

JETBLUE PARK SAFETY NET RIGGING CASE STUDY

Red Sox New JetBlue Park Marks Debut for High-Performance Synthetic Rope

For the 2012 spring training season, the Boston Red Sox are unveiling a brand new stadium in Lee County, Florida that will feature a first for major league baseball – and it's something that hopefully won't be noticed by the fans.

The new JetBlue Park at Fenway South replicates the exact field dimensions of Boston's famous Fenway Park. For added authenticity, it even has its own Green Monster, Fenway's famous 37 foot, 2 inch left field wall and an original outfield scoreboard from Fenway. Seating 10,000 spectators, with an additional space for 1,000 fans in standing room areas, the state-of-the-art facility is the first to use high-performance ropes to support the netting behind home plate.

The rapid pace of construction was nearing completion and all the final preparations were being made when Rob Huff and his team from C&H Baseball arrived in late November, 2011 to install the new safety netting behind home plate. Joining C&H was Samson's application engineer, Frank Choltco-Devlin, to help employ Samson's high-performance synthetic rope, Validator-12, to hold up the netting.

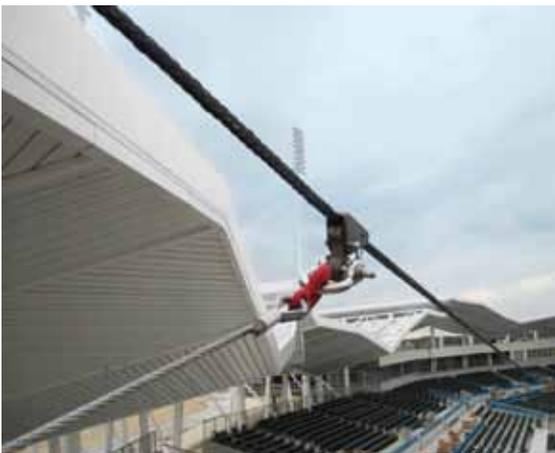
Traditionally, steel wire rope has been used to hold up the netting because of its strength and ability to hold the netting with firm tension. However, steel wire rope has its challenges. Due to its weight (1 lb. per foot), it can be awkward to handle. The gross weight quickly adds up considering JetBlue Park requires 700 – 800 feet of support rope. In addition to the heavy weight, steel wire rope will rust in the elements and although it is taut at the time of installation, it stretches over time and the tension has to be tightened every 6 months or so.

THE BENEFITS OF SYNTHETIC ROPE

Huff stated, "Typically, when C&H arrives to install the netting we are one of the last contractor's on site. Laying out the steel wire ropes was a problem because they are heavy and abrasive and would scratch and damage many rows of seats and any Plexiglas in the area. Switching to a lightweight, high-performance synthetic rope solves these issues."

For this application Samson recommended Validator-12, which according to Choltco-Devlin, "is convenient for handling in the field and it's easy to splice to exact specifications". He described Samson's Validator-12 as a "12-strand rope constructed out of Vectran® fiber, a high-performance multifilament yarn that's spun from liquid crystal polymer." According to its manufacturers, Kuraray Co. Ltd., pound for pound, Vectran® fiber is five times stronger than steel wire rope. Choltco-Devlin explained that "the unique fiber has exceptional strength and rigidity with very low stretch, stands up to the elements, and is both cut and abrasion resistant. It's ideal for supporting a load under tension for extended periods of time."

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Samson's high-performance synthetic rope, Validator-12, is suspended from JetBlue Park's rafters to hold up the netting behind home plate. Because the rope is very strong, durable and has extremely low elongation under constant load, it's an excellent choice for steel wire rope replacement.

Steel wire rope can be awkward to handle due to its weight (1 lb. per foot). And the gross weight quickly adds up considering JetBlue Park requires 700 – 800 feet of support rope for the stadium. Steel wire rope also can rust in the elements and the tension needs to be checked and re-tightened every 6 months or so.

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The advantages of using Validator-12 soon became apparent when the nets were first suspended in front of the seating. "This process almost always involves a lot of adjustment and re-tensioning to ensure the netting is positioned and set correctly." Huff recalled, "When the synthetic ropes lifted the main cable system up for the first time behind home plate, the tie-back lines required a few final adjustments. Adjusting steel wire rope is often a long and arduous process to reposition the wires into the right place. However, with Validator-12 it was simple, easy and the entire installation process took less than half the time [in this case one day instead of two] when compared to using steel wire rope—allowing other contractors to work without interruption."

When asked if he will consider using synthetics again for future ballparks, Huff enthusiastically replied, "Yes, we have plans to convert other baseball parks to Validator-12. Along with being quicker, easier and safer to install and maintain, the rope is black so the sight lines aren't noticeable, so watching the game is more enjoyable for the fans. We plan to use it wherever we can." Over the long-term, Huff expects that other major league baseball parks will follow suit. He added, "Because the rope is so light and easy to use, employing a winch system will now allow stadium crews, instead of outside contractors, to control the set-up and take-down of the netting system resulting in a huge savings in both time and cost."

THE SAMSON ADVANTAGE

When asked about making the decision to use synthetic ropes for this application, Huff replied, "The stadium architects initially expressed some concern about switching to synthetic ropes because this was to be the first major league stadium to employ them." Huff added, "We thought it might take some time to convince the architects, but Samson was unbelievably quick to respond. In one day they provided test data that more than satisfied any initial concerns they had." The advantages of switching from steel wire rope to Validator-12 were more than evident, including relying on Samson's technical expertise in the field.

Currently, the new Marlins Park in Miami is set to become the first regular season major league ballpark to use Samson's Validator-12 and C&H Baseball will be there.

For more information on Samson's complete line of high-performance ropes visit our website, www.SamsonRope.com, or contact our customer service department.

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Samson's application engineer, Frank Choltco-Devlin, inspects the Validator-12 ropes prior to installation.



Splicing Validator-12 is simple to do because it's lightweight and easy to handle.