

X'S AND O'S | By Steve Mann

All in the Family

From Ridder to Rochester, Rink Systems keeps used boards in the Minnesota hockey community

ALBERT LEA, MINNESOTA-BASED RINK SYSTEMS, a family owned and operated business for more than 30 years, is a leader in the dasher board system industry. While the company serves clients across the country, the Rink Systems team takes extra pride in serving programs and organizations in the State of Hockey.

So, when the opportunity arises to bring two Minnesota hockey communities together, to give previously used boards new life in another facility through the process of repurposing, it's an absolute no-brainer that provides a variety of benefits for all involved. It's like keeping a beloved artifact or piece of hockey history in the Minnesota family for future generations.

"When we complete projects that require older board systems to be replaced, we try to find them a new home," said Rink Systems President Stacey Overgaard. "It's always neat to see them go to another Minnesota program. I think it's appreciated more."

This past year, the city of Rochester, Minn., embarked on a major renovation to its Rochester Recreation Center. Planned improvements to the ice rink included the installation of new boards, glass and netting, locker cubbies along with previously upgraded player benches, penalty boxes and a scorekeeping table. Facility leaders didn't have to look very far to find the right boards and components to fit the job.

Rink Systems had just recently supplied and installed the dasher board system at the University of Minnesota's Ridder Arena, home of the Golden Gophers women's hockey team. When the Rec Center team found out the old boards were available and in solid condition, they jumped at the chance to bring them to Rochester.



► The Rochester Recreation Center worked tirelessly in preparation for the 2026 World Junior Championship Pre-Tournament Series, which hosted Sweden, Switzerland and Denmark in late December.

While the two rink blueprints weren't configured in precisely the same way—the radius in the corners were different, doors weren't in the same place, etc.—the Rink Systems team created and executed on a plan to pull the various components apart, reface and repair as necessary and then

rearrange them, like assembling a puzzle, to get them to fit in the new space.

"We were able to move things around and make it look like nothing got changed and just got dropped right in," said Overgaard.

In addition to the practical and "cool" factor the Gophers' boards brought to Rochester, they also delivered significant cost savings (Overgaard estimates close to 50%). In general, because boards can be one of the biggest capital expenses in a rink, purchasing used instead of new can enable a community to afford boards that were originally from a pro-level or high-end facility, or free up budget for other upgrades.

"Rink managers sometimes don't understand that this can be an option for them, and a lot of times are looking at getting new boards," said Overgaard. "But if the framework and structure of the boards are intact and solid, you can make the old look almost brand new. Oftentimes, by cleaning the surface, removing puck marks from the outer shell, and replacing some of the hardware, in the end you can get a project that looks very good for a much lower cost."

Reusing dasher boards can also make a positive impact on the environment, as it helps keep a huge amount of material out of landfills. It's recycling on a big scale—think steel, aluminum, high density polyethylene plastic panels and more—all getting a second life.

"People want to discard things a little too early which is a shame," said Overgaard. "A lot of times there's a lot more life left in these materials than people understand, and they make decisions based on how they look on the outside. Buying used boards can make a big difference. There are so many benefits." **MHJ**

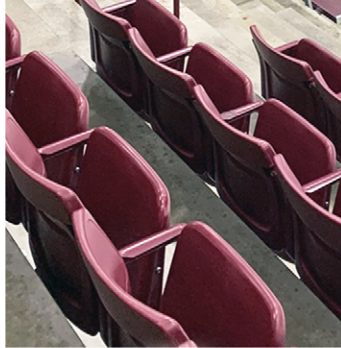
ROOTED IN MINNESOTA



When the University of Minnesota upgraded its dasher boards, the existing system still had life left to play. Rather than disposing, they were renewed and repurposed, preserving a piece of Minnesota's deep, hockey history.

Now rooted in a new community at the Rochester Recreation Center, those boards begin the next chapter.

Rink Systems is proud to stand alongside the rink industry delivering smart, sustainable solutions that keep the game moving forward, creating great-looking rinks where teams want to play and fans come together.



Chapter TWO



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