COMMUNITY’S EFFORT SAVES HISTORIC ‘FIELD OF DREAMS’

Since 1926, Duncan Park Stadium in Spartanburg, South Carolina, has welcomed generations of baseball fans to the national pastime. Over the years, however, time and weather had taken their toll and turned the historic “field of dreams” into a nightmare.

A grassroots effort to revitalize the stadium was fueled by petitions signed during the summer of 2006 by more than 1,000 citizens who pledged various levels of support. Organizers of the campaign, called Friends of Duncan Park, were determined to preserve the state’s oldest baseball park and one of the oldest minor league stadiums in the country.

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Citing the stadium’s historic past, the editors of Baseball Digest reported, “Duncan Park Stadium hosted the likes of Lou Gehrig and Joe DiMaggio in exhibition games and Ryne Sandburg as a minor-league player, as well as countless American Legion and textile-league teams over the decades.”

According to Baseball Digest, “Duncan Park Stadium is typical of ballparks of its era. The focal point is a large wooden grandstand with a roof supported with steel trusses, topped by a small press box. We’re guessing the box-seat dividers were original to the ballpark, and we’re also guessing many of the old-fashioned green wooden seats were original to the ballpark as well.”

In 2006, an article in Ballpark Digest described the deteriorating condition of the stadium. “Walk through Duncan Park Stadium and you can’t help be a little depressed at its condition,” the article observed. “Squishy plywood doesn’t exactly inspire confidence underfoot, and there’s at least three coats of paint everywhere, with the topmost layer peeling.”

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“The city of Spartanburg, which owns the park, and the school district have a partnership that grants the baseball and softball teams exclusive use of the stadium,” the Herald-Journal reported. “The partnership allows the stadium to get much-needed upgrades, which wouldn’t have been possible without the district’s help.”

During last year’s improvements, protective coatings from Tnemec were applied over structural steel that was high-pressure washed at 4,000 psi and prepared in accordance with SSPC-SP3 Power Tool Cleaning.

“Project specifications were for a protective overcoat,” recalled coating consultant Dan Anderson with TSE, Inc. “We prepared coating samples and tested them for adhesion and the performance was acceptable. We used Series 135 Chembuild over the old coatings and also on steel surfaces in the dugouts and under the grandstand.”

Approximately 90 percent of the surfaces that were coated are under cover, explained Cris Crissinger, the
project’s technical consultant with McMillan Pazdan Smith Architecture. Ultraviolet (UV) light was a concern on the stadium’s perimeter and columns that were exposed to the sun.

A topcoat of Series 73 Endura-Shield, an aliphatic acrylic polyurethane, was applied over Series 135 on structural steel that is shielded from the sun. Steel surfaces on the perimeter of the stadium that are exposed to UV light received a topcoat of Series 1071 Fluoronar, a high-solids fluoropolymer coating with outstanding color and gloss retention.

Working from samples provided by Tnemec, the architects were able to match the desired color they wanted with the durability they required. “The selected color came out perfectly,” Crissinger noted.

Wood surfaces and overheads were power washed to remove old paint prior to receiving a spray-applied coat of Series 115 Uni-Bond DF, a self-crosslinking hydrophobic acrylic coating in the color white.

Crissinger cited the coating contractor, Graydaze Industrial, for its quality work on the Duncan Park Stadium. “They were very conscientious. They had modern, up-to-date equipment, very good installers and a quality control group of inspectors who were NACE-certified.”

“Everybody was extremely happy with the result,” Anderson added. “The coatings selection met a very tight budget and the project was completed on schedule. It looked like a new stadium when it was finished.”

When completed, the renovation project will include an overhaul of the stadium’s electrical system, handicapped-accessible restrooms and seating, a new scoreboard, and improvements to plumbing, locker rooms, and concession areas.