



Securing our sporting world

Lorna Webley takes a look at some of the challenges faced by the Events Security operations of G4S around the world

There is not a moment in time when, somewhere on the planet, a sporting event is not being played out in front of cheering spectators. Sport is an important part of almost every society, though the games vary in nature and popularity from country to country.

American football attracts huge crowds as well as massive TV audiences. This year's Arizona-Pittsburg Super Bowl XLIII, played on 1 February before 70,774

spectators in the Raymond James Stadium in Tampa, Florida, and was also watched by an incredible 98.7 million television viewers – almost one-third of the US population.

For the organisers of such events, effective security and crowd management services are essential, which is why G4S teams will be out in force this year to protect major sporting occasions around the world.

Its long-standing involvement in the sporting world also gives

G4S an opportunity to showcase its abilities to customers and the public alike.

That is particularly true in the UK, where The Championships tennis tournament at Wimbledon, horse racing at the Epsom Derby Festival and golf at The Open, which this year takes place at Turnberry, Scotland, are just some of the annual events in the sports calendar where the organisers, staff, competitors and visitors can rely on G4S's Events teams



LEFT: G4S teams provide security at top horse-racing events, including the Grand National, Royal Ascot and the Epsom Derby Festival.

ABOVE: Tennis fans enjoying the weather at Wimbledon, under the watchful eye of G4S.

to provide a safe and welcoming environment.

However, such events are not without their challenges, including the potential threat of exhibitionists, protestors and terrorists determined to interrupt or disrupt the tournaments.

G4S Events has been providing the All England Lawn Tennis Club, home of The Championships, Wimbledon, with a security operation for over 22 years. It gives a year-round security service to the members' club but steps up its security capabilities in the lead up to The Championships.

Over the years, as well as the Club facilities being extended and upgraded, the G4S Events team has also grown to 750-strong during the two weeks of The Championships which this year will run from 22 June to 5 July. During

Wimbledon fortnight, which attracts up to 475,000 visitors, G4S security officers perform a range of duties including vehicle and bag searches, ticket inspection, player escort and on-court protection.

"Our security officers serve as a visible reminder that safety is our number one priority," says Mark Hamilton, managing director of G4S Events UK. "The security operation at The Championships has become more complex over the years as there have been a lot of changes to facilities, and this year Centre Court has been fitted with a retractable roof and temperature control system.

"As a result of the refurbishment programme, we have worked closely with the organisers to deliver a comprehensive and integrated security solution that meets their needs and those of their visitors."

Protecting race meetings

For many ardent horse-racing fans, the Grand National, Royal Ascot and the Epsom Derby Festival are the highlights of the social calendar, with news of who attends and what they are wearing grabbing the headlines as much as the racing results.

G4S Events has a long-established relationship with Jockey Club Racecourses (JCR) and has provided a secure environment at the Epsom Derby Festival, a two-day event in June, for the last 20 years. In 2008, a G4S Events team of over 500 staff secured the event, which is attended each year by the Queen.

The organisers, supported by Surrey Police, were keen to reduce the police presence at the event to a level that both parties felt was →



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R&A, organisers of The Open Championship which is held at one of nine British golf courses, on a rotating basis. G4S first provided security in 1972, when the championship was held at Muirfield and was won by Lee Trevino, and has continued to do so ever since. This year the event, which attracts the world's top golfers, takes place at Turnberry, Ayrshire, in July. Among the duties of the G4S security officers will be ensuring that none of the tens of thousands of spectators carries a mobile phone through the gates.

Soccer security

Before and after a match, now more than ever before, soccer clubs around the world are relying on G4S events security teams to provide rigorous crowd control and stewarding services.

With the need for increased security measures, G4S Norway has already demonstrated that its state of the art security solutions in the new Telenor Arena will enable security officers to patrol and monitor the stadium with greater ease.

G4S has implemented a range of security systems that include alarms, access control, CCTV, intercom integration, mobile patrol and static security officers.

Since February this year, the Telenor Arena, built on the site of the old Oslo airport, has become the home ground of Norwegian Premier League football team Stabæk IF. The indoor stadium has the capacity to seat 15,600 soccer fans and a concert audience of 23,000. G4S Norway will expand the scope of its event security capabilities in this multipurpose arena by providing stewarding at exhibitions, fairs and other sporting activities.

Manchester United striker Dimitar Berbatov makes good use of G4S in his home country, Bulgaria.

more appropriate. G4S Events collaborated with JCR and the police to create a robust security and stewarding plan that fulfilled the requirements of the event.

Faced with the challenge of managing high volumes of people of varying profiles, in several areas and across a large open space, G4S Events provided a number of door supervisors and staff to secure the grandstand and ticketed areas, while experienced security officers managed the crowds of racegoers entering and leaving the site.

Members of the G4S team also patrolled the bookmaker stands and market area on the lookout for rogue traders. In addition, 32 security officers who had been on a site-specific training programme, were equipped with stab vests and plastic cuff restraints in order to provide a restraining and detention

service.

Mark Hamilton explains: "Our customer's number one priority was to ensure the 130,000 visitors had a safe and enjoyable experience at the Epsom Derby Festival.

"We are the only private company in the UK granted permission to detain and remove members of the public on land which has unrestricted public access. To be awarded this status, we had to demonstrate that G4S has the capability to provide the calibre of staff required to carry out functions normally allocated to the police, while ensuring the safety of everybody attending the prestigious event."

Long association

The record for the longest security partnership in sport must surely go to G4S's association with The

Meanwhile, G4S has been providing Manchester United soccer star Dimitar Berbatov with personal and event security for over two years at his own request, in his home country of Bulgaria.

A G4S Bulgaria security team was recently required to take control of the crowd when 2,000 people arrived at the Military Club in Sofia to catch a glimpse of the famous striker who has been voted Bulgarian Footballer of the Year five times. Berbatov had flown home from England to present talented young people with achievement awards from the Dimitar Berbatov Foundation.

"Securing the event was a tough task, particularly as the venue was overcrowded with kids, parents and fans, as well as the media," comments Krasimir Bojinovski, G4S Bulgaria's operations manager. "Dimitar Berbatov showed his appreciation by thanking our team for doing such a sterling job in difficult conditions. Under the watchful eye of our trained and professional security officers, everything went smoothly."

Gala event

G4S provided manned security and technical solutions at the Malmö Indoor Gala athletics event in February, which took place at Malmö Arena in Sweden, one of Europe's most modern and spectacular indoor facilities, with the capacity to seat 15,000 spectators.

Around 50 of G4S's customers were invited to watch the athletics competition and participate in a seminar about tackling organised crime.

Right on track

This August, G4S Belgium will be living in the fast lane when it provides security services at the Belgian ING Formula One Grand Prix event in Francorchamps. A team of 150 staff will be responsible for managing bag searches, directing VIPs to their respective areas and restricting unauthorised access to certain areas during the three-day event on the fast and hilly track through the Ardennes.

Alain D'Haese, service line director, Event Solutions, G4S Belgium, says: "Our security officers encounter daily challenges of varying degrees. Before they are selected to work for us, they are required to be able to speak three languages – French, Dutch and English – in order to communicate with the many nationalities attending the Grand Prix.

"To meet our customers' needs, we have developed an integrated event solutions concept, which also includes non-security services – for example, parking attendants, hostesses, cloakroom attendants, stewards, catering support and shuttle services.

"Our customers want a solution that is cost effective, flexible and reliable, and is not just about providing security staff and stewarding. We are the only company in Belgium able to offer customers such an extensive range of smart event solutions."

All of which means that spectators attending events protected by G4S can focus their full attention on enjoying the action while leaving others to ensure they do so in a safe and well-managed environment. ■

Assisting disabled people

Attending a major sporting event can sometimes be a real trial for disabled people, but thanks to Fraser Bathgate in Scotland, G4S is leading the way in dealing with disability issues at public events. Fraser knows only too well some of the difficulties associated with attending a concert or a sports tournament, after spending half of his life in a wheelchair since he was paralysed from the waist down in a climbing accident at the age of 23. However, Fraser has not let his disability stop him from living a full life. For the last eight years Fraser, a G4S Events supervisor, has trained hundreds of events safety staff in how to deal with issues arising from disability including customer care and venue assessment

As well as consulting on disability issues, Fraser also carries out a range of operational duties including control room liaison with major agencies such as the emergency services and CCTV operation.

"I'm fortunate to work for an organisation that is willing to listen and ask my professional opinion on issues," explains Fraser. "I am able to empathise with many disabled people through my own experiences, particularly as I'm responsible for checking out venues in advance to see how disabled-friendly they are before giving my feedback to the customer. Providing effective security and crowd management services, regardless of physical disabilities, are essential to the enjoyment of an event."

Interestingly, Fraser has become an expert on access for disabled people, and he has even had consultations with the government to address issues on physical access.

Mark Hamilton, managing director of G4S Events UK, comments: "It's important that we continue to find ways of ensuring that people with disabilities have the same opportunities to enjoy major events, sports or otherwise, safely and securely. Fraser has given us a real insight into their needs, which is enabling us to make recommendations to our customers, so that events are easily accessible for all visitors."



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