

EnkamatPlus®

Concert Cover



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— Larry Hawkins
Asheville Tourist
General Manager

Enka-Engineered
INDUSTRIAL PRODUCTS



EnkamatPlus Helps Preserve a Patch of City's History

Asheville, NC is a small mountain town that clings fiercely to its quaint and sometimes quirky history. Here, old buildings are seldom razed to the ground, but are reclaimed and renovated. The result is a rich fabric quilted together from the new and the old.

On the south end of town stands historic McCormick Field, home to the Asheville Tourists – farm team for the Colorado Rockies and the city's minor league baseball team for the last 82 years. The field opened in 1924. Ty Cobb hit the first home run here. A year later, Babe Ruth was on his way here to play an exhibition game when he experienced "the belly-ache heard 'round the world" after eating one too many hot dogs on the train from Boston. The field is as much a part of Asheville's history as the acclaimed Biltmore Estate.

So when Tourist General manager, Larry Hawkins, suggested that the venerated field be used as a venue for a proposed concert by the Indigo Girls, it raised a couple of eyebrows.

Premier acts are nothing new to Asheville. This music-happy town has played host to a variety of big name performers including Elvis Presley, Jerry

Seinfeld, Jackson Brown and Pearl Jam. The stumbling block has always been finding a large enough venue. The biggest indoor space, the Asheville Civic Center, seats less than 6,000 and the acoustics in the circa 1970s building are not the best.

At full capacity, McCormick Field Stadium seats 4,500. By using the infield grass for seating, promoters could increase the capacity to 5,600, making it the third largest concert space in this part of the state. So early in 2006 Hawkins suggested giving the stadium a tryout as an outdoor concert venue once the baseball season had ended. If it worked out, he reasoned, it could be used for a multitude of purposes besides baseball, bringing in additional revenue for the stadium.

"We've been talking for years about how we can better utilize the facility, not just for concerts but for city-wide festivals and outdoor exhibitions," Hawkins added.

The major concern from the beginning was protecting the field itself. Hawkins and his staff began to research temporary flooring systems that would guard the field's temperamental Bermuda grass from the foot traffic of 1,600 spectators.

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"We initially looked at the traditional systems like the hard plastic systems, but cost was an issue and we also heard that an inter-locking modular system could be cumbersome to install and remove," he mentioned. The region's fall weather further complicated matters. With day time temperatures still into the 70s and night time temps in the upper 30s, condensation rapidly builds underneath any covering. If not allowed to breathe, the midday sun can quickly destroy the grass.

"Anytime it rains and the tarp goes down, it's a mad dash as soon as the sun comes out to get it off the grass," Hawkins explained.

His search for a suitable flooring system led Hawkins to interview a number of national distributors. Along the way, Asheville Parks & Recreation officials mentioned EnkamatPlus, a turf protection matting made by Colbond, based – of all places – in Asheville.

EnkamatPlus is a popular material used to protect natural turf in high traffic areas such as sidelines during football, soccer and baseball games. It consists of a tough polyester geotextile fabric thermally bonded to a three dimensional Enkamat matrix. The fabric provides a walkable surface that allows water and other liquids to pass through while the 95% open, Enkamat matrix provides a breathable airspace and a structure that flexes as athletes, coaches and fans continually walk on it.

On the market since 2001, the re-usable, heavy duty cover has been used by concert promoters; pro, college, and high school sports teams; and local parks and recreation departments. Even still, Hawkins and his crew harbored some reservations about using it. "We weren't completely sold until after we used the product. I think everybody has a similar reservation the first time they think about laying something on their field for an extended period of time," he mentioned.

To make matters worse, at least 25% of the EnkamatPlus would need to be in place prior to the stage being erected, four days before the concert.

That's when Colbond's Tom Robrecht stepped in and suggested Hawkins give it a test run. Using a 4' x 6' test sample of EnkamatPlus in an inconspicuous area of the field, head groundskeeper Patrick Shrimplin allowed the grass to remain covered for an extended period of time. When Hawkins and Shrimplin removed the test sample, the grass was in perfect condition.

"There was a big sigh of relief," Hawkins admitted. He and his team decided to go with it.

The first two rolls of EnkamatPlus, 4,800 square feet, went down, four days prior to the concert. The remaining six 16' x 150' foot strips were installed the day before the show. In all, it took a crew of four about 2-3 hours to install the 9,600 square feet of EnkamatPlus. Once the rolls were in place, they were seamed with 4-inch heavy-duty duct tape. To eliminate the tripping hazards from the electrical cords running down the two main aisles, the crew laid 3/4-inch plywood down each 10-foot wide aisle. Finally, 1,600 folding chairs were placed directly on the EnkamatPlus and tied together to keep them aligned.

As luck would have it, a steady rain soaked the field the day before the Saturday evening concert. The Sunday morning following the show the ground crew anxiously began to roll up the EnkamatPlus to see how the grass had fared.

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Perhaps best of all, stadium officials now have a single reusable solution they know they can depend on season after season. Each of the eight strips is rolled onto a PVC pipe and stored neatly at a nearby city-owned facility where it waits for the next show, which, according to Asheville residents, can't come soon enough.

"What an incredible place to watch a concert," remarked Lorraine Silverman of nearby Weaverville. "It really is a great way to blend Asheville's history with its future. Well done."



The 16' x 150' strips of EnkamatPlus are simply rolled out onto the field and held in place with ordinary landscape staples. Total installation time was less than 3 hours.



The 2,000 square yards of EnkamatPlus allowed the McCormick Field event staff to accommodate an extra 1,600 people, sound booth, and more than 1,000 feet of electrical cables, without damaging the field.

For more information about these and any other products marketed and manufactured by Colbond Inc. visit www.colbond-usa.com or call 800-365-7391.

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