Line Striping: One Coat vs. Two Coats

When it comes to running track striping, there is an occasional misconception that two coats of line striping may be better than one. This can be a logical conclusion from the lay perspective, but unfortunately this assumption is incorrect and can lead to an inferior end product. There are several challenges and potential issues associated with applying initial line striping in two coats.

Application
The application of a second coat can create splatter and overspray that may result in a "fuzzier" line edge. Accurately aligning stencils and consistently applying paint during the second coat can also be an issue.

Accuracy
Tolerances of line striping are quite tight but do allow for slight variability. When attempting to paint over an initial coated line or marking, there is essentially zero tolerance, making the installation of a second coat nearly impossible. Since the second coat is based off of the initial coat and not a marking survey, slight deviations in the initial coat can be exacerbated by the second coat.

Paint Thickness
A second coat of line paint will increase the mil thickness of the line paint installed on the track surface. Line paint installed at a thicker mil thickness tends to crack and peel because it is too rigid to expand and contract with the resilient track surface. In addition, increasing the mil thickness of line paint with a second coat will lead to a reduction in the texture of the track surface, thus reducing surface friction. A reduction in surface friction can cause the track surface to become slippery or perform noticeably differently in areas that received the line paint. Appropriate paint thickness is achieved in a single coat by selecting the correct spray tip and accurately controlling the application speed.

Visual Aesthetic
When installing the second coat of line paint, any slight deviation from the initial coat will create the appearance of a wider or "wobbly" line. Because the lines from the first and second coat will not perfectly align, the portions of the lines that have two coats will be visually different from the portion that only has one coat, creating a shadowing effect.

For the above reasons, applying two coats during initial striping of a running track is not advised. It is recommended that a properly applied single coat should be installed.

Differences in site, weather and soil conditions require variations in construction and repair methods and materials. Readers are advised to consult an ASBA Certified Track Builder, a design professional with experience in designing sports facilities or a qualified contractor before undertaking construction or repair of a running track facility.