

Good Clean Fun

Pressure Washer is a Big Hit at Baseball Stadium

For the Reading Phillies, one of minor league baseball's best supported teams, cleanliness truly is next to godliness. The Class AA Eastern League team, which draws over 450,000 fans a season, relies on repeat business from families — people who drive in from communities throughout Pennsylvania Dutch country. They come for good clean fun, and that includes walking into a clean stadium.

"We have great fans and many of them don't even come for the baseball," said Andy Bortz, director of stadium operations and concessions. "They come for the food and to see what crazy things we do between innings. Our fans like how clean the stadium is. That's something I hear all the time."

Instead of the traditional outfield bleachers, the 9,000 seat FirstEnergy Stadium features eating areas, a bar, a pub and even a pool area for pool parties. It all adds up to a major cleanup challenge. And if food stains weren't enough, the 54-year-old stadium receives a fine dusting of black soot that wafts over during the graveyard shift from an adjacent plant.

While Bortz says cleaners at the 68,000-seat Lincoln Financial Stadium in Philadelphia have 25 pressure washers, minor league baseball thrives on thrift. Bortz has just one permanent pressure washer: a 15-year-old, gasoline-powered Kärcher HDS 1000 BE skid-mounted cold/hot water unit. The longevity of his workhorse pressure washer isn't unique. "We have Kärcher machines out there that are over 20 years old and still working fine," says Doug Kochel, president of Kochel Equipment, the team's Kärcher dealer.

When purchasing a pressure washer, Kochel advises that the machine should have adequate pressure and heating capacity for the job and due consideration should be given to all safety, productivity and energy-saving features to ensure the highest return on investment as well as ease of servicing and brand reliability.



Kärcher's pressure washer, designed for safety, convenience and performance, keeps FirstEnergy Stadium spotless.

Bortz's gas unit can be deployed anywhere on the stadium property. After every game, after the debris like peanut shells is removed, the stands are hosed. "If we had 25 pressure washers, we wouldn't hose, but there is no way we can do it on a daily basis," he says. After each homestand, he pressure-washes the main concourse and food courts. About once a month, the grandstand and bleachers get the full Kärcher treatment. The Kärcher machine has a hard-surface cleaner attachment nicknamed the whirler. With a single pass of the whirler, the 54-year-old concrete walkways become a much lighter shade of gray. At the end of each season and just prior to the start of the next, the entire stadium is pressure-washed. The post-season cleanup is especially rigorous. "I take about three weeks," said Bortz. "I go through all the concession areas. I pull all the equipment and clean it." He first applies a strong degreasing agent and the hot, pressurized water does the rest.

Bortz's machine optimizes operator productivity, energy efficiency and water consumption for significant cost savings and extended machine life. All Kärcher burner systems have an industry-leading 90-92% fuel efficiency. Also typical of all Kärcher cold/hot Classic machines, Bortz's washer has several on-gun features: infinitely variable pressure control (870-3,000 psi for the HDS 1000), variable temperature (86 deg. to 175 deg. F) and built-in steam mode (275 deg. F). The HDS 1000 has automatic speed reduction of the air-cooled, four stroke 13 HP Honda GX engine; low-fuel cutoff protection; Kärcher's high performance direct drive axial pump; and a scale-inhibiting system that prevents mineral deposit buildup in the heating coil.

On occasion, and especially at fall clean-up time, Kochel has rented the team a 230-volt HDS 900Ci from Kärcher's ergonomically designed line of electric-powered Classics. The compact 900Ci weighs only 274-lbs., yet delivers up to three gpm and 450-2000 psi. All electric-powered Classics feature Automatic Total Stop as standard equipment. "The biggest thing that kills pressure washers is when you shut the gun off, the machine continues to run in bypass mode," says Kochel. "If nobody shuts off the machine, it can run all night, wasting electricity and wearing out the motor — even causing a fire. "With Automatic Total Stop, when you release the trigger the motor and pump shut off instantly and don't come back on until you restart the machine," he says.

For Bortz, features and specs are fine, but all that really matters is that his 15-year-old machine roars into action when he needs it. "We couldn't do without it, Bortz says."

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