



Bulletin Number: 809

Managing Screen Marks Fact Sheet

Just as heavy duty stripping pads can impart deep scratches into a floor finish that is being deep scrubbed, sanding screens can impart deep scratches into a gymnasium coating that is being refinished. The scratch marks on a floor finish are easy to see when the tile is a darker color and one way to make those marks less obvious is to follow up the black pad scrub with another scrub using a pad that is less aggressive such as a blue pad. This is similar to sanding a piece of wood in your workshop with a coarse grit sandpaper and then sanding it again with a medium grit sandpaper.

On gymnasium floors, the same idea can be accomplished by following up the sanding screen used under a swing machine with something milder such as a maroon pad (SPP for example) under the autoscrubber. There are pro's and con's to this practice however. First, maroon pads are more expensive than blue pads. Secondly, just as a piece of sandpaper wears out after a while, so will the cutting edges of a maroon pad. In order to achieve a uniform look to the floor, the maroon pad on the autoscrubber must be flipped over every 200 to 250 square feet and replaced after every 400 to 500 square feet. This may sound easy enough, but in reality, changing pads on autoscrubbers over and over can be frustrating.

One solution to this problem (the problem of swirls from sanding screens showing through after a gym floor is refinished) is to avoid the use of the sanding screen altogether and simply plan on using maroon pads under the swing machines right from the start. While this technique is certainly capable of creating a uniformly dull floor (provided the maroon pads are being flipped and replaced correctly), it is also fairly common to discover after the fact that the maroon pads didn't remove the ground in soils from the existing finish well. The end result is a gymnasium floor that has dirty traffic lanes buried underneath the urethane finish. This dark and dirty look is one of the principal reasons gym floors wind being completely sanded down to bare wood which is enormously expensive.

To achieve a bright, light colored, clean looking floor, the use of sanding screens is necessary. Depending on how well the floor was maintained since the last refinishing, the choice of which grade of screen you use is worth considering. You may be able to reduce the level of scratch swirls by using a 150 grit screen (instead of 120's or 100's) but this is only practical if the floor was cleaned well throughout the year. Of course, you may still see some scratch swirls unless the 150 grit screen is followed up by a maroon pad.

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Given budgetary concerns, which screen or pad you choose, how many passes you make, how often you flip your pads, and how much you are willing to accept scratch swirls versus ground in dirt, these will all play a role. Knowing that a complete sand down of the entire gym is so expensive, it is unwise to take shortcuts.

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