



**METAL DASHER SYSTEMS
CHOOSING THE RIGHT METAL FOR YOUR FACILITY**

Many arenas will purchase a dasher system only a couple of times during the life of their building. Decisions on such a complex requirement can be difficult, with many decisions requiring extensive research. The selection of your frame construction may be one of the most important, and the question of whether aluminum or steel provides for the better dasher system is currently an area for debate.

As a manufacturer of both aluminum and steel systems, *Maple Leaf Gold* does not have a preference as to which type of metal the customer selects for their dasher board frame. We do however feel that both types have their role in the market, and care should be taken to ensure that consideration is given to facility needs and uses before choosing one over the other.

Aluminum frames are much lighter than steel. On our System 400 Professional Model, the aluminum frames are 60% lighter than the frames of the same model in galvanized steel. Once the finishing plastics and fasteners are added, the difference is reduced to 40%, however this 120 pounds per section is significant when handling multiple frames in tear-downs and set ups.

Dasher systems are now built with the understanding that they should flex on player impact, rather than remain rigid and resistant to movement. As a result, modern factory built systems, whether aluminum or steel, have a lot more flex in the frames than older models.

Aluminum is more forgiving than steel, has a highly attractive maintenance free finish, and being considerably lighter is easy to handle. Being a softer metal, aluminum does require more care in the design and manufacture than steel, is more prone to problems with durability of fasteners, and in our experience does not have as long a life expectancy as similar steel framed systems.

That being said, if the facility will be removing and reinstalling all or large portions of the dashers on a regular basis, has elite players using the facility, or wants to be considered "leading edge", then an aluminum system should definitely be a consideration.

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Multi purpose facilities are often selling an "event" rather than "ice". Speed and ease of turn over is paramount in changing between these events, and any delays could result in large revenue losses for the facility. In these cases, longevity of the product is less important than ease of handling, and any features that speed up the change over process are extremely valuable. These facilities can easily cover the cost of a new dasher system from the revenue of just a few events.

Steel on the other hand is heavier and more resistant to stripping of fasteners. Typically steel frames are hot dip galvanized after the welding process to provide a highly attractive finish that is often mistaken for aluminum, and provides complete corrosion protection for the metal. The harder metal is more durable than aluminum and gives a longer life expectancy than aluminum framed dashers. In the unusual event of damage to a frame, repairs can easily be made by most local welders.

The additional weight of a steel framed system is not an issue where all or most of the dashers remain in place on a permanent basis. Facilities with smaller budgets, limited operating and maintenance funds, or are essentially selling ice time, often rate the durability and longevity of their dasher system near the top of their list of priorities. Where these conditions are present, a steel framed system may be the best option for the facility.

So, to the question of "do aluminum or steel frames provide a better dasher system?" The answer is "Yes!".

Both metals can provide the better dasher system, but which is the better system for your facility depends on your evaluation of the facility's use, needs, budgets, and preferences. Taking the time to consider these issues will ensure that you make the correct selection for your facility, eliminating costly maintenance or the premature replacement of your dashers.

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