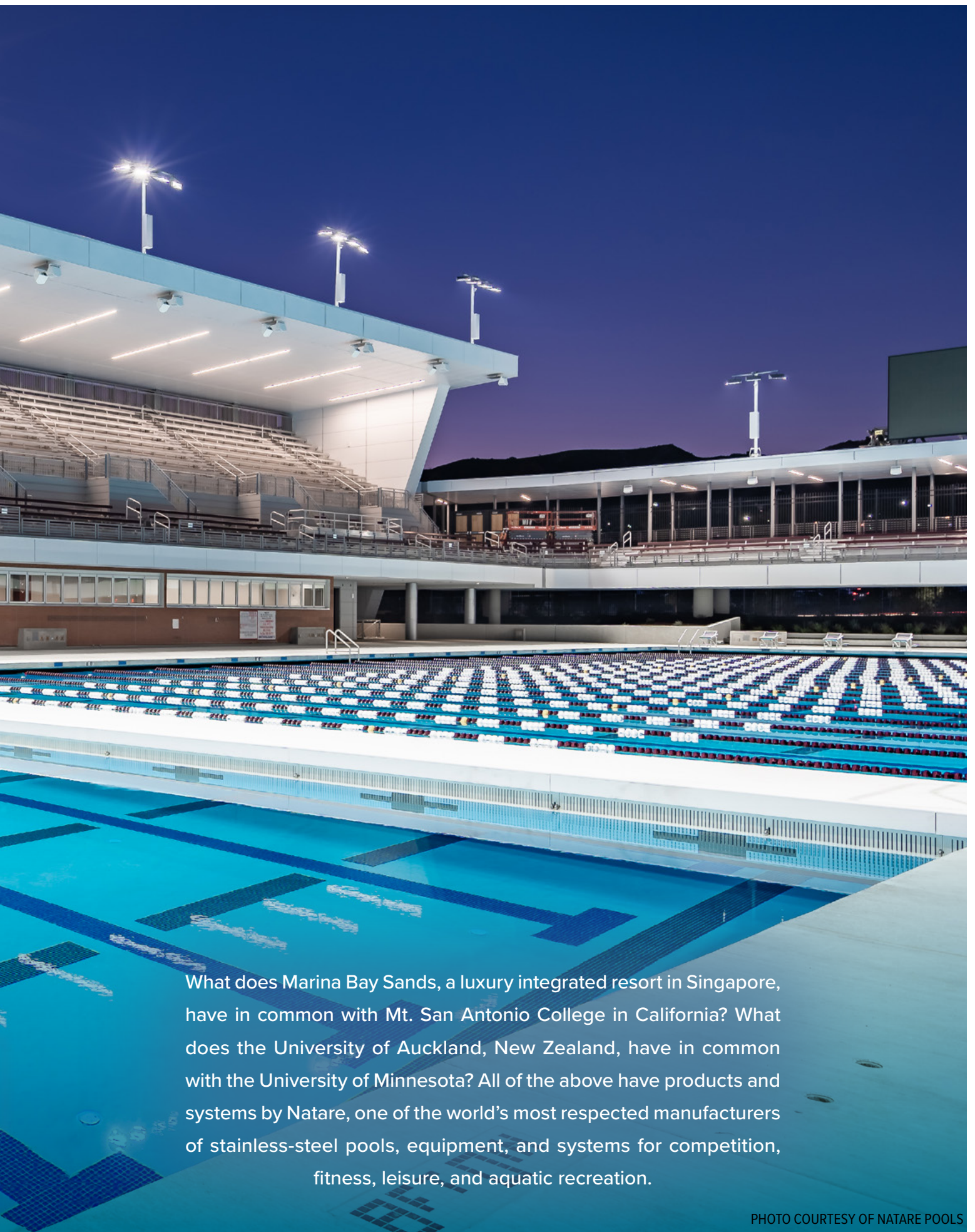


BUILT TO LAST

HOW STAINLESS STEEL IS RESHAPING CAMPUS AQUATICS

BY ROSALIND FOURNIER



What does Marina Bay Sands, a luxury integrated resort in Singapore, have in common with Mt. San Antonio College in California? What does the University of Auckland, New Zealand, have in common with the University of Minnesota? All of the above have products and systems by Natare, one of the world's most respected manufacturers of stainless-steel pools, equipment, and systems for competition, fitness, leisure, and aquatic recreation.

PHOTO COURTESY OF NATARE POOLS



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While Marina Bay Sands boasts the world's largest rooftop infinity pool, Mt. San Antonio College features three Natare Hybrid bulkheads. The University of Auckland has Natare stainless steel pools, filters and bulkheads, and the University of Minnesota has a Natare Hybrid bulkhead. The choice by these four very different entities to partner with Natare reflects a growing understanding of stainless steel's advantages over traditional pool materials. We talked with Joshua Albertson, sales manager for Natare Pools, about colleges and universities choosing stainless to build new pools or renovating an existing one.

PUPN: Before we got on the phone, I was looking at some pictures of your projects online. Why do some look like stainless steel while others don't?

Albertson: With some you'd have no idea they're stainless because of how they are finished. They can be finished with ceramic tile, others with PVC membrane, so you wouldn't necessarily know it was a

stainless-steel pool versus a pool built from traditional materials. There are number of pools we have out there that do have the stainless-steel finish, but it can be all sorts of different things.

PUPN: Is the demand for stainless-steel pools growing on college and university campuses?

Albertson: I would say that stainless-steel pools are gaining more and more traction, especially in the competition, municipal, and collegiate environment. That's really been a shift over the last three to five years. There are several reasons why a stainless-steel pool would make sense in the collegiate environment. One, they're so low maintenance. Once they are installed, you don't have to worry about tile that fails over the years, plaster needing to be redone, or the dreaded "L" word—leaks—because it's a fully welded stainless-steel vessel.

So from a product standpoint it makes a lot of sense, and from a construction standpoint it makes even more sense, because once it's designed and approved, the on-site work is fast. That matters, because the most expensive part of a big project is when you are actually building it, and every day is costing you money.

PUPN: What makes your process faster?

Albertson: We can build the wall systems in sections in our shop and then ship them to the site. When possible we weld them together in our shop as well. We have an army of men and women who are fabricators and welders, so we are very capable of doing incredible work efficiently.

However, there are projects when it makes sense to do the majority of the work on site, but in those cases, the sections are in place and welded together in a matter of weeks. The traditional methods of using concrete, gunite, or other cementitious materials can take several months to get the actual pool construction done. There's an incredible amount of savings on site when it comes to stainless.

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PUPN: Are there any unexpected factors that can slow down your work?

Albertson: The biggest challenge we face sometimes is the amount of time it takes once we have delivered the design package or the submittal package. At that point, the architect, pool consultant, general contractor, and the owner all need to review it. The approval process can be the biggest hurdle, and that's where we sometimes see a challenge.

PUPN: How can university or college clients help make the process go as smoothly as possible?

Albertson: Know who's working on your behalf, whether it's the general contractor or the pool contractor, the architect or the pool consultant. Has the architect been involved in a project before with a significant pool project included? Has the pool contractor proven they can build a facility capable of hosting collegiate events and programs? If

you have organizations that have never been a part of that before, it's going to take more time to get through everything.

PUPN: We've talked previously about the value of bulkheads—essentially floating movable partitions. How do you help campuses decide whether bulkheads are worth the investment?

Albertson: We look at their needs. The bulkheads allow for so much more programming, capabilities, and flexibility. If you build a rectangular pool without a bulkhead, you're limited to only a few different uses. But if you can physically separate the pool, it allows you to have, for example, free swim on one side and swim lessons on the other. You can have kayaking and canoe class at two o'clock while the other students are having open swim. The combinations are endless.

That is a big thing, because it's expensive to

build a pool, and you want the most bang for the buck.

PUPN: Are more colleges and universities investing in bulkheads?

Albertson: It seems like more often than not they choose to include at least one bulkhead. For example, one in Walnut, California—Mt. San Antonio College—has three of our bulkheads in their pools. The biggest reason is they host swim championships every year, and they can use the bulkheads in their competition pool to dial in the course length specifically for the event. They can move the bulkhead slightly to make sure their course is exactly 50 meters or exactly 25 meters.

PUPN: Is it hard to do that?

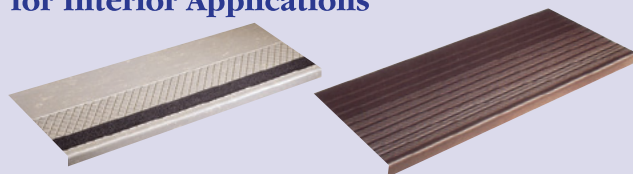
Albertson: It's very user friendly. You really just open a valve, turn on an air compressor, and allow the buoyancy chamber to fill with air, and you make a 15,000-pound bulkhead

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much, much lighter. So adjusting the bulkhead is a reasonably easy process. You can train two lifeguards to do that.

PUPN: Sustainability is increasingly a priority in every aspect of a campus life. Is that true of pools?

Albertson: Absolutely. For one, our stainless-steel pools have the advantage of longevity. We warranty the pool structure for 25 years, and chances are it's going to last much longer than that. So that saves on resources having to go into a new structure due to wear-and-tear.

PUPN: What makes your pools last that long compared to traditional materials?

Albertson: Our stainless-steel pool wall system is by far the best in the United States. One, it's all welded. We do offer a bolt-together system, but our preference is our all-welded system. You don't have to worry about the welds ever coming apart, because they don't. Two, we use heavy gauge material, and three, it's all domestically sourced within 300 miles of Indianapolis. And for the most part we use grade 316L material, which is an upgraded material compared to the more common 304-grade stainless steel.

Then if something needs to change 50 years from now, it's a recyclable material. You can't recycle concrete, but you can recycle stainless. On top of that, our filtration system operates a lot more efficiently than traditional filtration systems from an efficiency standpoint of saving water, chemical, heating, and labor costs.

PUPN: What are some other trends you're seeing?

Albertson: Campuses are increasingly gravitating to attracting students with more bells and whistles, pools with more of a resort feel—lazy rivers and slides, almost of college-kid water park.

PUPN: How much do clients know coming in about stainless-steel pools?

Albertson: It is all over the board. There are people who surprise me when we have our first conversation, because they know so much. And others don't. For the most part it does take a little bit of an education, and that's something we are always striving to do better, whether it's how our website is informing people or the types of brochures and literature we have. But having been in business almost 60 years, I think we're doing something right.

PUPN: Any final thoughts?

Albertson: We are capable of working in all 50 states, and I think our product is even more valuable because we're willing to go anywhere. Not every part of the country has a pool contractor capable of building a major commercial pool like this in what I would call traditional materials. Or they might not have a contractor willing to do it in their part of the country. Because we can bring our fabricated products with us, we can really go anywhere.

And we're USA fabricated. All our stainless steel is domestically produced, and that appeals to our customers.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR: Rosalind

Fournier is a freelance writer/editor in Homewood, Alabama where she lives with her husband and kids. She loves to read and looks forward to March Madness every year, though her bracket is usually a disaster.

EXPLORE SOLUTIONS

MEET THE DEMAND OF COST-SAVINGS

A Brown University student analyzed the fitness center's electricity data, climate mitigation impact, and ran a cost-benefit analysis—determining that if they replaced half of their cardio machines with ECO-POWR™, they would offset 2% of the building's electricity, more than the solar panels already in place.



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Tennessee Tech University turned to SportsArt to furnish their new 6,000 sq. ft. cardio room with fitness equipment that could stand up to the demands of heavy use and receive service quickly if something goes wrong.



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MEET THE DEMAND OF SUSTAINABILITY EXPECTATIONS

When faced with a rec center remodel, Penn State Altoona called on their Sustainability Counsel. Their guidance was to turn traditional, energy-intensive workouts into student-engaging, net positive activities that lower the carbon footprint of the building with ECO-POWR™.



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