



## Major Leagues Sport More Sustainable Stadiums

by Avery Mack

**T**raditional sports stadiums and arenas generate a huge carbon footprint. Multiple sources concur that during a single football game, a 78,000-seat stadium can consume 65,000 kilowatt hours of electricity, and discarded cardboard, plastic and paper; in-stadium food and beverage containers; and tailgating debris that includes cans and bottles leave behind a mountain of waste.

A dozen years ago, the pioneering Philadelphia Eagles enlisted the help of the National Resources Defense Council (NRDC) to begin a persistent push to their goal of going green. Today, the NRDC publishes the *Greening Advisor* guidebooks on green operating practices for all professional teams in Major League Baseball, the National Football League, the National Basketball Association, the National Hockey League and Major League Soccer, plus the U.S. Tennis Association, and has expanded to include college sports.

### Food

Stadium food has always been part of the fan experience, but it's possible to eat sensibly and well with options like the roasted turkey sandwich at AT&T Park, in San Francisco, where concessionaires source locally and compost leftovers. Veggie burgers, vegan cheesesteaks and sushi have also found their way onto game-day menus to add a change of pace for fans, says Julianne Soviero, author of *Unleash Your True Athletic Potential*.

The growing interest shown by the sports industry in composting offers enormous potential benefits, and not a moment too soon, says Allen Hershkowitz, Ph.D., co-founder of the Green Sports Alliance and director of the NRDC Sports Project. Using recyclable containers counts—New York City's venerable Yankee Stadium reduced its trash load by 40 percent by switching to biodegradable cups and service ware. PepsiCo supported the upgrade by ex-

changing its conventional plastic bottle for a bio-based version made from agricultural waste.

### Lights

At New York's Oncenter War Memorial Arena, the American Hockey League's Syracuse Crunch pro team skates under LED lights. "They make the arena brighter. It's easier to see the puck," says defenseman Joey Mormina. "The fun light show that follows goals adds energy for the crowd and players."

LED lighting provides improved clarity in TV transmissions and sports action photos and doesn't create soft spots on the ice, like traditional lights. "Utica and Binghamton teams switched to LED after playing in our arena," comments Jim Sarosy, chief operating officer for the Crunch.

### Water

"The Crunch is the first pro hockey team to skate on recycled rainwater," Sarosy adds. "It's collected from the roof, stored in three central reservoirs in the basement and pumped into the Zamboni machine for resurfacing the ice." The practice also diverts rainwater from overworked sewer systems.

The first pro football stadium to earn a Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) Gold Certification, the San Francisco 49ers Levi's Stadium features a 27,000-square-foot rooftop garden to help control water runoff.

Home to the Los Angeles Lakers, Clippers and Kings, the Staples Center has swapped out 178 flush urinals for waterless models, reducing annual water usage by 7 million gallons.

Like the Eagles, the Florida Marlins pro baseball team, in Miami, now uses 50 percent less water via low-flow plumbing fixtures. Also, the stadium's upgraded landscape design lessens outdoor irrigation needs by 60 percent.

The University of Georgia likes keeping its grass green, but hates wasteful water dispensers. Its football field is now watered via an underground irrigation system that saves a million gallons a year. Soil moisture sensors indicate when watering is needed.

## More Creative Practices

Lincoln Financial Field, home to the Philadelphia Eagles, now boasts more than 11,000 solar panels and 14 wind turbines that combined, generate more than four times the energy used for all home games in a season. The staff uses green cleaning products and has increased recycling more than 200 percent since 2010. Most creatively, the carbon costs of team travel are offset via mitiga-

tion by financing tree plantings in their home state and purchasing seedlings for a wildlife refuge in Louisiana.

The Seattle Mariners Safeco Field's new scoreboard uses 90 percent less power than its predecessor and the Arizona Cardinals pro football team provides bags for tailgating fans to use for recycling.

Five NBA arenas have achieved LEED certification—Phillips Arena (Atlanta Hawks), Toyota Center (Hous-

ton Rockets), American Airlines Arena (Miami Heat), Amway Center (Orlando Magic) and Rose Garden (Portland Trail Blazers).

The goal of a cleaner, healthier planet is achievable with systemic shifts like these as more pro and collegiate sports teams score green points.

*Connect with our freelance writer via [AveryMack@mindspring.com](mailto:AveryMack@mindspring.com).*