Tile Proves Equal to the Engineering Challenges of Rutgers University Pool Complex

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The completion of the new Competition Pool Complex at the Sonny Werblin Recreation Center located on the Busch Campus of Rutgers University in New Jersey has given athletes a new place to train, students and visitors a modern recreational facility, and tile contractors an interesting installation challenge.

The beautiful and functional $18 million complex replaces the antiquated facilities at the College Avenue Gym, and includes facilities for swimming, racquetball, weight training and basketball.

Billed as one of the top five facilities in the country, the Complex incorporates a one-million-gallon Olympic-sized pool, with a 10-meter diving tower and adjacent recreation pool featuring a moveable floor. Over 26,000 square feet of tile was set in the pools of the facility. When specifying materials for the project, The Eggers Group of New York looked for products which would be capable both of performing well underwater and standing up to intermittent water and chlorine chemical exposure on the pool decks and in the locker rooms.

It was the installation of 2" x 2" ceramic tiles on the recreational pool's moveable floor which provided the biggest installation hurdle. Mounted on hydraulic lifts, the floor allows the depth of the water to be adjusted, while the pool is filled, from zero to 6', to accommodate a diverse program and allow easy access for those who may have difficulty entering and exiting the pool. Mapei Corporation's Kerabond premium floor and wall mortar, mixed with the firm's Keralistic premium mortar additive, was chosen to set the tile. This system provided the high bond strength and flexibility needed to deal with the tremendous stress resulting from the routine raising and lowering of the pool floor.

The same combination was also used to set the 2" x 2" ceramic tiles in the Olympic-sized pool. The Kerapoxy 100% solids epoxy grout system was used for grouting due to its high strength and chemical and impact resistance. Black lane markers were set with tile on the pool floor; depth markers were set with 1" x 1" maroon-colored mosaic tiles, and the Rutgers name was spelled out with 1" x 1" mosaic tiles. Kerapoxy was also used to set and grout the grey and maroon 1" x 1" ceramic mosaic tiles on the surrounding deck areas. Aquatic Development, Ltd., of Cohoes, NY constructed and set the tile in both pools. The tile installation in the rest of the facility, including rest rooms, showers, the trainer's room and pool decks, was completed by Artisan Tile and Marble, NJ. Fitzpatrick and Associates, Eatontown, NJ, was the general contractor for the project.