

Swim Pool Makeover



Before and after the acid wash. The pool walls went from yellow to blue white

By Michael Heller

Water LIFE Editor

After 13 years there were settlement cracks in the pool deck and the tile had come off in several spots around the pool. The filter leaked and the leaking filter ultimately rusted and shorted out the pump. It was time for maintenance.

Although I am told this is standard procedure, the biggest problem was the way the pool was constructed in the first place. When they built the pool they shot the pool shell with a high pressure concrete mix, then they filled in dirt around the pool and poured the concrete deck so that it overlapped the top of the pool shell. With time, flooding and several hurricanes the fill began to settle at the outside edge of the deck. This raised the inside edge of the deck that was on top of the pool shell. When it moved a crack developed. The crack ran behind the pool tile so the tile popped off and the pool began to leak water.

I rented a concrete saw and since my back was in a bad way my friend Charlie Knuttles of Knuttles Concrete sawed the deck

all around the pool.

When the dust cleared I called Ralph Bellon of Bellon Pools to install a new skimmer and reroute one of the return lines to make a therapy jet for my back. Ralph is a friend of our diving writer Adam Wilson.

"Anything wrong with a pool, Ralph can fix it," Adam said. He was right.

After the skimmer was in Charlie and I started on a new concrete cap on

top of the old pool shell. This was not an easy job. It required three weeks of work and numerous trips to the dump and the Depot. Charlie drilled over 200 holes in the concrete top of the pool shell so we could epoxy steel rods into it and anchor new reinforcements. His son Chaz, who also drives an Ambulance, cruised by the house one day to check on our progress. The Ambulance got the neighbors interested real quick.

Our pool is curvey so we soaked plywood in the pool for several days to get it soft enough to bend forms around the outside radiuses. For the inside forms we used masonite. After it was all formed we pumped it with 5000 pound concrete with fiberglass strands added for strength. It came out great.

The pool was a tan-brown from the years of age and discolored Charlotte County water. Ralph came back to help put up the new tile. "You ought to acid wash this pool," Ralph said.

Acid washing mostly involves using a sprinkler can filled with diluted muriatic acid and walking around the top of the empty pool sprinkling the mixture down the sides. The trick is, you also have to know when to hose it off.

Ralph used a submersible pump to pump the slurry of acid out of the bottom of the pool and back onto the walls and steps again. Then the pool was rinsed down and pumped out.

The result was the clean bright surface the pool had when it was new! The down side of acid washing is the acid eats up a little of the finish so it shortens the time you have until you have to refinish the entire pool.

While we were at it we installed a new filter. IMHO the Hayward DE (dimataeous earth) is the ONLY way to go. I am a firm believer in dimataeous earth. It's easy, it's cheap and the water is soooooo crystal clear.

We also put in a new pump. As far as pumps go I learned that all the new stuff is basically crap. Right now, if you get a couple of years out of the new Chinese made motors you are doing good. That is the word on the street.

We found a NOS (New Old Stock) pump in the back of a warehouse in Tampa. It is a Sta Rite Max E Glass II pump. Those are great pumps but you can't get them any more. Hopefully this one will last another 13 years.

Now the pool is back up and running. The water circulation is better than ever and the new therapy jet feels great on my back. This was maintenance money well spent.



Above: Ralph doing acid wash. You can see the new cap.
Below: Chaz helping with the form work



Brian Hague

Mike Hague

The Hobby Shop
Everybody's Toy Store
941-625-5524

Fax: 941-743-7661
www.gatorhobbies.com

3835 Tamiami Trail
Port Charlotte, FL 33952