

Standing tall

Goal posts designed to resist frenzied fans

BY JOHN KMITTA

Every autumn some things are certain to happen. Not only the changing of the leaves, shorter days and cool winds, but tailgate parties, marching bands and storied rivalries—the certainties of college football. Almost as certain is the prospect that raucous fans will charge football fields throughout the land as part of that questionable tradition of “tearing down” the goal posts. What is becoming less certain is that they will actually succeed.

Merchants Environmental Industries (MEI), a Chicago-based engineering and contracting firm, has spent the last decade designing goal posts to withstand the onslaught of overzealous attackers.

“We got into [the goal post business] a little over 10 years ago,” said Bob Allen, vice president of MEI. “We were asked to get involved when Northwestern University was losing almost a goal post per week. They had lost a lot of games and the students had no reason to be happy, so they made themselves happy by tearing the goal posts down. The university asked us to design something that would be resistant to these weekly tear downs.”

Northwestern, the University of Illinois, Notre Dame, Arizona State and Penn State are some of the 25 universities that now use MEI’s goal posts.

“Mostly it is schools that are looking forward to really good seasons,” said Allen. “The schools that are perpetually in the upper rankings are the schools that want them, because those are schools that do a lot of celebrating.”

MEI builds the posts and ships them to the facility they will be used at. Then MEI sends a crew of three or four men who will put the posts in and show the people at the university how to do it, so that they can take them out, put them back and adjust them in the future.

According to Allen, the posts are of steel construction with machined steel parts; the core is machined steel and then there is steel pipe. The posts weigh approximately a ton and a half, but they are removable for maintenance. They go into the ground approximately 6 feet. There is a sleeve in the ground and they slide into the sleeve.

“The posts have evolved over time,” said Allen. “It’s somewhat like building a safe. If you build a safe,

someone figures out how to crack it. Then you build it better, and they figure out another way to crack it. So it’s been an evolving situation.”

According to Allen, the fans can’t get the posts down simply with people.

“The posts that we’ve had problems with are those that fans have come at with tools,” said Allen. “In one case the fans used a fire hose at the stadium and wrapped it around the posts. In another case they used chains that they found on campus. In two cases they used the television cables - approximately an inch in diameter - that were coming into the stadium. If you have enough people on the end of a 100-foot-long cable, then you have more people than could actually climb on the posts. So we’ve informed [school officials] that they can’t let people get out there with tools, equipment, ropes, and chains.”

Allen explained that the way the posts are built, even if they do bend, they don’t come down.

“Accidents happen if a post goes down really fast and people are crushed in the fall,” said Allen. “Or you get a bunch of people on a post and all of a sudden it goes over, whereas, with our steel posts, the steel won’t buckle. It will bend, but it won’t buckle. Even though the fans have been able to bend them, there has never been a situation in which people have been in danger. That’s a big issue for the schools, and they understand that. If the fans bend it, nobody is going to get hurt in the bending process.”

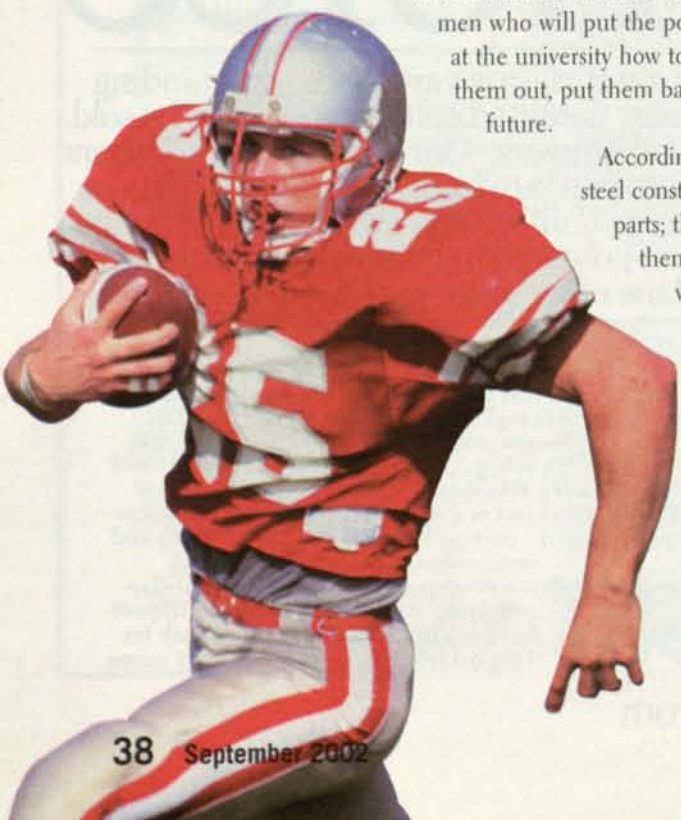
“They’re not cheap. For just the goal posts alone without installation is about \$20,000. But you don’t have to lose many goal posts to justify that cost.”

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One company has spent a decade designing goal posts to withstand the onslaught of overzealous (and probably overserved) attackers.





GOOSENECK GOALPOSTS

Future Pro has gooseneck-style football goalposts in high school and collegiate dimensions. These 4 1/2-in. gooseneck posts bury 48 in. into the ground for stability. Future Pro does offer ground sleeves for removable installations. Posts have a 60-in. setback and 20-ft. aluminum uprights. The crossbars are 3 1/2-in. steel tubing. Safety yellow powder coating is offered on both collegiate and high school dimensions, white powder coating on high school only.

Future Pro/800-328-4625
For information, circle 156, or
see www.OneRS.net/209sp-156

Putting on the pads

AN ESSENTIAL ITEM for any goal post is the padding. According to Jim Bernecker, vice president of marketing at Promats, a Fort Collins, CO, manufacturer of protective field wall padding and related equipment, there are essentially two types of goal post padding: round cored-out foam and hexagonal pads.

"What was always the case was that you would take a round piece of foam, core it out to whatever diameter pole you had, and make a vinyl wrap," said Bernecker. "The foam had a slit in it. You would wrap the foam around the pole, then put the vinyl wrap around the foam and attach it using Velcro or grommets."

"But whatever goes down the posts gets into that foam. If it is in Florida in the humidity, then the foam is exposed to the elements. Unless you take it down and put it away properly—and nobody really gives a goal post pad any attention—they will rot and stink."

Last year Promats introduced a hexagonal pad that has flat sides. The foam is beveled appropriately for whatever size post. The hexagonal pad folds flat for storage and also creates a flat surface for graphics. There are several ways to apply the graphics: enamel for hand-painted graphics, silk screening, vinyl tape and sewn-on vinyl.

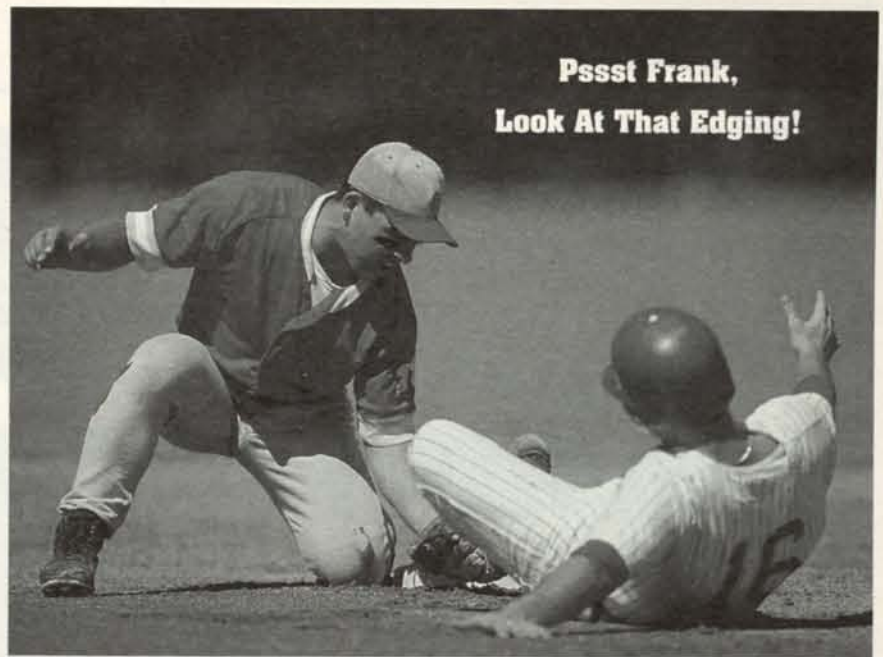
The hex pad completely encases the foam in vinyl. However, there are companies that make round pads completely encased in vinyl, so complete encasement is not specific to a hex pad.

"The 18-ounce coated vinyl used in a goal post pad is a heavy, tough material," said Bernecker. "And it is easily repaired if it gets torn. You can patch it with vinyl-to-vinyl cement, and it is as strong as a sewn seam if done properly. If somebody gets a tear in a goal post pad, if it's quickly repaired it will never affect the internal foam. But people need to do it before it gets wet."

As for the foam itself, Bernecker points out that not all foam is alike.

"You can have 3 inches of foam with 10 different densities, so the density of the foam is a big deal," said Bernecker. "The NFL wants 6 inches of foam, but you could have 6 inches of foam that won't react to impact any different than 2 inches of foam. The foam density is an issue that gets into indentation load deflections and pounds per cubic foot, but the bottom line is based on what we know works."

- John Kmita



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DEBRIS, LEAF PUSHER

SweepEx has introduced its new debris & leaf pusher attachment, ideal for leaves, cans, and bottles. This pusher basically adds a strong net to the broom attachment that allows you to carry more material farther. The pusher bolts to the front of any SweepEx Pro Series broom, which are available in 48-, 60-, 72-, and 90-in. lengths.

TrynEx International/800-725-8377
For information, circle 181

GENERATORS

Shindaiwa's EGR6000 and EGR6000E generators provide quiet electric power and feature brushless alternators, electronic ignition and pull starters, automatic return-to-idle feature, and oil sensor that automatically shuts off engine if oil level falls, to protect the engine.

Shindaiwa Inc./503-692-3070
For information, circle 183



Extra points

FOOTBALL FANS REVEL in the touchdowns, the passing game, and the power rushers. Few, however, realize the importance of the kicking game. The same is true from a historical standpoint.

American football as we know it began very similar to its ancestors, soccer and rugby. Early matches emphasized the kicking game. But throughout the years the importance of the "goal from the field," or "field goal" as it came to be known, has changed. In 1882 a field goal was worth five points. In 1904 it was changed to four points. And in 1909 it changed to the current 3 points. As the game evolved, so too did the goal posts.

According to Kent Stephens, collections manager at the College Football Hall of Fame in South Bend, IN, records show that the goal posts used in 1873 were simply two poles 25 feet apart.

"In 1876 rule number 4 in the football rule book required that the goal posts be 11 feet in total height, 18-feet 6-inches wide and the cross-bar be placed 10 feet high, which only allowed for one foot over



the cross-bar," said Stephens. "By 1890 the uprights had to be 20 feet in height. In 1959 college football widened the posts to 23 feet 4 inches. And in 1991 the posts were moved back to 18 feet 6 inches."

According to Gene Henshaw, president/GM of Stackhouse Athletic Equipment, a Salem, OR, manufacturer of athletic equipment, Stackhouse has been making goal posts for 30 years and has used steel and aluminum for the duration of those 30 years.

"Prior to that, going back to the 1940s and 1950s goal posts were wood and in the H style," said Henshaw. "In the late 50s or early 60s goal posts trended toward steel or aluminum."

Stephens could not pinpoint an exact year in which the last stadium switched from wooden goal posts to steel or aluminum, but added that the Rose Bowl was still using wood as late as 1969.

- John Kmita

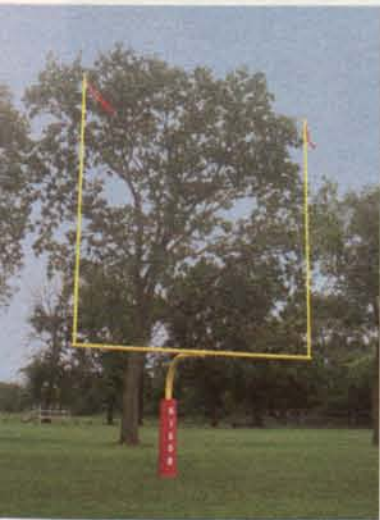
FIRST-AID KIT

Compliance Safety, Inc., a nationwide distributor of safety products for the turf, landscaping, horticulture, agriculture and pest control markets, has added an "Outdoor Workers First Aid Kit" to its line of first aid products for the outdoor workplace.

The gasket-sealed, waterproof kit is packed with 98 items, including

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Compliance Safety/800-340-3413
For information, circle 176, or
see www.OneRS.net/209sp-176



NEW FOOTBALL GOAL POSTS

Bison now offers a full line of football goal posts. With both competition single post and recreational H-post designs, this new line has goals for all high school, college and recreational applications. There are Bison football goal posts with official yellow, white, or galvanized finishes, in both high school and NCAA dimensions. All goals can be set in a permanent mount or in a height adjustable removable ground sleeve. Post padding is available in 12 school colors. Custom lettering is also offered.

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NEW SWEEPER

Heavy-duty sweeping is now available for ATV's and Utility Vehicles. Sweepster's new Li'L DAWG Series brings 4-season versatility to vehicles that cannot lift and carry a conventional sweeper and where hydraulic or mechanical PTOs are not readily available.

The series is a tool for cleaning dirt, sand, gravel, or debris from hard surfaces, dethatching lawns, spring clean-up, windrow fall leaves, disaster clean up, and snow removal.

Features include 4 or 5-ft. broom widths, 24-in. diameter polypropylene brush, 8-hp electric start engine, and remote mount at operator station, engine start/stop, choke and throttle.

Sweepster, Inc./800-456-7100
For information, circle 186, or
see www.OneRS.net/209sp-186



NO EXPOSED FOAM

No exposed foam makes this goal post/light pole padding a must when leaving them out in the elements. PROMATS Hexagonal post padding completely encases the foam in vinyl for durability.

Flat surfaces complement graphics and the unique design just plain looks better, says the manufacturer. Can be manufactured for any size pole.

Promats, Inc./800-678-6287
For information, circle 177, or
see www.OneRS.net/209sp-177



INVERTER GENERATOR

Honda's EU3000is is a quiet inverter generator that features an eco-throttle, an electronic governor that automatically controls engine speed to best-fit load. It is capable of running more than 7 hours at rated load and up to 20 hours at quarter load on 3.4 gal. of gas. Also features electric start, oil alert, and overload alarm.

American Honda Motor Co./800-426-7701
For information, circle 184



GOAL POST CATCH NET

Markers Inc. has introduced its Goal Post Catch Net, a practice tool that verifies field goal and PAT accuracy. The loose-fitting catch net is installed between the uprights, above the crossbar, and it captures every good kick, dropping it immediately to the ground, verifying distance and angle.

Three sizes are offered, scholastic, collegiate, and pro series; all can be installed in a variety of ways, with accessories available for multiple installation methods.

Markers Inc./800-969-5920
For information, circle 185, or
see www.OneRS.net/209sp-185

OUTDOOR SPEAKER SYSTEM

Rockustics, a leading manufacturer of outdoor speaker systems and the innovator of the "rock" speaker (speakers in simulated rock cabinets), has expanded its product line with the addition of the FurlEave speaker series, a unique Euro-style weatherproof cave speaker engineered and built in partnership with Electro-Voice (EV).

The design reproduces rich sound over a much broader listening area than traditional cave-mounted "box" speakers and maximizes both audio coverage and quality.

The speaker can easily be mounted on any surface using the Strong-Arm-Mount bracket.

Rockustics/800-875-1765

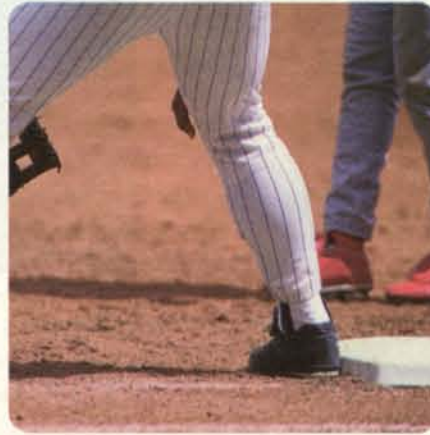
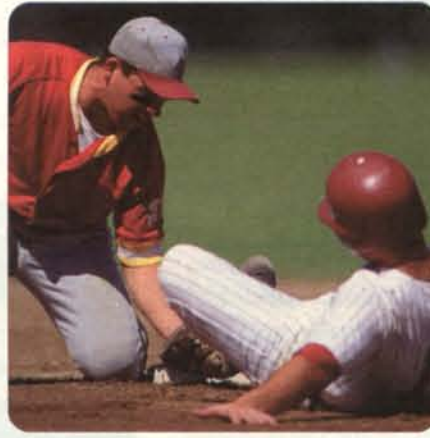
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PARKING LOT PRODUCTS

Barco Products has a summer 2002 catalog of parking lot products, from recycled plastic wheelstops, barricades and standardcaedes, to traffic control signs and pavement marking equipment. Safety markers, trash receptacles, and more.

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For information, circle 182



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ANTI-SLIP STAIR HELP

Garon Treds can help make your stairs safer. Made from heat-resistant extruded aluminum alloy with aluminum oxide grit, the treads will provide traction for a long time, says the manufacturer.

Treds are custom cut and can be applied to concrete, wood, or metal stairs in 11 colors. ADA and OSHA compliant.

Garon Products/800-631-5380
For information, circle 180, or
see www.OneRS.net/209sp-180



Hall of Fame Trip a Great Experience



THE WINNING TICKET in the second SAFE Foundation Drawing provided a great experience for Dick Doyle, systems control analyst for Iowa State University in Ames. The package Doyle won was an expense-paid trip for two to Canton, Ohio, to join in the Pro Football Hall of Fame's 2002 Enshrinement Weekend celebration. Father of three sons, Doyle decided not to play favorites by choosing "just one" to join him for the trip. Instead Doyle's co-worker, Todd Boyd, another big football fan, filled the second slot.

Bob Patt, current SAFE (and past STMA) Treasurer and Civic Center Manager/Stadium Manager for the City of Canton, was the key force in putting together the Raffle package. Patt made sure Doyle and Boyd received their own VIP treatment with all the on-site arrangements in place and running smoothly. Doyle says, "With all the activities going on in Bob's facilities, he made time to meet us and really make us feel welcome. Everything was set up so we could just relax, take it all in, and enjoy."

Doyle and Boyd checked out the NFL Experience, an interactive set of challenges of such individual football skills as passing and receiving to see how one stacks up to the skills of NFL players. Doyle says, "Lots of families were taking part in this. It was fun to see how competitive most of the kids—and many of the adults—were in working through the challenges. They had one display of molds of the arms and hands of some key NFL players. It was pretty amazing to see how big some of the guys really are."

The Pro Football Hall of Fame (HOF) was even more amazing. Doyle says, "I hadn't imagined there would be so much on display for each of those in the Hall of Fame. It takes you through their entire football career. And there's so much more there about the game of football and its history. You could really spend lots of time there, taking it all in.

Having the opportunity to see that alone would be a great trip."

And there was more. On August 5, Doyle and Todd played in the 2002 HOF Golf Scramble at Shady Hollow Country Club. The fifth on their team was retired NFL player Tom Goosby who had played linebacker for the Cleveland Browns. Doyle says, "He was a really friendly guy and had lots of stories to share. Todd and I aren't great golfers, but none of our team were aiming at being top competitors, so we all really enjoyed just playing the course and visiting with Goosby."

Monday evening's events began with HOF Tailgate Party. Security for this event and the HOF game itself had been heightened, as has that for all major events, following September 11. With awareness of that and a potential for rain mowing in, Doyle and Boyd opted to leave cameras behind and just enjoy the evening.

Doyle says, "The Tailgate party was fun. We didn't meet any of the inductees, but we could spot some of them and lots of the past inductees that were there for the ceremonies and the game. Our seats were great for the game between the Houston Texans and the New York Giants. I think I was most impressed watching HOF inductee Jim Kelly, former quarterback for the Buffalo Bills, who led them to four Super Bowls. He's not a very big guy by NFL standards, but he was a great leader. There was a huge turnout of Buffalo fans there for him. And, instead of rain, we got a cool down in the weather and a nice breeze, a perfect night for football."

Not a bad return for a \$5 raffle ticket, especially since it was Doyle's supervisor, Mike Andresen, CSFM, who bought the ticket for him! Doing his part as an STMA Board Member to support the SAFE fund raising efforts, Mike bought enough tickets to fill one out for all of his staff members. Proceeds from this SAFE fund raising event will support sports turf related research and scholarships. For more information, see www.sportsturfmanager.com.