

Fan Experience and Security Management Balance: Applying the Grid Leadership Model

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The tragic events of September 11, 2001, changed America forever. The assault on American values, ideals, and lifestyle has been felt throughout all facets of our society, including the sport industry. Since 9/11, the sports industry has increased security at major sport venues and high profile events such as the Super Bowl, World Series, and Olympics. Large public gatherings that take place nearly every weekend such as Collegiate Football games and NASCAR races are potential targets for terrorism (Hurst, Zoubek, & Pratsinakis; Durling, Price, & Spero, 2005).

In recognition of potential threats at sports venues, the Department of Homeland Security in 2004 hosted representatives from professional and collegiate sport and shared a "Best Practices" policy manual for security at high profile events (DHS.gov, 2004). Implementation of such security measures as hand-held metal detectors, search of bags and personal items, parking prohibitions, limited vehicle access near stadiums and arenas, barricades, increased security, surveillance cameras, public address announcements, video board warnings and evacuation plans, implementation of no-fly zones, no-reentry policies at football games, "pat-downs", backpack bans, and bioterrorism detection equipment are commonplace at professional and collegiate athletic contests (Pantera et. al, 2003; Iwata, 2002).

The University of Southern Mississippi Center for Spectator Sports Security Management (SSSM) was created in 2005 through a research grant awarded by the Mississippi Department of Homeland Security (MDHS) and the Mississippi Emergency Management Agency (MEMA). The purpose of the grant was to create a research-based model for effective security management of university sport venues. In conjunction with Security Management Solutions (SMS), sport stadium/arena vulnerability assessments were conducted at seven of the state-supported universities in Mississippi. Through a modified Delphi research model, standards and best practices were developed regarding sport event security and management of athletic venues. (Hall, 2006). Beckman, (2006) continued the goals of the Center of conducting research to improve sport security policies, and enhance emergency response, evacuation and recovery operations due to terrorist incidents, national disasters and crowd management issues, by devising a system for evaluating emergency response capabilities at a university sporting venue. Beckman (2006) utilized "table-top" exercises with law enforcement, emergency management, fire department, athletic administration, and university administrative personnel to determine effective response strategies in simulated emergency scenarios.

Faculty and students involved in the University of Southern Mississippi Center for Spectator Sports Security Management (SSSM) conducted research in the Fans' Perceptions of Security Management at the NASCAR event at Talladega Superspeedway in October of 2006. Over 1650 spectators completed surveys regarding the security management and fan enjoyment at the event. Results indicated that fans felt that management practices overall led to a perception of safety, and felt security measures were not obtrusive or did not affect Customer Satisfaction. However, 43% of the respondents indicated they did not know how to get emergency care if needed, 47% indicated that evacuation procedures and signs were not clear and easy to follow, and 64% believed that a terrorist attack at a major sporting event in the United States was a high probability (Phillips, D, Hall, Phillips, J, Cunningham, 2006).

Intercollegiate sporting events have begun to receive additional security attention and focus in recent months. During the 2005 football season, a student strapped with explosives was headed to the stadium entrance at a University of Oklahoma football game, when the explosives prematurely detonated killing the young man (Hagmann, 2005). In September 2006, nearly 60,000 fans attending the LSU vs Mississippi State University football game in Baton Rouge, LA, had to be evacuated because of lightning strikes in the close proximity to the stadium (Macaluso, 2006).

One problem of the growing focus on policies and procedures to increase safety at sporting events, has been the deciding where the balance between fan safety and fan enjoyment is maintained. Sport Managers have had little research to guide them in the management decision-making process to maintain that delicate balance. Utilizing The Leadership Grid ["one best way to lead model"] (Blake and Mouton, 2004) as a theoretical framework for managerial styles relating to Concern for People and Concern for Results; Cooper, D. Phillips, J. Phillips, Hall, and Cunningham (2006) developed a new paradigm relating Fan Experience to

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Security Operations at Sporting Events. The Security Management Grid is a management model describing the balance between security operations management and a positive fan experience.

Survey research was conducted at sport events during the 2006-2007 academic year to help test the application of The Security Management Grid. Utilizing an instrument developed by researchers at the University of Southern Mississippi Center for Spectator Sports Security Management (SSSM), consisted of a 20 question survey complete with sections on participant demographics, and a 5-pt. Likert scale series of questions relating to security management measures, emergency care, searches, banned or prohibited items, crowd control, and customer enjoyment. Results of the surveys and their application to the Sport Security Management Grid will be presented and discussion will address the interface between (A) Fan Experience/Enjoyment, and (B) Security operations/Safety. Both dimensions must be optimized to assure achieving maximal marketing potential and return on investment. The operations side, including marketing and sales, must learn to effectively interface with the security operations side including law enforcement, emergency management and traffic/crowd control (Cooper et. al., 2006)

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