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**Security could enhance sports fans' experience**

Used as a business tool, security could boost its ROI

By Whit Richardson - 08.09.2011 [Email](#)

NEW ORLEANS—There's a paradigm shift expected in the sports security field that would change the security of sporting arenas from a cost center to a money maker through the incorporation of mobile apps and video surveillance that will not only improve security, but improve fans' experiences.

That is just one of the major takeaways from last week's 2nd annual National Sports Safety and Security Conference and Exhibition, which spanned four days in New Orleans, according to those who spoke to *Security Director News*.

For example, video surveillance that's used to monitor sensitive areas of a sporting venue, could also offer fans an insider's view of places like a team's bullpen at a Major League Baseball game. Besides improving the fan's experience, these video feeds could be accessed through a mobile app that would offer the marketing department an opportunity for advertising. "The chance to change security from a black hole to a revenue generator was very exciting for us," says Lou Marciani, director of the National Center for Spectator Sports Safety and Security at the University of Southern Mississippi, which hosted the conference.

The conference attracted a record crowd of more than 300 security professionals, integrators, and manufacturers, Marciani said.

For Jim Cawley, the NBA's senior vice president for security, the conference offered a venue for the sharing of best practices across the different sports leagues and other security markets that touch on the sports world. "Lou and his facility down there offer a new opportunity for people in this industry to parallel what's already been done in other industries for a while and formalize that relationship," Cawley told *Security Director News*.

Another takeaway from the conference is the benefit of incorporating social media into an arena's security apparatus. One example is allowing people to report fan violence or other threats via text messages. "We must pay more attention to embracing fans as part of the solution for security," Marciani said.

The texting tool—dubbed "tattle texting"—is currently used at as many as half the NBA arenas, according to Cawley, but his goal is to see it implemented across all NBA arenas by next season. "We all appreciate the opportunity technology provides to give us that force multiplier effect we're looking for," he said.

The conference also featured an awards ceremony to recognize exemplars in the field of sports security. Mike Rodriguez, security director for the U.S. Open Tennis Championships, one of the largest sports events in the country, received the 2011 Distinguished Leadership Award, while 13 sports arenas and organizations, such as NFL's New Meadowland Stadium and Little League Baseball, received Facility Achievement Awards. ([View the full list of winners.](#))

The center was founded in 2005 to address the needs of sports security, such as education and training, that arose in the wake of 9/11. "I wouldn't be talking to you right now if it wasn't for 9/11," Marciani said.

With the 10th anniversary of 9/11 only a month away, Marciani said the industry has taken great strides in the last decade. "I'm very proud of where the profession is going and, most importantly, that the university has a chance to play a part in it."

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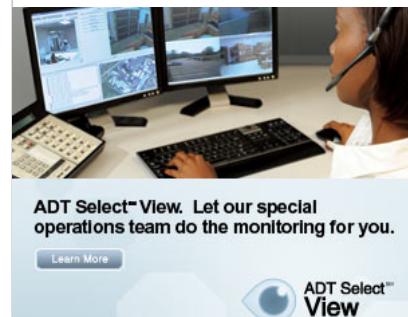
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