

A photograph of a rider in equestrian attire jumping a white horse over a wooden fence. The scene is set outdoors with trees and a building in the background. A large blue semi-transparent circle is overlaid on the left side of the image, containing the title text.

Raising the Standard at Aiken Park with Pre-Blended Footing

Background

Bruce's Field at Aiken Horse Park in Aiken, South Carolina, is one of the premier hunter/jumper competition venues in the Southeast. The 66-acre facility features five competition arenas and three warm-up arenas that accommodate thousands of horse-and-rider trips during major equestrian events.

As a nonprofit organization dedicated to preserving and advancing equestrian sport, the Aiken Horse Park Foundation continually invests in facility improvements that support horse welfare, rider performance and long-term venue success. Maintaining high-quality footing is central to that mission.

"Footing is a priority of any facility like this," said Kate Boggan, Director of Marketing and Communications at the Aiken Horse Park Foundation. "If you don't have good footing, people just don't come."

The demands placed on the facility's arenas are substantial. During major competitions, more than 100 horses may jump in a single arena in a single day. In some cases, an arena at Bruce's Field experiences more use in one week than a private arena sees in an entire year.

To maintain its reputation as a premier destination for competitors and spectators, the Foundation embarked on a long-term arena improvement program.

"This is a groundbreaking innovation, especially in this industry, and if this can continue, it'd be phenomenal."

— Justin Potts,
JP Surfaces



Challenge

The Foundation needed a footing solution capable of withstanding the demands of a high-traffic competition venue while providing the consistency, drainage and performance required by riders, trainers and horses.

Traditional arena construction methods can make that difficult. Footing sand and synthetic fiber additives are often mixed on-site using cattle feed mixers or other improvised equipment, requiring significant time, labor, equipment and staging space. Even with experienced crews, reducing fiber clumps can be difficult, distribution can vary across the arena and packaging materials can create quality-control concerns.

For a busy competition venue, the quality of the blend mattered as much as the quality of the sand. Uneven footing, standing water or excessive moisture can affect performance, increase maintenance demands and undermine rider confidence.

To address these challenges, the Foundation partnered with arena builder Justin Potts of JP Surfaces and sought a solution that would streamline installation while delivering exceptional footing performance.

Solution: Pre-Blended Footing, Delivered Ready for Installation

For the arena renovation, Potts needed a custom footing blend featuring BESTSAND™ EQ products from Covia combined with synthetic footing fibers. The process called for blending two types of sand first, followed by the incorporation of synthetic fibers.

Traditionally, that sequence is performed through batch blending or on-site mixing. Covia moved the process upstream, blending the materials at its Lugoff, SC facility and delivering approximately 1,500 tons of pre-blended footing material across roughly 60 truckloads.



BESTSAND™

Equestrian Sand

The project became the first equestrian installation to use Covia's continuous pre-blending process, an innovative approach designed to improve material consistency, reduce on-site labor and simplify arena installation.

Covia's continuous pre-blending approach helped the project team:

- Reduce on-site mixing time, labor and equipment needs
- Improve consistency from truckload to truckload
- Distribute synthetic fibers evenly throughout the footing material
- Reduce clumping and support cleaner material handling and quality control
- Keep the project moving on a demanding installation schedule

"Every load I got was very consistent," said Potts. "I've never seen the materials so well blended."

The collaboration between Covia's technical team and Potts was critical to the project's success. Together, they developed a footing solution tailored to the specific performance requirements of a premier hunter/jumper competition venue.

Outcomes

The renovated arena exceeded expectations and quickly became one of the top-performing surfaces at Bruce's Field.

Faster Installation and Reduced Labor: Covia's pre-blended footing solution eliminated the need for extensive on-site sand-and-fiber mixing. With the material thoroughly blended before delivery, Potts and the Aiken Horse Park team could focus on arena preparation, grading, drainage and finishing instead of managing labor-intensive mixing in the field.

Consistency: Horses and riders rely on predictable footing throughout the entire arena. According to Potts, the pre-blended footing delivered a level of uniformity he had not previously experienced, with fiber distributed evenly throughout the material and fewer inconsistencies associated with traditional blending methods.

"The product really stood up in a tried-and-true test. Out of all the rings, this one performed the best in the conditions," advised Justin Potts

For more information about BESTSAND equestrian sand, please call: 800.243.9004 or email: BestSand@CoviaCorp.com.



BESTSAND™

Equestrian Sand

Improved Drainage and Weather Performance: The new footing demonstrated outstanding drainage during its first major competition. While significant rainfall created challenges elsewhere on the property, the renovated arena remained consistent and usable in wet conditions.

Positive Rider and Trainer Feedback: Rider and trainers praised the consistency of the footing and its performance during changing weather conditions. “People loved it,” said Boggan. Potts echoed that sentiment: “This is the first time in my career that we’ve received absolutely positive feedback all the way around.”

BESTSAND™ Delivers

As demonstrated by the success of the arena renovation at Bruce’s Field, choosing BESTSAND™ EQ products is about more than selecting a footing material. It’s about partnering with a company that understands equestrian performance and has the blending, quality and logistics capabilities to simplify installation.

Equestrian Expertise

For more than 15 years, equestrian arenas and tracks have trusted BESTSAND EQ products for superior footing performance. Backed by Covia’s 120-year heritage in high-purity silica sand production, BESTSAND EQ products are engineered to meet the demands of horse owners, trainers, arena builders and competition venues.

Pre-Blended Footing Solutions

Covia’s pre-blended footing capability helps arena builders and equestrian facilities reduce one of the most time-consuming steps in arena construction: mixing sand and fiber on-site. By producing a consistent blend before delivery, Covia helps simplify installation, reduce labor requirements and improve footing uniformity.

Justin of JP Surfaces stated, “This is the first time in my career that we’ve received absolutely positive feedback all the way around.”

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Consistent Quality and Performance

BESTSAND™ EQ products are manufactured from fully washed, high-purity silica sand with consistent particle shape, size and angularity. These physical properties help create footing with the balance of firmness, stability and drainage needed to support horse comfort, rider confidence and predictable performance.

Innovation Through Partnership

The project also showcased Covia's commitment to innovation. By using a continuous blending process to produce a pre-blended footing solution, Covia helped address a long-standing challenge in arena installation. Working closely with arena builder Justin Potts and the Aiken Horse Park Foundation, Covia delivered a solution tailored to the facility's specific performance requirements.

Logistics You Can Count On

When arena construction schedules are tight, dependable supply matters. With extensive production capabilities, substantial reserves and one of the industry's most comprehensive distribution networks, Covia helps ensure reliable product availability and timely delivery.

Conclusion

The renovation at Bruce's Field demonstrates the value of moving arena footing preparation beyond traditional on-site mixing. By delivering a pre-blended footing solution, Covia helped reduce labor, simplify installation and improve consistency while supporting the performance expectations of a premier hunter/jumper competition venue.

For horse parks, arena builders and equestrian facilities planning new construction or footing upgrades, the project shows how Covia's blending capability can help save time, reduce complexity and deliver a more consistent finished surface.



1,500 tons of footing

~60 truckloads

Pre-blended footing delivered
ready for installation

1-month implementation
timeline

Thank you to the team at Aiken Horse
Park Foundation and to Justin Potts at
JP Surfaces for generously contributing
their time to this case study.

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