

UW-OSHKOSH INSTALLS LAUNDRY SOLUTION TO STOP MRSA IN WASH



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“Preventing illness and injury is our focus,” says Jack Johnsen, assistant athletic trainer at the University of Wisconsin-Oshkosh (UWO). “The Sports Laundry System here has decreased MRSA outbreaks.” Since the System’s installation, UWO averages just one infection per year, compared with as many as 10 in the past. Reducing cases of MRSA, a staph bacterial infection resistant to antibiotics, is critical to the health of UWO athletes and the success of its athletic programs, Johnsen attests.



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the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, a MRSA outbreak can cause much anxiety for parents, athletes and staff, and MRSA infections can vary from mild to severe.

To ensure infection doesn’t spread among athletes or individuals, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends that contaminated laundry be properly cleaned. The Sports Laundry System is verified by independent

Construction of Oshkosh Sports Complex

UWO installed the Sports Laundry System five years ago during the construction of its Oshkosh Sports Complex, a venue for football, soccer, track and field, baseball and softball competition. Today, three area high schools and seven Division III UWO teams use it for practices and games. Its synthetic turf field – J.J. Keller Field at Titan Stadium – is constantly in use for both soccer and football.

“When you put in a turf field, you can use it a lot more,” says Cindy Suess, Oshkosh Sports Complex Facilities Manager/Head Softball Coach. “We could never have a grass field with that much traffic. But, when you install a turf field, infections and MRSA will be an issue. In warmer months, the temperature of our turf reaches more than 100°F, which helps breed bacteria.” In turn, she says, the chance of infection increases in athletes who are subjected to cuts and scrapes.

The MRSA Threat

The MRSA Research Center at the University of Chicago Medical Center reports that a temperature of 97°F is ideal for staph to grow. “Generally, someone who has a MRSA infection stays infected for just under 10 days if they are treated by a doctor, although many factors are involved and this can vary from person to person.”

MRSA has become a growing problem in athletic locker rooms and training facilities across the country. According to the Official Website of



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laboratory testing to eliminate up to 99.9 percent of infectious bacteria and viruses in the wash—helping keep athletes and coaches healthy.

How the Sports Laundry System Works

UWO's Sports Laundry System includes four highly-programmable washer-extractors, each with ozone injection, and four high-performance drying tumblers. The System, which is sized to fit UWO's athletic laundry production needs, also conserves water, energy and natural gas. It is unlike most laundry solutions on the market, according to Suess, because it automatically combines ozone with the right amount of chemicals, water and wash action during the wash process. Together, these processes ensure disinfection and superior wash quality using significantly less water, and virtually no hot water. Laundry managers or attendants simply select a program number and press start.

So, no matter who does the laundry, uniforms, warm-ups, loops and towels are perfectly and consistently cleaned. "The System is set and programmed to have the perfect balance of ozone, chemicals, water temperature and levels," says UWO Head Football Coach Pat Cerroni. All items are disinfected as they are cleaned.

Sports Laundry System washer-extractors deliver high programmability for total control over every phase of the wash process. Nearly every variable of the wash cycle is programmable and automated to combine water temperature and levels with the proper mix of cleaning chemicals, extract speeds and rotation action. Automatic chemical injection eliminates human error and the possibility of damage to laundered items. Ozone is also injected into the wash cycle at precisely the right time and water temperature. A powerful and safe cleaning agent, ozone disinfects laundry using mostly cool water.

Catapulted Laundry Productivity

At UWO, laundry is quickly cleaned and disinfected. Because the washer-extractors produce extract speeds of up to 381 G-force – considerably higher than most traditional washers – more water is



removed from every load, reducing resulting dry time and improving productivity. This means piles of contaminated towels and athletic wear don't lie around, posing an infection risk. With the high extract of the washers, there is barely any water left in the clothes. Laundry is completed faster and spends much less time in the dryer.

Because dryers run less often, UWO saves on natural gas and uniform replacement costs. "Anytime uniforms spend less time in the dryer, they will last longer," says Cerroni. "Now, our equipment manager can quickly wash towels from a morning practice and have them ready for afternoon practice. Our laundry system makes it easy for him to do his job." Since the installation of the Sports Laundry System, UWO has experienced fewer outbreaks of MRSA; improved laundry productivity and cleanliness; and drastically cut natural gas and water usage. "All of our teams are doing laundry at the same time," says Suess. "The benefit of a Sports Laundry System is you don't have to worry about MRSA, or the over or underuse of chemicals."

Cerroni agrees. "My responsibility is to protect the player. When I bring recruits and parents in, I tell them we have a laundry system that disinfects—it helps protect athletes from infection."

To discover more about Sports Laundry Systems, visit www.sportslaundrysystems.com or call 920-230-8550.



Pat Cerroni, UWO Head Football Coach and 2012 D3 West Region Coach of the Year, conducts practice at J.J. Keller Field at Titan Stadium.