



Hitachi Takes the Lead in Talladega Resurfacing Project

PHOTO COURTESY TALLADEGA SUPERSPEEDWAY

In the world of NASCAR racing, there are fast tracks and then there is Talladega. Formally known as Talladega Superspeedway, the north-central Alabama venue features a 2.66-mile, four-lane, tri-oval track with turns banked anywhere from 18 to 33 degrees. The track's unique layout and design has resulted in some of NASCAR's fastest speeds, like a record-qualifying lap of 212.809 mph set by driver Bill Elliott in 1988, which still stands today. Built in 1969, Talladega has aged remarkably well. But in 2005, track officials recognized that a total repaving on the trademark banked curves — last done over 25 years ago — was in order. It turned

out the same features that make Talladega so unique to racing would prove challenging to its repaving.

EXCELLENT TRACK RECORD

Roanoke, Texas-based Sunmount Corporation was tapped for the project. According to Sunmount's mechanical supervisor, Danny James, the company is no stranger to speedways.

"Speedway repaving has become something of a specialty for us," he says. "Over the years we've done a number of sites including the Texas Motor Speedway three times, Atlanta Motor Speedway, Richmond International Speedway, and Homestead-Miami Speedway. However, I believe Talladega with its steep banked curves

and concrete wall has been the most challenging of them all."

To remove the track surface prior to repaving, Sunmount had a solid game plan in place. Using a Hitachi 450 equipped with a custom-fabricated, extended-reach stick and 54-inch bucket, they would reach up and strip back the material, exposing the sub-base. But the plan quickly hit a major snag: just about every 450-size Hitachi in the Deep South was already rented out for Hurricane Katrina-related cleanup projects.

"We were hitting dead ends everywhere until Robert Greene, the sales manager from J.W. Burrell, came through with a rental Zaxis 450LC

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through their Warrenton, Virginia, branch. Once we had the machine onsite, we had the 47 feet of reach we needed, and we were off and running.”

RACE TO THE FINISH

It takes a lot more than a patch job to put down a surface tough enough to take the pounding of a NASCAR race. To get to subgrade and make it ready for grading and paving, Sunmount had to remove 5 inches of asphalt and 6 additional inches of base material. Adding to the challenge, the company was working under tight time constraints.

“This project started on May 2nd and had to be totally wrapped up by mid-September to be ready for a series of racing events the first weekend in October,” says James. “We were counting on the Hitachi unit being productive to keep that facet of the project moving along. We were not disappointed.”

James says Sunmount’s initial plans called for the firm to have a pair of excavators onsite — one to do the removal of the material and a separate unit to handle the load-out.

“We quickly realized the Zaxis 450LC was so fast and productive, it could handle both removal and load-out with ease. That speed and power, combined with the long arm and big 54-inch bucket, let us grab material and swing around to load to the rear with the pace we thought we’d have with two machines. We removed more than 47,000 tons of asphalt and did so faster than we ever thought possible.”

INCLINED TO BE CREATIVE

In addition to the banked turns, Sunmount was contracted to add 2 feet to each of the Speedway’s pit stalls and widen the track’s pit road by 10 feet. Those two projects alone called for the placement of roughly 950 cubic yards of concrete.

“Those were a piece of cake, though, compared to what we encountered during the actual paving of the turns,” says James. “That steep 33-degree incline meant we had to get creative with our paving approach. To stabilize the paving machine, we put a pair of D-9 Dozers with specially designed arms at the top of the curve. This was definitely not business as usual.”

James says the project easily met the deadlines set by Speedway officials.

“This has been a really interesting project from a lot of different perspectives. We have a good team out there that knows what to do to keep things moving. We were also very fortunate to get the help we needed from J.W. Burress, and we’re more than impressed with what Hitachi did for us. It’s really worked out well.”

Sunmount Corporation is serviced by J.W. Burress, Warrenton, Virginia.



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