

ALL-VISTA LINE-UP IS A WINNER FOR PORTVALE FC

Portvale FC may not be the biggest club in the UK but, with the help of market leading electronic security equipment, they are now in the premiership of match security.

When the club made the decision to upgrade their CCTV system, they had a number of important factors to take into consideration. Footage of the matches needed to be made easily and immediately available to the police should an incident occur, and they needed a system that could be remotely monitored outside of match times. The solution came in the form of installer Select-A-Service (S-A-S) and the Vista SmartDisc.

S-A-S had been successfully supplying the club with stewards for a number of years, so when it came time to tender for the installation, they were asked to participate. Although their bid was not the cheapest, they won the contract on the technological superiority of the solution they offered. An integral part of this solution was the Vista SmartDisc, a powerful tool for combined video alarm verification and remote-site monitoring with all the features of long-term digital recording.

Police Co-operation

Portvale has always worked closely with the police to ensure that, should an incident occur, they have the necessary footage to examine. The new system allows for evidence to be physically removed via the SmartDisc removable drives or the CD writers on the supporting Columbus DVRs. "The local football liaison officers of Staffordshire Police are particularly keen to use the recordings to check back to a certain match day where an incident only comes to light after the match," says Mark Buxton, Director of S-A-S.

As part of health and safety requirements and to provide the Police and system controllers with as much usable evidence as possible, footage of the match and events for an hour proceeding and following the game must be made available. Burning this amount of information onto CDs simply wasn't a practical option for the club. Mr Buxton estimates the number of CDs required to be in excess of 30 which would take a huge amount of time to compile and is simple not a practical solution. Alternatively, the police could just seize the equipment to extract the information themselves. This would leave the club with no means of monitoring the premises and was not an option they were willing to consider.

If no incident occurred during a match, the Hard Disc Drives (HDDs) from the SmartDisc are kept for 31 days, in line with the Data Protection Act. After this period the HDDs are re-formatted, removing all previous recordings. This must all be documented in line with the



DPA, who are very strict on such procedures.

Vista all the way

So, why the all-Vista line-up? "We made the decision a number of years ago to only use Vista equipment in all of our installations," explains Mr Buxton. "The range gives us everything we need – the very latest technology, reliable equipment and excellent technical support should we need it."

The advantages of using just one brand were apparent during the installation. "The whole integration works seamlessly and there were none of the issues that arise when you try to get different manufacturers' equipment to 'talk' to each other," says Mr Buxton.

This was an important factor as deadlines for the project were extremely tight. S-A-S had just one month, during the closed season, to get all the equipment installed and working. "We were really up against it," recalls Mr Buxton. "We were working from 6.30am to 9pm each day and coming in at the weekends. In the end, we finished all the final checks at 7pm, the day before the first match of the season!"

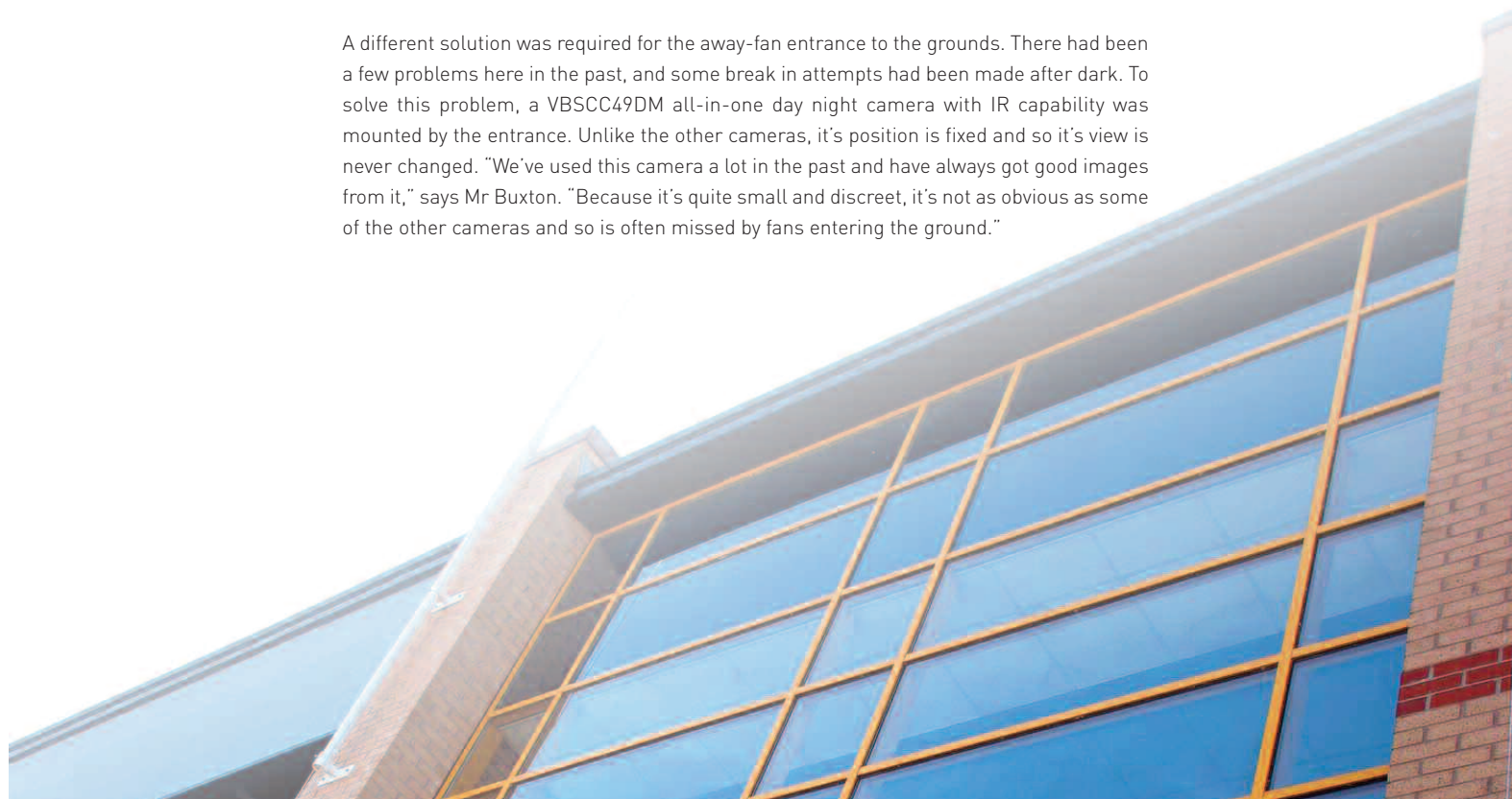
A good view of the match

Twenty cameras feed images into the SmartDisc recorders in the control room, 10 per unit. Outside the grounds six VPD3 vandal resistant domes, mounted on 6m columns keep watch over the car park.

Nine VPD2 cameras have been hung from the roof on 1m pendants within the stadium to cover the inside of the ground. The 25x optical zoom offered by these cameras was required to allow for facial recognition should an incident occur.

In the concourses round the entrances and bar areas, Vista VPD4 cameras have been chosen because they are small, robust and very compact. The 10x optical zoom is ample for the application and IR coverage isn't required.

A different solution was required for the away-fan entrance to the grounds. There had been a few problems here in the past, and some break in attempts had been made after dark. To solve this problem, a VBSCC49DM all-in-one day night camera with IR capability was mounted by the entrance. Unlike the other cameras, it's position is fixed and so it's view is never changed. "We've used this camera a lot in the past and have always got good images from it," says Mr Buxton. "Because it's quite small and discreet, it's not as obvious as some of the other cameras and so is often missed by fans entering the ground."



Always in control

As well as the two SmartDisc recorders, the control room has a wall of 10 Vista PDG2100 monitors to view the footage from the 20 cameras around the grounds. An additional two VLSF17 flat screen monitors have been set up to allow parties external to the Portvale team, such as the police, to view events during a match. "Having these two monitors allows the police to get on with their work without disrupting the operators," explains Colin Barstead who is in charge operating the equipment during matches. "S-A-S recommended them as there is only a limited amount of space available, and the quality of the picture is still excellent."

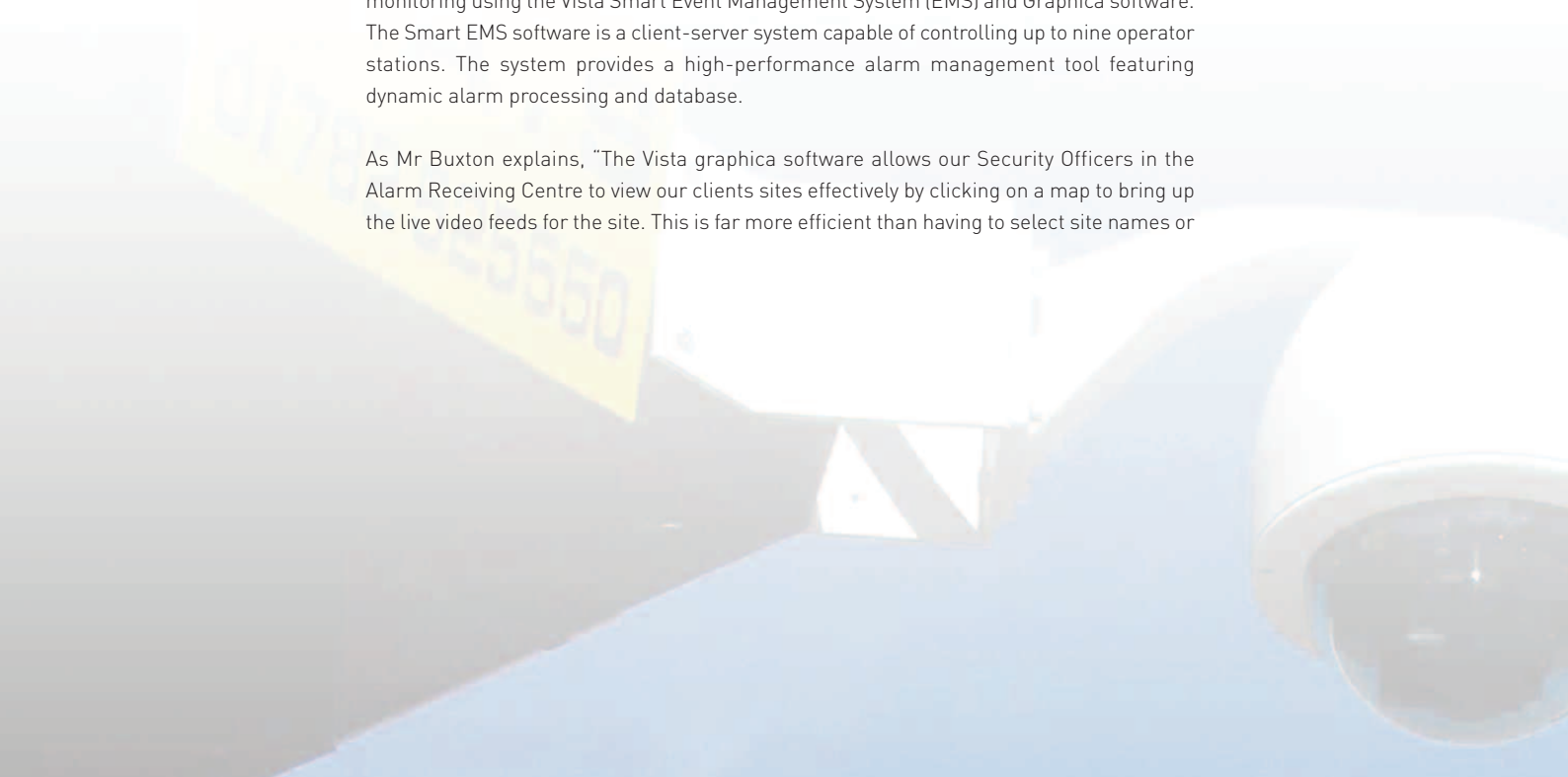
The two 16 channel Columbus DVRs have been employed as a back up to the SmartDisc drives. If a minor incident occurs or if the police think someone is acting suspiciously, the DVRs can be used to record smaller amounts of information to be taken away for further analysis. This means that the SmartDisc drives don't have to be removed, as is the case when a major incident occurs.

"Live viewing is made very simple," explains Mr Barstead. "You just select the camera and monitor number you wish to view the image on using the JBD3e Vista Keyboards." Having network access to the Vista SmartDisc units also provides Mr Barstead with a fast and simple way of reviewing recorded media. "A date and time line within the SmartDisc software allows us to instantly go to the correct camera at the exact moment required." Previously, all recording had to stop in order to review any footage, ruling out the option of any playback during a game – a situation that is obviously not acceptable under the circumstances. "Now we can view live images, record these images and review stored data all at the same time without any affect to the continuity of the match recordings." This is an excellent and invaluable tool for a football stadium – to be able to have instant verification of an offenders face or of an incident that may have been missed by the operator but witnessed by a match steward or police officer."

Keeping a close watch after hours

When a match isn't in progress, S-A-S keep watch over the grounds from their headquarters in Tunstall, Stoke-on-Trent. "The system has been set up to allow for effective remote monitoring using the Vista Smart Event Management System (EMS) and Graphica software. The Smart EMS software is a client-server system capable of controlling up to nine operator stations. The system provides a high-performance alarm management tool featuring dynamic alarm processing and database.

As Mr Buxton explains, "The Vista graphica software allows our Security Officers in the Alarm Receiving Centre to view our clients sites effectively by clicking on a map to bring up the live video feeds for the site. This is far more efficient than having to select site names or



IP address from a drop down list.” The EMS software provides the core alarm receiving function from the deployed SmartDisc and SmartTel units, which activate on alarm at the clients site. The alarm can be triggered either from the passive IR sensors that detect movement, or through video loss or HDD faults on the unit. S-A-S and the client are provided with full details of any incident as the software forces the operator to compile a report before he can action and close down the incoming alarm call. This obviously makes life a lot easier when compiling monthly reports, and removes the opportunity for the operator to miss an alarm or an important piece of information as everything is prompted on screen.

If an alarm is activated and an intruder is seen on-site, controllers in the S-A-S Alarm Receiving Centre issue a verbal challenge via the two-way audio feature of the SmartDisc and SmartTel units. “Usually this is enough to encourage the intruder to leave the premises, but occasionally we have to dispatch our mobile unit, or call in the police.

Forward thinking

Thorough forward planning was essential as there was no leeway on the completion date. If the CCTV system wasn’t up and running, the first match of the season could have been cancelled. “Laying 7000m of coaxial cable was a challenge in itself,” explains Mr Buxton. “The longest run was 520m, much longer than is normal. The cameras could have had difficulties with this, but fortunately the Vista range was flexible enough to deal with it.” He continues, “The on-screen menus are excellent and allow you to make key adjustments to fit the application. It would have been a real issue without this flexibility.”

There’s no doubt that Portvale are impressed with the results. “We’re delighted with the system,” says Bill Bratt, Chairman of Portvale FC. “We really feel that we’ve got one of the best, if not the best, CCTV system in the game. In particular, the Vista SmartDisc impressed us from the start and, if anything, has grown even more in our estimations.”

And the praise doesn’t stop with the equipment. “S-A-S have been outstanding on this project,” compliments Mr Barstead. “They have listened to our requirements from the start and have installed, on-time and to budget, a system then has surpassed our expectations. There’s absolutely no question that we’d use them for future projects and wouldn’t hesitate to recommend them as an installer.

About SAS Midlands

SAS Midlands Ltd specialises in the design, installation and maintenance of bespoke integrated security solutions combining manpower with all the latest digital technology. As security specialists, they offer independent and objective advice together with protection, investigation and many other related services.



They have found that customers using one area of their services will often also opt to use another, as the depth and breadth of their security knowledge means that they can help customers address most security issues or problems.

They see their strengths as their independence, stability and discretion, along with the diversity of their security expertise. The breadth of their resources and commitment to working with clients to establish what they need allows them to deliver what they promise, time and again.

