



Airedale Arena, Alma, AR

## Design and Performance are a Winning Combination at Airedale Arena

Airedale Arena is not your typical high school basketball arena. In fact, it's probably safe to say the stylish, multi-use facility outclasses most college basketball venues, impressing spectators and competitors alike with state-of-the-art performance features in a setting as attractive as it is functional.

Opened last November, the 90,000-square-foot arena is home to Alma High School basketball in Alma, AR, and boasts stats that are difficult to match: 3,097 chairback seats in a bowl configuration; retractable seating; a glassed-in hospitality suite; a concourse that also serves as an indoor track; full video production capabilities, including a state-of-the-art television and scoreboard package; portable stage and stage production equipment; team and officials' dressing rooms; weight and fitness rooms; dance and gymnastics studios; training facilities; an indoor batting cage; coaches' offices; classrooms; and a tornado shelter that doubles as a practice gym.

Construction of the arena took 30 months, but planning for the project began twelve months before the school district broke ground. David Woolly, Alma School District deputy superintendent and project manager for construction projects, visited 42 different basketball facilities, gathering ideas for the proposed arena.

As the design took shape, Woolly realized that the plans could be slightly manipulated to create a 1/8 mile concourse behind the seating area. "It's not exact enough for competitive purposes, but it's close enough to provide a practice track, a training area for physical education classes and a walking/running path for community members."

Woolly tasked Sarah Stillman, ASID, ASRID and interior designer with Architecture Plus, with finding a floor that would be suitable for the concourse/track. "I asked Sarah to find a product that does all of these things: It needed to be easy on the knees and ankles, cushioned but not so soft that it didn't provide good traction. The floor needed to be durable, able to hold up and not wear out as people walked and ran on it over and over. It needed to be easy to clean so that we could maintain its finish, even under the heavy foot traffic we anticipated. And, the floor needed to be slip resistant; not too sticky so that joggers might trip or turn an ankle, but safe enough so runners would not slip."



Woolly also looked to Stillman for flooring recommendations for two other strategic areas of the arena: the banner-lined promenade that leads visitors past the trophy case, school store and concessions area into the arena, and the arena seating area. "The promenade is important, because that's the first thing visitors see as they enter the building," explained Woolly. "As for the arena, we wanted to cover all the concrete, including the concourse, the risers and the concrete under the seats to make the arena attractive and give it a finished look."

Stillman recommended nora® products from nora systems, Inc. for all three areas. But, to ensure the correct product selection and the success of the floor covering, she arranged to test the floor in an elementary school.

"By going through that process, we got exactly what we wanted," said Woolly. "The people at nora were willing to go the extra mile for us, even making a special run in custom colors, just so we could be confident in our choice of a floor covering. The results were spectacular!"

In the promenade, custom norament® grano (green with gold flecks and gold with green flecks) perfectly matches the school's green and gold color scheme. "We used curvilinear designs in the promenade, alternating colors to help make the large open space flow better," explained Stillman. "We also used the product in two waterjet-cut medallions – one at the entrance to the promenade depicting the school crest and one at the arena entrance depicting an Airedale, the school mascot."

In all, 25,000 square feet of the norament product lends itself beautifully to the high traffic patterns of the promenade and the concourse, providing an eye-catching design while meeting the durability and maintenance requirements of both areas and the resiliency and slip resistance requirements of the concourse.

Another 25,000 square feet of noraplan® logic and 6,500 square feet of nora custom stair nosing, both in gold, set off the arena's green seats and carry the school colors throughout the facility. "Using noraplan sheet products made installation on the risers easy, and custom stair nosing specially ordered to match the precast bleacher system provided a finished look," said Stillman. "nora helped us select the best products for our project and worked quickly and effectively to produce custom color samples for our approval, including custom nosing and custom inset logos. Not only have the products held up well, they look great, too. Everyone involved is extremely pleased with the final outcome."

Woolly agrees, attributing the project's success to nora products and nora customer service. "nora did what was necessary to give us products that met our diverse needs – products that had to do several things at once and still look nice," he said.

**nora systems, Inc.**

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"Sometimes things turn out well," he continued, "and sometimes things turn out beyond what you expected. That's what happened in this case. You don't expect a sports facility to be attractive. Functional – yes, but not attractive. This place is incredibly attractive. You walk in and the 'wow' factor is just overwhelming, right down to the floor!"

"The floor needed to be durable, able to hold up and not wear out as people walked and ran on it over and over."

David Woolly  
 Deputy Superintendent  
 and Project Manager  
 Alma School District

