

Red card for violence in soccer.

Spectators involved in robberies and fights or with ties to drug dealing are prevented from entering Uruguay's Centenario stadium thanks to a facial recognition system.



Organization:

Uruguayan Football Association (AUF)

Location:

Montevideo, Uruguay

Industry segment:

Stadiums/Venues

Application:

Facial recognition

Axis partners:

H & O Tecnología Integrada, Herta Security

Mission

Stadium security during matches has been a critical factor for many years. It's also been something that is difficult for clubs, security forces and soccer associations to control. Robberies, fights and drug dealers are some of the most significant issues in Uruguay. These problems have kept peaceful and family-oriented fans away from this sporting spectacle. That's why the Ministry of the Interior decided to install security cameras in stadiums and gave the Uruguayan Football Association (AUF) four months to implement it.

Solution

In order to efficiently monitor what happens in the different areas of the stadium, which has a capacity for 63,000 spectators, the integrator H&O Tecnología Integrada positioned 15 AXIS Q6055-E Network Cameras in the grandstands and box seating sections, along with 41 AXIS P1365-E Network Cameras in the entrances. The entrance area cameras are integrated with Herta Security software to allow facial recognition of fans. At each game played at Centenario, security operations receives automatic alerts generated by a

cross-check of criminal data that checks for trouble-makers or people who are banned from the stadium, thanks to a unified list maintained by the Uruguayan Football Association, the Ministry of the Interior, and the soccer clubs. This makes it possible to identify 25 faces per second and take the necessary measures. In this regard, Centenario stadium is a pioneer in the use of facial recognition technology in the region.

Result

In addition to preventing the entry of people with a recent history of violence in stadiums, the new system is changing the behavior of soccer spectators in Uruguay. After seeing as many as 200 people detained in different incidents at the same football match, the number has been reduced to 10 arrests on average per match. People now know that if something happens there will be evidence and consequences. This new context has encouraged families with children and seniors—who little by little had abandoned the stands because they felt unsafe—to return to enjoying football matches.

“We thought it would be very complex, or that it would take a long time to see a drop in the violence occurring at each match. However, from the very start the camera system worked perfectly, allowing us to control access for people who were barred from entering; it prevented them from gaining access.”

Andrea Lanfranco, Executive Secretary General of the Uruguayan Football Association.

Historical problem, rapid response

In Uruguay, enthusiasm for soccer is enormous. The main stage is the Centenario Stadium, an emblematic site for this sport at a global level. It was here that the first match in the history of the World Cup was played—in 1930, when Uruguay was the host and succeeded in being crowned as World Champion.

Over time, this site where people gathered to enjoy a peaceful 90-minute spectacle had become a meeting point for certain groups and individuals who had no interest in the sport. This led to the search for an advanced access control solution that used facial recognition.

“We absolutely did not know how the project would work out, and we had the requirement from the Ministry of the Interior to ensure a safe environment for spectators and for athletes at Centenario Stadium,” explains Andrea Lanfranco, Executive Secretary General of the Uruguayan Football Association.

When the tests were finalized, the entire project was implemented in four months, including a monitoring center that operates 24 hours a day, 365 days a year, within the stadium facilities. “All this was possible thanks to the great effort made by our association to tackle the investment; in addition, we have the support of FIFA and CONMEBOL,” adds Lanfranco.

Germán Ruiz, director at H&O Tecnología Integrada, who advised and supervised the AUF throughout the project, says, “The timeline within which the camera system had to be operational was four months starting from the order from the Ministry of the Interior. That meant we needed to make very precise decisions at each stage in order to optimize implementation, and that was exactly what happened.”

Secure entrances

The 15 AXIS Q6055-E Network Cameras, which display what happens in the general admission stands, parterres and boxes, allowed the number of police officers on site to be reduced.

In turn, the 41 AXIS P1365-E Network Cameras located in the entrance area can successfully identify up to 25 faces per second in real time. They are cross-checked against a database that is continuously updated jointly between the AUF, the Uruguayan soccer clubs, police authorities, and the Ministry of the Interior. If a suspect is identified, security personnel instantly receive an alert at the monitoring center.

After it was announced that this type of monitoring would be operational, the authorities have noted that fan behavior has changed for the better. It has become a preventive measure for detecting any suspicious person or situation.

For Germán Ruiz, “the cameras that were chosen, along with the great performance from the Herta software, allowed us to see the success of the outcome and to return tranquility to such the massive and popular spectacle held in this stadium—one of the 15 largest stadiums in the Americas.”

It should be noted that in addition to project's success in practical terms, this implementation at Centenario Stadium received the 2018 ALAS award for Best Private Project, awarded by the Latin American Security Association, the main organization that brings together security industry companies in Latin America and the Caribbean.



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