



Case study



Mercedes-Benz Stadium Makes Guests and Staff Feel Like They Are Walking into a Friend's House with Fan-friendly Security Screening

Organization Overview

ORGANIZATION: Mercedes-Benz Stadium

LOCATION: Atlanta, GA

TEAMS HOSTED: Atlanta Falcons (NFL) and Atlanta United (MLS)

STADIUM CAPACITY: 71,000 Fans

URL: www.mercedesbenzstadium.com

Solution Snapshot

Goals

Transform fan ingress experience

- Extend fan-first culture to entrance experience
- Eliminate screening queues
- Deliver touchless screening
- Increase number of guests enjoying concessions before events

Increase staff flexibility

- Reduce security staffing requirements without impacting security
- Expedite training of security personnel
- Improve job satisfaction

Solution

People

- Configured on-site pilot and worked with stadium team to assess findings
- Trained stadium security team on Evolv Express® system operations and analytics
- Deliver ongoing consulting support to optimize system deployment

Process

- Configured and deployed 15 dual-lane Evolv Express® systems
- Trained stadium security team on Express system operations and analytics

Technology

- 15 Evolv Express® Dual Lane Systems
- Evolv Insights™

Outcomes



Largely eliminated ingress queues, even at peak times



90%+ of fans express satisfaction with ingress experience, a 3x improvement



Reduced 100 walk-through metal detectors to 15 Express systems



Dramatically improved security staff experience, morale, and retention



Decreased number of security staff needed for efficient and secure guest ingress from 250 to 90



Increased concession sales through faster stadium entry



Went from average of 40% of people being flagged for secondary bags checks to 6% to 12% with Express



Everything a Fan and Spectator Wants in an Experience

When Mercedes-Benz Stadium in Atlanta, Georgia opened in 2017, fan experience was at the very center of its design.

Whatever you think a sports fan or events spectator wants, the state-of-the-art Mercedes-Benz Stadium has it—from 4,000 miles of fiber optic connections snaking around the building, to the world's largest scoreboard, to hot dogs and all of the Coca-Cola you can drink for just \$2.00

The stadium, which is home for the NFL's Atlanta Falcons and MLS's Atlanta United, opened with rave reviews in 2017. But pro football and soccer are just a start. There's an average of 40-50 major events and 200 private events hosted at the stadium each calendar year, including the annual Chick-fil-A Kickoff (a series of football games kicking off the College Football season), the SEC Football Championship and countless concerts by world-renowned artists.

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— Greg Overstreet, Director of Security, Mercedes-Benz Stadium

First Impressions Matter for Guests

In 2019, the security team embarked on an initiative to enhance the Mercedes-Benz Stadium guest experience further by transforming arrival and entry.

“Our objective is to make attending events at Mercedes-Benz Stadium feel like you’re walking into a friend’s house—to a place you belong or even own,” notes Karl Pierburg, Chief Technology Officer at AMB Sports and Entertainment, the parent company of the Atlanta Falcons, Atlanta United, and Mercedes-Benz Stadium. “Certainly, the prior walk-through metal detector experience didn’t convey such—waiting in a long line in front of each stadium entrance was not the experience we wanted.”

Even though the overall feedback from guests was very positive, 7 out of 10 cited their arrival at the stadium as an area of frustration and dissatisfaction. “Guests would go through a long queue to get into the stadium and complain in their feedback that they spent 30 minutes waiting in line,” says Greg Overstreet, the Stadium’s Director of Security. “And while we would go back and look at the video and find that it was really only 15 to 18 minutes, we couldn’t deny that it felt like 30 minutes to the guest.”

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The wait time to get into the stadium was also impacting the ability of guests to enjoy the more than 100 concession stands—which is an important part of the guest experience at Mercedes-Benz Stadium. “We intentionally price our concessions to be fan friendly so that families can go to a game or event and enjoy a meal and beverages beforehand,” Pierburg relates. “However, because the queues at our gates delayed guest ingress, too many guests weren’t getting into the stadium in time to enjoy our concessions before games, concerts, and other events started.”

In addition to inconvenience, this also created a safety concerns. “Queues would form due to the screening process tied to the walk-through metal detectors, which created dense crowds of people waiting to enter the stadium,” Overstreet notes. “This was a serious safety issue that we needed to solve.”

A Frustrating Arrival Experience for Staff, Too

The arrival process was a problem for more than just stadium guests. It was also a challenge for staff.

"Our staff bring food and other items that they need throughout their workday, and the walk-through metal detectors created an uncomfortable situation and delays in getting staff into the stadium," Overstreet comments. "Too often, they had to divest everything from their bags and their person to get through our entrance gates."

This negative impact on staff entering the stadium had a cascade effect. "The more friction we could take off of everyone arriving, the greater the likelihood that everyone—guests and staff—would have an awesome event-day experience," Pierburg explains. For security staff, none of them wanted to work ingress screening. "We never had staff

ask to work ingress screening," Overstreet adds. "Indeed, they would purposely ask to work security elsewhere in the stadium."

Hiring and retaining security staff was also a problem. "Virtually every stadium in the country is experiencing hiring and staffing challenges, and we're no different," Overstreet says. To operate the 100 walk-through metal detectors at the stadium, he had to allocate 250 personnel from his security team. "We would need to place a greeter in front of two machines, someone to operate them, a traditional bag-inspection screener, and a supervisor," he explains. Keeping all of these staffed was an ongoing battle for Overstreet.





Vetting and Selecting Evolv

In 2019, Overstreet embarked on a search to find a better entry screening process.

"We pride ourselves on being forward-thinking and innovative, and thus we decided to take a look at the Evolv Express® while attending an event in Las Vegas," Overstreet recalls. "While we were initially skeptical, we quickly concluded that Evolv was the answer to the problems we were trying to solve. We were particularly excited about the fact that we could take resources that we were utilizing at our entrances and move them to other places in the stadium for enhanced guest safety."

But before Overstreet and his team could move forward, they needed to verify the Express system was just as effective in detecting weapons as their legacy walk-through metal detectors. "We did extensive testing and found the Express provided the same, if not higher, detection levels compared to our metal detection systems," he reports.

Part of the process involved setting up an Express system at one of the entrances for beta testing in November 2019. "One of the coolest things we saw as part of this process was watching our pre-drop lines that form before gates; they simply melted away and disappeared," Pierburg recalls



[With Evolv in place,] 9 out of 10 fans say that weapons screening is not a point of contention for them. This contributes to the high marks we get in general when it comes to entry experience, where we rate in the top quarter of all NFL stadiums."

- Karl Pierburg, Chief Technology Officer, AMB Sports and Entertainment

Shrinking System and Staff Footprint

The throughput capabilities of the Express system enabled the Mercedes-Benz Stadium team to reduce the number of weapons screening systems at entrances by 85%—going from 100 walk-through metal detectors to just 15 dual-lane Express systems.

“In addition to recapturing physical space, we reduced the number of security staff at our ingress points by almost 60%—from 250 to fewer than 90,” Overstreet reports. “Hiring and retaining security staff can be challenging, especially with the aversion staff have toward the walk-through metal detectors.”

With the deployment of the Express systems in early 2021, staff started asking to work at stadium entrances. “We went from staff not wanting to work security ingress to actually asking to do so,” Pierburg says. “It is all because of the Express system and the great support we get from the Evolv team. We have some associates who are full time and work here every day and other associates who work here a few times. The Evolv system is so intuitive and simple to manage that they can quickly understand how to operate it.”

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Benefits of Flexibility and Portability

Unlike walk-through metal detectors that cannot be moved, the flexibility and portability of the Express systems enable the Mercedes-Benz Stadium team to move the systems between entrances, when needed.

"If we have an event where we know more guests will enter through certain ingress points, then we can relocate some of the Express systems to those areas," Pierburg says. "The systems are extremely

durable. We move some of them around frequently. Plus, the Evolv team has been extremely helpful in deciding where and how to configure them based on the analytics we see in Evolv Insights."

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With Evolv Insights, we know how many weapons were detected, how many were knives versus handguns, and which alerts were what we call nuisance alarms. We can even compare these security analytics across different event types.”

- Greg Overstreet, Director of Security, Mercedes-Benz Stadium

Getting Value from Data Insights

Both Overstreet and Pierburg benefit from the analytics and reports they get using Evolv Insights™.

"Knowing how many guests move through each entrance compared to ticket scans enables us to know how many guests are in the stadium and at what times," Pierburg says. "We also track how quickly guests are moving through each of our entrances, and visitor arrival curves and counts to manage staffing resources for optimal guest experience. Unlike with our walk-through metal detectors, we no longer have overstaffing or understaffing issues."

Evolv Insights gives Overstreet's team valuable data they use to analyze security-related activities. "With Evolv Insights, we know how many weapons were detected, how many were knives versus handguns, and which alerts were what we call nuisance alarms," he says. "We can even compare these security analytics across different event types."

The analytics also provide the Mercedes-Benz Stadium team with training opportunities. When a fan walks through the Express system with a threat item, a photo of the person is captured and a red box marks the location where the potential threat is located on the body. Additionally, because every guest interaction is captured on video and appended with data at scale, the security team can tap an extensive dataset for training and quality control. "With data from Insights, I can bring up a picture of the interaction with a guest who was flagged coming through an Express system," Overstreet says. "If they had something on their ankle, for example, we use that to remind staff that guests can have concealed weapons on their ankles."



Reducing and Improving Secondary Screenings

The percentage of guests being flagged for a security recheck with the traditional walk-through metal detectors was around 40%.



"Guests had to take off their belt, empty out their pocket and handbag, and go back through the metal detector," Overstreet explains. "Then, of those, we would pull about 40% aside for a more intrusive screening and pat down." This amounts to more than 5 in 10 guests being put through at least one secondary screening. "This was the last type of experience we wanted these guests to have when entering a stadium that we advertise as fan first," Overstreet adds.

With the Express systems now in place, the Mercedes-Benz Stadium team has seen the secondary screening number drop dramatically. "Depending on the event and where we have set the sensitivity settings on the Express systems, secondary weapon screenings have been as low as

6% and as high as 12%," Overstreet says. Even at its busiest, this is a nearly 80% reduction in the number of guests going through secondary screenings."

Plus, because the Express system tells the security operator the exact location of the suspected weapon, secondary screenings are dramatically faster and easier. "It is important to note here that security screening is just as effective as before, and more so," Overstreet adds. "Routine human tasks are replaced with artificial intelligence that never tires. We're simply not searching guests unnecessarily for everyday items like cell phones and belts."

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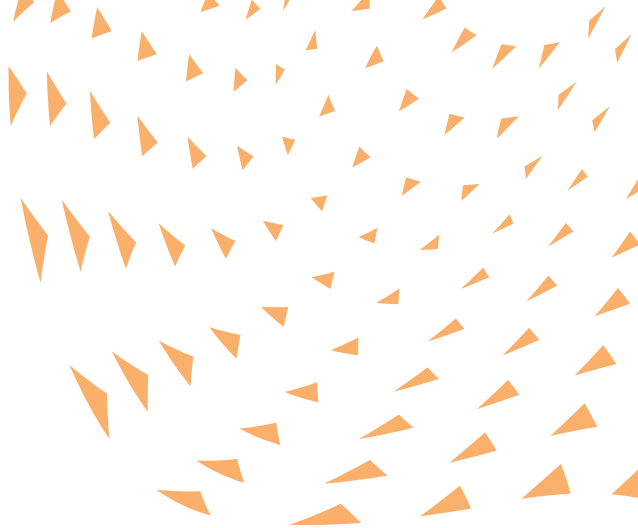
“Off-the-Charts” Feedback

The interactions, collaboration, and support from the Evolv team has been superb according to Overstreet and Pierburg.

“We have gotten nothing but a great response from Evolv,” Overstreet says. “Everyone on their team listens to us—from executive management to their consultants to their sales team to their support team. And they are very responsive whenever we have questions or encounter problems.” The ongoing collaboration with Evolv has enabled the Mercedes-Benz Stadium team to be constantly innovating and improving their ingress process to meet the needs and expectations of everyone who visits and works at the stadium.

Positive feedback from fans and staff has been off the charts since deploying Evolv, according to Pierburg. “Nine out of 10 fans say that weapons screening is not a point of contention for them,” he says. “This contributes to the high marks we get in general when it comes to entry experience, where we rate in the top quarter of all NFL stadiums.” When guest experience with the Express systems is compared to feedback before their deployment—where 70 percent of guests gave their entrance experience negative marks—the difference is astonishing: a threefold improvement in guest satisfaction.

“I’ve really enjoyed seeing Evolv’s success here and with other stadiums,” Overstreet sums up. “This is truly the most innovative technology that I’ve seen in my 20 years of experience in the industry. What makes me so proud is that Mercedes-Benz Stadium was the first NFL stadium to utilize Evolv and prove its benefits.”



Contact us to learn more about how to protect your workforce
and facilities with touchless security screening.

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