

cover story |

In sports and recreation



facilities metal is the ultimate competitor

When most people think of sports and recreation, they think BIG—major league sports played in massive venues. While the national teams are visible daily in television, newspaper, and online coverage, most of the “reality” in this industry is in our own backyards.

In fact, the largest percentage of sports and recreation facilities are connected to park districts, schools, and universities. Many are funded by taxpayers, others by private organizations. Regardless of the revenue source, the slowing economy is shrinking the pool of funds available. As a result, many developers are choosing renovation over building new facilities. Either way, the trend is to create more multipurpose structures, and metal remains a major player in this market.

“For the most part, any new construction going up now was funded, planned, and designed before the economic slowdown. The financial challenges on the tax base are just catching up with schools, which lag behind the rest of the economy by one fiscal cycle. The →

project info

Project

Indoor practice facility at the University of Pittsburgh Medical Center, Pittsburgh, Pa.

People

Architect, LDA Companies, Pittsburgh; contractor, Allegheny Construction Group, Inc., Bridgeville, Pa.

Product

A 100,000-square-foot rigid frame metal building system with a clear span of 220 feet from VP Buildings, Memphis, Tenn.

Fine points

The indoor practice and training facility is used by the Pittsburgh Steelers and the University of Pittsburgh Panthers football teams.

For contractors – the possibilities are endless

Contractors are creative, innovative sorts who will do whatever it takes to get the job done.

By Marge O'Connor

This can-do attitude seen on the jobsite is present in the front office and the boardroom as well. When owners of construction firms are faced with challenges, they step up to the plate. This might involve a new business venture, a new product based on a field technique, finding more business opportunities or creating economic development for an area that feeds many other businesses.

Perhaps it's because the current metal-in-construction industry in the U.S. is younger than some other segments or because of the creativity offered by today's metal products that encourages innovation. Regardless of the reason, the fact is that there are thousands of interesting stories about contractors who've applied their ingenuity to achieve wonderful things. The following abstracts focus on three such innovators who've served the sports and recreation field.

Determination and customer service build business

In her first career, Laura Deklewa applied her degree in economics and business management to the financial side of large construction

projects. That was more than 20 years ago, when few women were working in the construction business. "Being a woman was not a real door opener at that time," says Deklewa.

Then she married into a construction family. In fact, her honeymoon included spending some time visiting a construction site at a water treatment facility on the Allegheny River. After playing a minor role in the activities of the family business, but not really being part of it, she decided to apply what she'd observed to a new career. "I think I learned that if you can't beat them, join them, so I started my own company." She didn't choose something small, instead Deklewa

decided to enter the world of pre-engineered metal buildings.

Her business, Alleghany Construction in Bridgeville, Pa., now handles conventional as well as pre-engineered metal building projects. Few women are in this market, but that's not an issue for Deklewa who says, "I've competed on own merits."

Deklewa recently entered another male-dominated area, major league sports, by building the indoor practice facility used by the Pittsburgh Steelers and the Panthers, the University of Pittsburgh's football team.

Her business philosophy and attention to detail have made her business venture a success, showing a reported growth rate of 184% in three years. The company's focus on excellent customer relations and efficient project management are its keys to achieving growth, according to Deklewa. "Our customers like the follow through they get with our single source responsibility," she says.

Sports facilities help draw events to region

Combining economic development with sports facilities construction has worked well for the town of →

Deklewa's company built this 100,000-square-foot indoor practice facility for the University of Pittsburgh.

