

Munich facility fest

SAM Editor Mark Webb looks back on a Stadia & Arena conference and exhibition that was tightly focussed on the practical concerns of venue managers.

The Olympia Park did a great job hosting Stadia & Arena at the Event Venue building and Olympia Park General Manager Wilfrid Spronk (pictured below) sparked off the whole two days with a passionate explanation of how the iconic 1972 Olympic Stadium could not continue as the home of Bayern Munich. Ever the true professional, nevertheless there was emotion in Spronk's voice as he recalled Bayern winning its 17th national title in the stadium, a victory that became a farewell party. Spronk clearly relishes the challenge however and reeled off a list of event initiatives designed to fill the calendar in the Park. Munich is a music city and the Olympia Halle arena gets top rock acts, to which Spronk is adding open-air classical, opera and cinema. The recently completed Allianz Arena isn't allowed to compete in this sector.

A wine exhibition has attracted 15,000 paying customers and is set to expand. A five-a-side soccer league on four indoor fields is booked out evenings and weekends. A Chinese festival and cross-country skiing championship move the Park into autumn and winter, while next summer it will be a FIFA fan park during the World Cup. Construction has also begun on a permanent Sea World attraction. Of the 5.4 million registered visits per year, 1.5 million came to Bayern games but Spronk thinks his management team has come up with a real economic alternative to a soccer team, and concluded: "We can be optimistic about what will be happening in the future in the Park."



FIFA (Nigel Walker) and UEFA (Thierry Favre) kicked off a busy conference by jointly explaining their sensible cooperation on artificial turf, resulting in a two-star category for pro use and welcome joint funding of technical and medical research. The first two-star installation has just gone in as a training pitch at Borussia Moenchengladbach's new stadium and in Peru in September the entire U17 tournament will be on FIFA approved artificial.

Staying secure

European venues are not immune from terrorist activity (witness the car bomb outside the Bernebeu in Madrid) and managers make a

point of keeping up with the latest state of play from the security services.

Very welcome therefore was an update from Chris Bain (pictured below) from the Metropolitan Police Force. Bain's explanation of how terrorists planted a timed bomb in the concrete structure of Grozny stadium during construction, resulting in the assassination of the president of Chechnya, reminded everyone what they are potentially up against. Management of venue access, including parking areas, is vital, argued Bain. He also touched on criminal damage, e.g. the betting syndicate that sabotaged UK floodlights, and the theft of works of art from trophy rooms.



Saima modestly proclaimed its contract at the New National Stadium, Wembley.

Access control is central to security and safety so of particular interest was the ESMA breakout session, which brought together managers and consultants with the access control experts from Skidata, Kaba, Siemens and Saima. Each expert reported back to the conference on the second day.

Siemens compared how different ticketing strategies affect customer data. Skidata emphasised the open nature of its Handshake system for bringing together ticketing and access control. Kaba reported on the speed of access possible through different types of gate. Saima modestly didn't mention that the company, who met with Wembley operations staff at Stadia & Arena 2004 in Milan, is to supply access control to the new National Stadium. Saima is equipping Wembley with 132 turnstiles and 33 access points in the VIP areas secured by Pass 107, a gate style familiar from metro (underground) train stations.

Taking chances

Are stadiums missing a trick when they could use surrounding land to host participation sports, by building an indoor facility? Some stadiums, such as JJB in Wigan, have built artificial turf 'soccerdomes' and the Reebok Stadium in Bolton has an adjacent arena. Basketball and many other sports could also be targeted.

At Stadia & Arena 2005 both Rubb Building Systems from the UK and Duol from Slovenia showed how it could be done. Rubb designs and constructs with a PVC polyester membrane cladding tensioned over a structural steel frame system. Duol supplies air-supported structures, complete with ventilation system, lighting and backup power. Both provide the clear space and height required by sports.

Upgrading often provides an opportunity to improve the materials and systems in your building. Schott Glass sell an antireflective glass called Amiran, ideal for corporate and media boxes, from which the view can be disrupted by light reflection. The Stadia & Arena catalogue entry for Schott contained an incorrect email address. Use: dominique.wengler@schott.com



Venelli revealed which royals sit on these VIP seats.

Meeting stricter environmental standards is part of today's management job. In his conference address about the future of venue design, HOK's Richard Breslin touched on how architects can play their part. The exhibition also had some answers. The foam base for artificial turf made by Schmitz Foam Products removes the need for rubber infill and can be taken to normal landfill for disposal or returned to the manufacturer for recycling.

Money-making ideas come and go but the 'fan brick' always delivers. Bricconomics showed managers how to make cash from supporters who want to put down a marker.

Dressing your building can transform it for special events and the Austronet stand showed that huge impact can be achieved. Austronet can be hung inside or out, displaying images printed to your design. It can also act as a projection screen. Importantly the fine net lets air through and so does not flutter in the wind but offers rain protection.

Sharing information is what it's all about and Phivos Constantinides's presentation on stadium management summarised much of the private discussion that goes on between Europe's top stadium managers. He delved into facilities management, event creation and successful outsourcing, emphasising the delivery of customer satisfaction and the need for leadership.



ESMA breakout session on access control. Each group reported back to the conference.



Design perspective

British architecture firms HOK Sport Architecture (exhibition sponsor above) and Arup Sport (speaker J Parish below) were the only architects making the effort to meet with the people who know most about what happens in stadiums and arenas. Can other architects claim to know how to provide venues that will work properly if they don't interact with venue managers?

This attitude of European architects contrasts starkly with architecture companies in the USA. 360°, Crawford, Ellerbe Becket, HNTB, HOK, Kiku Obata and Kimball are all SMA sponsors and benefit from an ongoing exchange of information. If, as architects claim, form follows function, architects need to talk to venue managers so that they might understand more about function than they currently do.

