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The Hendrix Pool

In the heart of Conway, Arkansas, sits an imposing structure. Its massive glass walls and roof glint in the sunlight, drawing attention from the flowing stream of cars that circle the nearby roundabouts. The Bob Courtway pool on the Hendrix campus is the home of the Aquakids, a local swim team, and the Warriors, the Hendrix college team. Some may criticize and attack the pool for its lack of fancy features and new gadgets, but the facility does not find its beauty in overly complicated frills; it has a simplistic elegance reflective of the sport of swimming.

The exterior of the building is impressive nonetheless. Rough brick rounds the lower half of the building from shoulder height to the ground. Glass sprouts out of the brick foundation like a man-made forest. It winds all the way up the roof, which opens and closes to provide fresh air to the building. The glassy exterior gives it a light, airy feel from the outside. If the roof is open, the roar of water being churched within and the tweeting of whistles waft through the air. The entrance of the building is starkly contrasted with the grand glassworks above; a simple metal door and a few half-hearted brick pillars are all that designate the point of entry.

Immediately upon entering, a guest would be greeted by a minimalistic foyer, with white tile and a petite gray reception desk, usually manned by an uninterested college student.

Entrances to the locker rooms are on either side of the desk, men's on the left and women's on the right. The locker rooms have a mirrored wall behind the reception area. Inside the locker rooms, the icy metal lockers and drab gray tiles sap the heat from anyone who enters. The

softest sounds cast echoes to the far ends of the room, and the tiles hold droplets of water in their small ruts, causing the chamber to smell faintly of chlorine. Individuals come and go quickly because this environment is not designed for comfort.

To get to the pool deck from the locker rooms, one must maneuver through a narrow passageway that winds behind the rows of bleachers. A wave of hot, chlorinated air slaps all who enter the pool area, regardless of how open the roof is at the time. The air is so thick that some swimmers complain that they feel as if they can drink it. After one gets over the shock of the harsh atmosphere, the pool becomes prominent in the senses. The water that seemed tame from far away now clearly appears as a roaring, churning mess of bodies and white foam. The sound of the water alone is deafening as it echoes off the concrete and glass walls, and the shouts of coaches and the screams of whistles regularly punctuate the chaos. The ten lanes of the pool stretch out for what seems like an eternity, and at the distant edge, two three-meter diving boards tower above the water. The pool area is blindingly bright; the glass roof and walls allow every shred of sunlight into the building and provide no shade whatsoever. The light catches the water and shines all the way to the depths of the fourteen-foot behemoth.

The Bob Courtway pool does not require all of the extravagant extras and frivolous cosmetics that are currently popular with larger schools. Just like in swimming, sometimes the simple solution is the most effective, elegant, and efficient.