



Small Town Makes It Big in the NCAA Final Four

Amasa, Michigan, March 10, 2010—When the Men’s and Women’s National Collegiate Athletic Association® basketball championships begin in mid-March, millions of Americans will be watching the athletes play on courts that started taking shape last September in a tiny town on Michigan’s Upper Peninsula.

The town of Amasa, population 250, is home to a complex of four buildings housing one of the manufacturing operations of Connor Sport Court International. Connor, founded in 1872, is the leading manufacturer of hardwood courts in the U.S.

Summer brings a tourist economy to the U.P., but the Connor plant is the largest full time employer in Iron County.

“We draw 70 per cent of our 125 employees from the towns of Iron River and Crystal Falls,” says Conrad Stromberg, manager of the plant and a Connor employee for the past 23 years. Stromberg lives in Amasa, “But we have to go to Crystal Falls or Iron River to do our shopping.”

In addition to the NCAA® Final Four® courts, Connor’s Amasa plant also manufactures about 750 playing courts every year for schools, gymnasiums, colleges and even NBA teams.

“We are very proud of the portable courts we build for the NCAA and the NBA teams,” said Stromberg, citing as an example the unique parquet hardwood portable floor the company built for the Boston Celtics.

“Portable floors—such as those used in the Final Four—enable venues to quickly take them up and down. This means you can have basketball one night, hockey the next,” says Stromberg.

The NCAA Final Four courts for both men and women are manufactured from hard maple which Connor purchased as rough lumber from Timber Products Company, located about 140 miles north of Amasa near Munising, Michigan. Connor buys from about 60 different sawmills, most of them in Michigan and Wisconsin.

Last September the rough lumber arrived at the Connor plant.

“First it is cut to a width size of 2 and $\frac{1}{8}$ inches,” said David G. Smith, production manager at Amasa. It is then planed and defects are cut out of the wood. After that, it runs through a side-matcher, which planes it down and cuts the tongue and groove on each side of the strip. It then goes to the end-matcher which makes a tongue and groove on the end of each strip. It is graded first, second and third according to Maple Floor Manufacturers Association (MFMA)

“The NCAA gets only first grade maple,” says Smith.

The courts then go into a separate building where it is “portablized,” assembled into sections measuring 48 $\frac{1}{8}$ inches by 96 and $\frac{1}{8}$ inches.

One of the most critical elements is the subflooring, a patented Connor structure which goes under the maple surface and provides just the right amount of resiliency and shock absorption to assure good performance and player safety.

Once each portable section is complete, it is placed in a stack of 12 under stringently controlled temperature and humidity conditions. .

A few weeks before the Final Four tournaments, the floor is assembled and inspected at the Amasa plant. The floor is then disassembled and sent to one of the company’s finishing facilities, in this case J.T. Flooring in Milwaukee for the men’s’ Final Four Court and Mid-Ohio Flooring in Apple Creek, Ohio, for the women’s floor.

The men’s floor will travel to its destination in Indianapolis, stopping for community events to celebrate the 2010 NCAA Men’s Final Four and college basketball in Midwest:

Monday, March 22—Marquette University, Milwaukee.

Tuesday, March 23—Chicago

Wednesday, March 24—Notre Dame, South Bend, Indiana

Thursday, March 25—Lucas Oil Stadium

Friday, March 16—Installation in Lucas Oil Stadium.

The 2010 Men’s Final Four will be played April 3-5 in the Lucas Oil Stadium in Indianapolis. The 2010 Womens Final Four will be April 4-6 at the Alamodome in San Antonio.

The finishers lay out the floor and then carefully sand the surface... Two coats of seal follow. Seal keeps the finish and paint from being absorbed. Then the logos and other decorative elements are painted on the court. Finally, one coat of gloss provides that familiar shine that says “Final Four basketball.” From the finishers it is shipped to the playing sites. (To see a portable Connor court assembled in quick-time action, go to:

<http://www.jsonline.com/multimedia/video/?bcpid=13960334001&bctid=68170863001>

Stromberg proudly points out the company's environmental efforts. In 2009 an independent environmental engineering firm audited and designated them a "Zero Waste Company."

"The whole plant celebrated that designation," says Stromberg. The plant utilizes sawdust to fire boilers and to heat and generate steam. Any remaining waste is made into "wood flour" which is used for composite decking.

As a member of the Maple Flooring Manufacturers Association, Connor adheres to the strict grading and quality standards of that organization, Stromberg adds. Maple hardwood used in the courts is from a renewable resource, with the U.S. growing six times more hardwood than is harvested each year.

"We're very proud of our Amasa group, says Ron Cerny, President and CEO of Connor Sport Court. Connor Sport Court International is headquartered in Salt Lake City, Utah and its hardwood surface sales offices are headed by CSCI Vice President and General Manager Jon Isaacs in Arlington Heights, Illinois.

About Connor Sport Court International

More athletic events are played on Connor Sport Court surfaces than on any other sports flooring in the world. Connor sports floors have established themselves as the standard for professional and elite sports since the company was founded in 1872. Sport Court® is a registered trade mark of Connor Sport Court International. Since 1974, it has identified the original and authentic modular sport surface, continuously improved and patented to provide the highest levels of quality and performance. Connor Sport Court is proud to be the only sports surfacing company in the world that is independently audited and verified as "Zero Waste" and fully ISO 9001:2008 certified.

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For more information on the itinerary for the 2010 Connor Final Four Playing Floors

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