For the University of North Carolina Tar Heels men’s basketball team, the Dean Smith Center isn’t just an arena where games are played – the venue, and its locker rooms, are an important motivator for players and an invaluable recruitment tool for impressing potential recruits.

Having been 15 years since the locker rooms were last updated, the elite team decided it was time for an upgrade that matched their reputation as a breeding ground for many of the sport’s top athletes, including NBA legend Michael Jordan.

The goal of the $5-million locker room renovation was not only to modernize the space, but also to rival those found in top NCAA programs, serving as a point of pride for the athletes as one of the best off-the-court spaces in college basketball.

In addition to expected upgrades to showers and toilets, the extensive renovation also included spaces that maximized the locker room’s use, including a nutrition and beverage station, therapy areas, media room for press conferences and interviews, team meeting and video space, a players’ lounge and separate locker areas for players, coaches and staff.

**Situation**

The entire renovation was limited to just seven months, with an expected completion prior to the start of the 2016 college basketball season. Neuse Tile was only given two months to complete their part in an effort to allot enough time for the other trades to complete theirs as well. Ultimately, the schedule was compressed even more due to the demanding materials selection and approval process, resulting in final completion just hours before the grand opening gala.

**Challenges**

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**High Profile** - There are few college basketball programs in the country with a reputation as prestigious as UNC, which has earned a top 10 national ranking year after year and produced many NBA athletes. Neuse Tile knew from the outset that this facility would double as a recruiting tool and a functioning facility for the basketball team, so the space needed to "wow" visitors while withstand heavy everyday use.

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**Tile Availability** - Due to changes in preferences and long lead times on the materials that were originally specified, the project experienced multiple tile changes. Neuse Tile was called upon to find new sources for products with narrow variance. With each change, hard samples had to be sent out of state for approval from the design team and project committee.

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Ultimately, Neuse Tile’s relationship with local vendors proved to be crucial in the attempt to provide options that were: within design specifications, readily available in the right quantities and the right color of Carolina blue.

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**Tight Timeframe** - The entire renovation was limited to just seven months, with an expected completion prior to the start of the 2016 college basketball season. Neuse Tile was only given two months to complete their part in an effort to allot enough time for the other trades to complete theirs as well. Ultimately, the schedule was compressed even more due to the demanding materials selection and approval process, resulting in final completion just hours before the grand opening gala.
A LATICRETE Solution

Nearly 6,000 square feet (557 m²) of large format, glass and mosaic tiles were installed by Neuse Tile during the locker room renovation, each with associated waterproofing and substrate preparation.

To resolve many issues before and during the construction process, LATICRETE® products were used in conjunction with various TCNA installation methods. Thanks to HYDRO BAN® waterproofings’ rapid curing formula, multiple phases of the work were able to proceed simultaneously with careful coordination.

Completed and often concurrent installations included mud-set installations, the use of various membranes, thin-set installations on concrete, large format glass wall tile, extensive waterproofing, the use of linear drains and preformed niches, and tile installations in the construction of therapy pools. TCNA Methods F113-16, F112-16, F125-Full-16, F115-16, W2021-16, W243-16, W245-16, B420-16 and P602-16 were used.

The array of solutions provided by LATICRETE products and technology proved to be a perfect match for this technically diverse and difficult assembly of installations. Since multiple tile types were used throughout the project, almost every area required different products for installation. Installations ranged from very simple, such as adhering the tile to drywall, to the much more difficult mud-set tile in the pools.

Unique uses of conventional products were also creatively applied to allow design concepts come to life from sketches and ideas. Multiple uses of decorative and functional profile edgings for everything from floor transitions, bullnose substitutes, mirror trims and channels for low-voltage lighting, added to the creativity this project required, but also to its complexity.

"With so many wet areas and surfaces that require frequent cleaning, tile installations were a prominent part of the overall project. It was crucial for our team to be able to rely on the performance of LATICRETE products when dealing with so many different installations on such a multi-faceted project."

~ Nyle Wadford
President of Neuse Tile Service, NTCA Five-Star Contractor

Outcome

"Our many years of experience, technical knowledge and craftsmanship as an NTCA Five Star Contractor were called upon during this process. That, and a great deal of collaboration from the entire construction team, as well as the product solutions from LATICRETE, made this tightly scheduled project a huge success," added Wadford.

The UNC’s men’s basketball locker room is now considered among the best locker rooms nationwide and continues to be a talking point for the school at large.