

ENTER THE PROJECT OF THE YEAR CONTEST. PAGE 36

The World of Masonry

Masonry

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APRIL 2010

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the Bricklayer 500

PAGE 28

SHOWCASE:
The Dressed-up
Industrial Look

PAGE 16

Reinforcement
Products

PAGE 38



Masonry Bleachers are a Winner

Schools use masonry seating instead of aluminum for two stadium projects.

For decades, the same scene has played out in towns, big and small, across America. From Maine to Montana, from Minnesota to Mississippi, and in thousands of places in between.

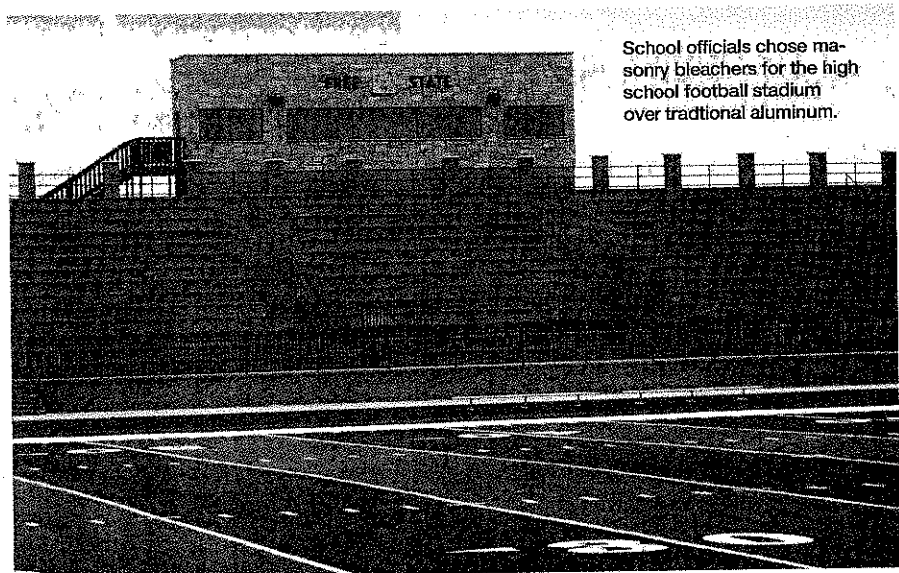
Just hours after classes have let out, parents, relatives, and neighbors gather behind high schools to watch their Friday night heroes punt, pass, and kick their way to glorious victory—or heartbreaking defeat.

In addition to peppy cheerleaders, cold food, and autumn temperatures, other staples of Friday night football are the creaky, swaying, and banal aluminum bleachers.

Not so in Lawrence, Kan., where two high school football fields have recently been outfitted with masonry bleachers. In addition to their aesthetic appeal, they cost less and even please neighbors living nearby.

Although some amphitheatres have used similar systems, “to everyone’s knowledge, these were the first sports bleachers made out of block,” says Brian Hinck, sales manager with Capitol Concrete Products in Topeka, Kan.

In deciding on masonry, “it was the noise consideration more than anything,” says Hinck. “One of the stadiums is in a residential area and when it was proposed to put aluminum bleachers in, the neighbors threw up a red flag and



School officials chose masonry bleachers for the high school football stadium over traditional aluminum.

said they didn’t want that noise on a Friday night. I didn’t realize the neighborhood had such a big voice in what the schools did.” The school district considered building an enclosure around the lower portion to contain the noise.

Cost considerations

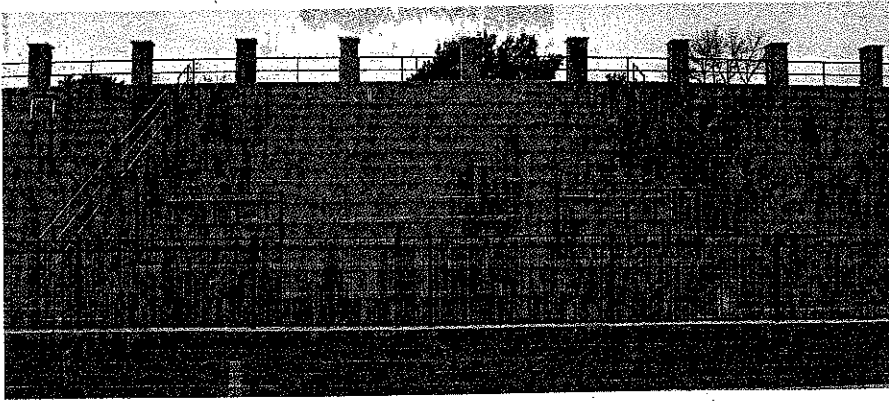
“When they looked at a segmental retaining wall, they realized it would actually be cheaper than aluminum,” Hinck says. The enclosed aluminum bleachers would have cost \$400 per seat.

Two styles were used for these stadiums. Most were terraced toward the back and had a shorter retaining wall,

and cost \$250 per seat. Those that were not terraced, with a straight wall on the back, cost \$335 per seat.

A Versalock retaining wall system was used for both projects. The blocks’ versatility was ideal because masons could make several outside and inside corners onsite with the standard block unit, and then build the stair with it, Hinck explains. The crews only needed a block and a cap; no special units.

Another unique aspect of the project was the bond the crew used between the blocks. Mason Bond was chosen for the task instead of traditional mortar. Its manufacturer, ITW



When completed, there was no need for a sound buffer, which neighbors would have sought if noisy aluminum bleachers had been installed.

TACC, of Rockland, Mass., boasts Mason Bond has 3.5 times the bond strength than building codes require. Handling the dynamic loads of people moving up and down the bleachers was key.

“With the traffic that was going to be on the stairs and seats, the Mason Bond had a lot better sheer strength and connection strength with the

concrete and materials than anything out there,” says Hinck. Traditional segmental retaining wall adhesive does not have nearly the same bond strength, he adds.

Heat retention

Another advantage of the masonry is the heat it stores from sunlight during the day. “These bleachers are

For more information on the product in this story, visit www.itwtacc.com. Visit the mason contractor at www.capitolconcreteproducts.com.

not as cold as their aluminum counterparts,” Hinck adds. “Most football games are played in the evening, so when the sun goes down and the temperature drops, the block has thermal capacity. It releases the heat when people are sitting on it.” An added bonus: For daytime events, aluminum bleachers can become unbearably hot, compared to block.

The sales manager says everything went very smoothly; each stadium project took three months to complete last summer.

Now, football fans on Friday nights can hear the referees’ whistles and the cheerleaders, instead of people ascending and descending cold and noisy aluminum bleachers. **MC**