

An eye for a winner

When high value game prizes are at stake it is essential to be able to verify the result independently. CCTV is proving invaluable as the ultimate judge for Alton Tower's new 'Hole in One' golf game.



A high value prize, a brand new Peugeot 206, combined with golf, the country's most popular individual sport, is fast turning Alton Tower's new 'Hole in One' golf competition into one of the park's most successful games ever.

The concept is beautifully simple. Contestants attempt a 60' drive across open water to a green moored in the middle of the lake that forms a central landscape

feature in the centre of the park. A 'hole in one' wins the contestant the car. 30% distance golf balls are used, partly to provide an added challenge to the keen golfers who participate, but more importantly to ensure that no balls stray beyond the lake where they could cause injury to other guests. Given their weight the balls float making it easy for the balls to be collected from the lake each evening.

At such a distance it is impossible for a contestant to see whether a 'hole in one' has been achieved. To provide the evidence required to verify a winner's claim a number of CCTV cameras are positioned to cover the site from different angles.

The installation comprises four cameras with the video fed back to the ticket office where a Vista Triplex™ Columbus digital video recorder (VC04Te-40 4 input DVR with a 40GB hard disk) and a high performance 17" Vista colour monitor (PVD1700DG, 750TVL dual standard) are located. Two of the four cameras are positioned at different heights directly opposite the driving range to cover the drive itself. A third is located much closer to the green on a neighbouring island in the middle of the lake. These three cameras are from Panasonic, the standard brand used throughout Alton Towers, feature Vista lenses and are cased in Dennard housings. The fourth camera, a Vista monochrome 'bullet' camera (VSBMC 1/3 380TVL), is positioned in a waterproof, Perspex box on the edge of the green itself to capture images at the bottom of the hole.

Recording is undertaken at a high frame rate and is continuous. This is to ensure that images are captured overnight should someone enter the site in darkness, intent on popping a ball in the hole and then turning up as the first punter of the day to 'claim' their prize.

The installation was undertaken by B&L Electrical Services of Stoke on Trent, a firm of electrical contractors that specialise in rollercoaster rides. At Alton Towers B&L is responsible for installing and maintaining a number of rides in the park, including 'Nemesis', 'Oblivion' and 'Air'. Kevin Burton, a partner in B&L, explains that all the CCTV equipment for the game was sourced from Norbain whose technical support proved invaluable:



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"As electrical engineers the design of a CCTV system is not our specialism. So we took pictures of the lake setting and asked Norbain's Technical Support department to specify what equipment we needed. They actually sent someone up to Alton Towers to assist us and train staff to use the system. Using Norbain makes an installation like this much easier and the reliability of their delivery system is second to none."



The inspiration behind the game is Rupert Hough, Alton Tower's Retail Manager responsible for all the games in the park.

"Alton Towers remains the UK's most successful and largest theme park. During the season we employ 2600 people and have between 5,000 and 20,000 guests a day. This success is tremendous but to remain at the top we have to keep thinking of new rides, new games and new attractions. There is no room for complacency. We're constantly trying to be different, adding value to the day's experience and pushing back the boundaries of what an entertainment park is about."

“When it comes to games we have to strike a balance in the park between the different games we offer but sport-based games is a theme that is definitely increasing in popularity. The ‘Hole in One’ game opened in April and quickly proved a success with our guests. The water aspect to it is quite a draw and of course golf is hugely popular right now. The game is meeting our revenue targets and so we’re now looking to improve and extend the game’s facilities by adding a third driving range ‘bay’ and so on. We might develop the concept more and add a putting game too. CCTV has proved decisive in all this. CCTV monitoring of the game gives us the confidence we need to offer substantial prizes as there can never be any doubt as to who is the legitimate winner.”

Following the positive experience of CCTV at the golf range, Alton Towers is also considering extending its use to monitoring other game areas such as the Arcades where it is essential to ensure that proper cash handling procedures are followed.