use them on patients' walkers. Animal shelters usually accept donations of anything that pets can chew on and play with. Don't forget to include a bin near your racquetball courts as well.

Lost and Found (and Reclaimed)

Animal shelters also accept donations of old towels - something to remember when doing a sweep of your locker room's lost and found bin, or when you find the current stock of towels to be getting a little ragged around the edges.

Donate unclaimed clothing to appropriate charities. Bottles of shampoo and other toiletries are also accepted by many shelters.

Many parks and recreation systems offer sports programs for children, and will gratefully welcome used equipment to be distributed among kids who can't afford it. PTR Foundation's Racquet Roundup collects used tennis racquets that are regripped and restrung by Gamma, and distributed to youth programs in need. Set up a donation box and make sure everyone knows that all sports equipment (tennis, softball, etc.) is accepted. You'll be surprised what members have in their attics, closets and basements, and they'll be glad to have a good place to send it.

There are organizations that accept used shoes (athletic footwear, dressy shoes, you name it) and a quick Internet search should be able to turn up plenty of options for you. Some organizations send shoes to those in need, while others recycle specific parts of the shoes. Either way, it's something that won't wind up in the landfill.

During Shutdown

When the courts are closed temporarily for club-wide updates, it's a good time to add touches that call for more involved work.

Looking to 'green up' your indoor courts? Think surface shade. "Color choice is an important factor to consider when resurfacing tennis courts indoors," says Bill Righter, of Nova Sports USA, in Milford, Massachusetts. "If you choose lighter colors for your indoor tennis courts, less lighting may be required, which would help conserve electricity."

Speaking of which, lighting has come a long way in the last few years, for both indoor and outdoor facilities. According to Bruce Frasure, of LSI Industries, in Cincinnati, Ohio, "Since lighting is a major contributor to the court facility's overall energy use, it is important to focus on fixture efficiency."

According to Frasure, using the most efficient light fixtures can translate into fewer fixtures, which also translates into less power consumption, and that means less adverse impact on the environment as a whole. "Presently, the most efficient court lighting equipment uses pulse start metal halide lamps in a vertical burning position in combination with technologically advanced reflector systems. This type of product produces a higher overall light output, which allows the option of using lower wattage lamps," he notes. "Many new court lighting systems are utilizing 750 watt or 875 watt pulse start metal halide fixtures in lieu of the 1000 watt metal halide fixtures typically used in the past, while obtaining the same or higher levels of illumination."

Outdoor fixtures, Frasure adds, can also be earth sensitive.

"Besides energy efficiency, court lighting systems can also be eco-friendly by addressing the overall environmental impact on the surrounding area. Full cutoff lighting, as defined by the Illuminating Engineering Society of North America (IESNA), is a fixture that projects all of its light in a downward direction. Full cutoff lighting fixtures emit no upward component of light, while providing precise, controlled illumination to the playing area. Full cutoff lighting systems utilize a recessed lamp in a fixture housing that is parallel with the playing surface. This design increases playing area illumination, reduces glare and light spillage in surrounding areas and eliminates upward light and sky glow. A full cutoff sports lighting system will typically meet or exceed community legislation or local zoning restrictions."

Oh, and keep it clean. "Clean light bulbs, lenses and fixtures regularly - at least annually - to obtain the most light," notes David Marsden, of Boston Tennis Court Construction Company, Inc., Hanover, Massachusetts.

On the Surface

It's no surprise that fast-dry or clay courts that use subsurface irrigation can save up to 50% on water consumption, since far less is lost to evaporation. But for those still using sprinklers for their courts (or for any areas of your club where landscaping uses sprinklers), Marsden recommends integrated rain gauges that can prevent sprinklers from activating on a wet day.

If hard courts are being reconstructed, Marsden recommends the use of recycled asphalt aggregate as base material. A tennis court contractor can provide more information on this technique. Bonus points for the fact that it can also save on the fuel costs of trucking in materials for a new base.

Beyond the Courts

Some ideas for going green have been around for years, including low flow showerheads and water saving toilets, energy efficient glass in windows, air powered hand dryers and other equipment. Many of these may already be in place at your club, or at facilities where your colleagues work.

Sometimes, the thought of being energy efficient is a bit overwhelming. We have any number of options, but most of us lack the means to integrate them all at once. The good news? You can just jot down those ideas for future use if renovations are planned. In the meantime, though, you can concentrate on the things you can change. Green is, after all, the new black.



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