# Designers: Why the Simple Mill & Overlay is Inappropriate for Running Tracks & Tennis Courts

In March of 2010, Mary Helen Sprecher with the ASBA wrote a fantastic article in Athletic Business making the case that, "A tennis court is not a parking lot. A running track is not a street." Unfortunately, most designers and owners are writing running track and tennis court specifications that treat both the running track and tennis court exactly as if they are streets and parking lots. Due to budget concerns, it is commonplace for designers to instruct bidders on most renovation projects to simply mill 1.5"-2" of the existing asphalt surface course and then install a new asphalt surface course at an approximate depth equal to the milled thickness.

As most of us know, this is a satisfactory specification for most parking lots and roadways as the smoothness tolerances for those facilities do not need to be the same quality as the tolerances for a tennis court or running track. However, even the highest quality milling operations will leave the newly milled surface with gouges, grooves, and variations that will not allow one layer of asphalt to correct the new asphalt surface within a 1/8" to 1/4" inch tolerance as required for new sports surface installations.

Please understand that most asphalt mixes compact approximately 20% for every one inch desired. For example, if you desire 2" of compacted asphalt thickness, you need to install approximately 2.5" of un-compacted asphalt material. If the milling operation gives you a milled surface with variations from one to three inches, which is not that uncommon, you will have finished asphalt surface variations of up to one half-inch. As most running track synthetic surfaces are approximately one half-inch in thickness, you will have variations in the new synthetic surface or sports surface that are too difficult to overcome for a quality running track or tennis court surface installation.

The solution to this is simple! Any time a designer for the owner wishes to specify a mill and overlay for the new sports surface renovation, a "scratch-asphalt levelling" course should be included to true-up the milled surface. In addition and if possible, it would be beneficial to true-up the milled surface using laser-controls, if the existing track was previously built in a way that would allow this technology to be used.

At the end of the day, it is our job to protect the owner's investment and ensure they receive the highest quality installation possible. I think we would all agree, a consistent synthetic surface or coating on top of a quality asphalt installation is the best way to do this. Anything less would be a disservice to the people funding and eventually using the facility.

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