

Basketball Facility Features Unique Precast Panels

Smith-Midland Corporation developed and manufactured the architectural precast panels that will be a unique feature of Virginia Tech's new basketball facility.

By Christina Fisher. Pictures provided by Smith-Midland Corporation.

Midland, Virginia-based Smith-Midland Corporation provided the architectural precast concrete panels for the construction of the Virginia Tech Basketball Facility in Blacksburg, VA. The \$20-million, 59,000-square-foot practice facility will house the men's and women's basketball programs and will include two weight rooms – one for the basketball programs and the other for Olympic sports teams.

The new basketball facility has been designed to complement the architecture of the Virginia Tech campus. The front of the facility that houses the offices, meeting rooms and trophy area will feature Hokie stone and precast concrete trim

pieces around the windows and entrances. There are also four large precast columns that are architectural features. The part of the facility housing the basketball courts will be clad with the precast panels.

The contract for the concrete panels awarded to Smith-Midland is valued at \$1.3 million. The project was awarded in April 2008, and production began on October 13, 2008.

Manufactured at Smith-Midland's facility, the entire project features 538 pieces, and of those there are 160 large panels. The largest panel weighs 34,000 pounds and is 34 feet long and 11 feet wide. The panels are 6 inches thick, steel reinforced, with a buff limestone finish. In total, Smith-Midland has manufactured 30,125 square feet of architectural precast panels for the project.

The panels feature several basketball imprints and the Virginia Tech logo on the exterior of the facility. Ashley Smith, president and COO, says that Smith-Midland worked with architect Canon Design and general contractor Whiting-Turner early on in order to develop "dramatic precast panels that would also be cost-effective."

Smith points out that the designs were built into the form of the panel; they were not embossed or pressed. "Our form builders are really artists; their work is so fine and detailed."

The form builders use a wood material to create a reverse image of the logo. This is attached to the precast form, and a coating is applied to the wood material to make it smooth so it can be easily removed once the panel sets.

The color and texture of the panels simulates smooth Indiana limestone and complements the Hokie stone used on the rest of the building and throughout the Virginia Tech campus.

"We're really proud to be associated with the project. It will be a nice addition to the campus that will be there for a long, long time," says Smith.

The erection of the building was completed in January. ■



Baltimore-based EE Marr Erectors uses a 200-ton Link-Belt LS-248H to lift the precast panels into place.

