



ASCHER BROTHERS CO. IN
TWO MAJOR CHICAGO ST

Winners

When Rick and David Ascher show up for work, their attire includes neither shoulder pads nor helmet, neither baseball glove nor bat.

The fact is they'll never score a touchdown for their beloved Chicago Bears or hit a home run for the Chicago White Sox.

But the co-founders of Ascher Brothers Co. Inc. have already played a key part in the success of their two favorite hometown sports teams in milestone seasons for each of the franchises.

For the Bears, the 2003 season will be their first in Soldier Field since its \$325 million overhaul. Opening Night is scheduled for September 29, when the Green Bay Packers will visit for a nationally televised Monday night game.

The Sox, meanwhile, have just recently taken a turn in the national spotlight. Their glimmering home park, US Cellular Field, hosted major league baseball's All-Star Game July 15.

But few know that for several anxious moments, some feared that star linebacker Brian Urlacher would be picking off passes at the Bears' temporary home in downstate Champaign, Ill., again this season. Few also know that talk surrounding the White Sox could

be focused on the shoddy appearance of the ballpark rather than the distance of Frank Thomas' latest homerun.

Fortunately, neither is the case. And Chicago fans owe at least a small part of their thanks to a painting contractor and its supplier for that.

TOUCHDOWN!

In December 2002, work on renovation of Soldier Field was in full gear thanks to the clockwork-like scheduling and project management of a joint effort led by general contractor Turner Construction Co. "On time" and "on budget" were on-site buzzwords, due in part to the fact that Turner is an organization with numerous successful stadium completions under its belt. Clearly, they were also motivated by the prospect of a \$6 million per day fine should they or any of the subcontracted trades on the job push back the schedule.

So when nearly all of the project's union trades workers announced one day that they were about to walk off the job, people took notice. Their complaint? An odorous solvent-borne coating system being applied by Ascher Brothers painters to the thousands of square feet of concrete masonry units in the new structure.

C. SCORES BIG WITH STADIUM PROJECTS



Chicago's US Cellular Field (above) and Soldier Field (left) each underwent significant painting projects in preparation for milestone sports seasons at each of the historic venues.

Ascher Brothers painters were following a specification, something they were not at liberty to change simply because the steelworkers didn't like the smell. But the threats of the unhappy workers were taken seriously by all who heard them.

"I was there for a meeting and all of a sudden guys are grabbing me and telling me the other trades are walking out because of the paint we were using," says project manager Jim Detmer. "The first call I made was to Tom Comstock and Sherwin-Williams to find out if there was something else we could use."

Comstock, a Sherwin-Williams professional coatings representative, quickly came up with a solution. An initial coat of Heavy-Duty Block Filler followed by an intermediate coat of EpoPlex Multi-Mil would be retained from the original spec. A topcoat of Centurion Waterbased Urethane would provide a low-VOC, low-odor alternative to the solventborne topcoat.

ASCHER BROTHERS PAINTING

David Ascher likes to use a sports analogy to explain how Ascher Brothers Co. Inc. has grown from a scratch start in 1979 into Chicago's largest painting contractor, turning \$30 million in business last year.

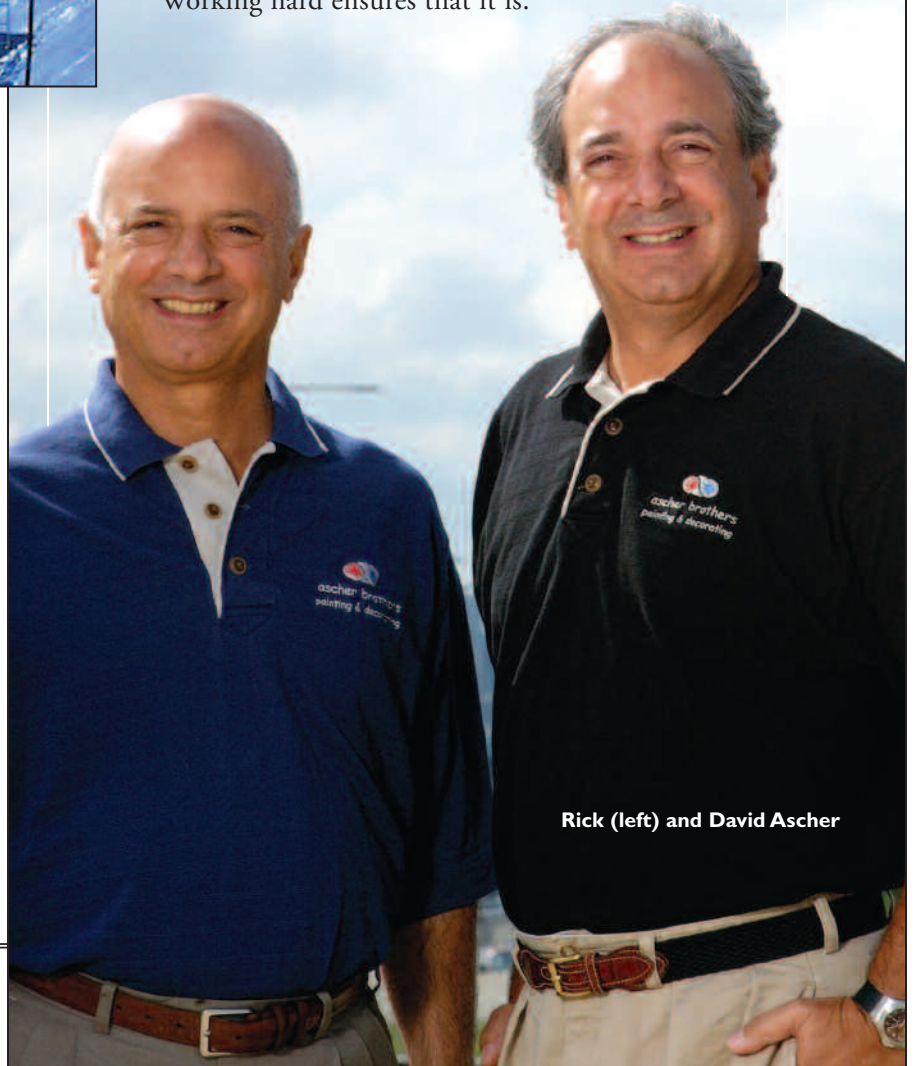
"Let's say I'm running a baseball team that's in first place," he says. "Then Babe Ruth comes and knocks on the door. I don't care if I've already got a rightfielder, I'll find another place to put the one I have. Babe Ruth is going to be on my team."

"That's the way we look at personnel around here."

That plan has armed the company with up to 300 of the top painting professionals in the area, according to David. Combined with the tireless sales and marketing efforts of Rick and David, it's also helped fuel a growth rate of roughly \$1 million in gross revenue per year.

"It's been a lot of hard work — six-day weeks, 12-hour days," says David. "We've tried to make sure that our quality is the best available in the market."

"Working hard ensures that it is."



Rick (left) and David Ascher



A specification change brought about by the efforts of Sherwin-Williams and Ascher Brothers Co. Inc. personnel helped ensure US Cellular Field sparkled for the 2003 baseball season.

Comstock and Detmer took their case to Turner personnel and architects Lohan & Associates, who had written the original specification and had the authority to change it. After the pair presented both the environmental benefits of the waterborne system and the fact that the system would deliver long-lasting performance equal to the solvent-borne system, the architects changed the specification. Painters were back at work that day and quickly caught up on the week's worth of topcoating delays they experienced. The other trades were happy since the new topcoat was comparatively odor-free. And Detmer figures the specification change even boosted his team's overall productivity on the project.

"There's less cleanup involved with waterbornes, you don't go through as many respirator filters and simply put, painters are more productive applying the Sherwin-Williams Centurion system than they are with solventbornes," says Detmer. "In the end, I think a lot of people were wondering why they hadn't spec'd this system from the start."

And if for a passing moment anyone thought that a paint issue would delay the grand re-opening of Soldier Field, they were able to put their fears to rest.

HOME RUN!

As big White Sox fans, Rick and David Ascher were ready to squeeze their profit margins on the US Cellular Field repaint just to have the honor of painting it for the All-Star Game. But when project manager Jim Detmer looked at the specification, something just didn't add up.

Detmer remembered the park had undergone a major maintenance repaint in 1996 largely because Ascher Brothers Co. Inc. had performed the painting for that project. As a result, he knew that exposed structural steel throughout the outfield was finished with a Sherwin-Williams High Solids Polyurethane system.

The new spec called for a power wash of that finish followed by two coats of Sherwin-Williams DTM Acrylic Coating.

Detmer knew both products to be high-quality performers — when used separately. Applied on top of each other, it would be akin to "wrapping the steel in plastic wrap and watching it melt in the hot sun," according to Sherwin-Williams professional coatings representative Tom Comstock.

Ascher Brothers bid the job, and Detmer wasn't surprised to learn the company was nowhere near the low bid.

"We bid the job to do it right, with blasting and priming before the two coats of DTM," he says. "The original spec was

a recipe for a major paint failure within 6 months — right about when the All-Star Game would be played — but we were basically out of the picture."

Not quite.

As a courtesy, Comstock and Detmer brought their concerns to the attention of the management group that handled the project. With Comstock's help, they rewrote the specification to include hand sanding, power washing, spot priming with Sherwin-Williams Corothane Aluminum and topcoating with two coats of Sherwin-Williams Corothane I. The system was compatible with the existing system and offered the added benefit of moisture-curing properties, which figured to be useful since the bulk of the application would occur in November, when the weather can turn raw in Chicago.

Armed with a new spec, management decided to bid out the entire project again. This time, Ascher Brothers won the project.

"There were a lot of meetings of the minds on that project," recalls Detmer. "In the end, I think we really scored some goodwill by proposing to do it the right way and bringing our concerns to their attention." ▣



Sherwin-Williams professional coatings representative Tom Comstock (left) and Ascher Brothers Co. Inc. project manager Jim Detmer admire ongoing coatings work in Chicago.