

Q2 Stadium: Where high-performance connectivity is the name of the game

This open-air venue needed high-performance cable and connectivity to withstand Austin, TX, weather while also supporting wireless connectivity, immersive technology, digital tickets and mobile ordering

Case Study



Customer

When Major League Soccer expansion team Austin FC was founded in 2019, they needed a place to call home. That home was Q2 Stadium, a casual, intimate space with lots of personality and local Central Texan flair.

The 20,500-seat soccer stadium sits on a 24-acre site surrounded by an amphitheater, stage and other inviting outdoor spaces.

Designed to entice fans with tech-forward entertainment, Q2 boasts hi-res LED video and double-sided marquees that showcase live video, instant replays, game stats, animation and sponsorship messages, all visible from any seat.

Several steps were taken to lessen the impact of the year-round sun and heat in the open-air stadium: open corners allow breezes to travel through, 30% of seats

are made of mesh material and the roof shields every seat from the sun. Due to limited onsite parking, the site doesn't have to worry about a heat island effect further increasing temperatures.

Challenge

While steps were taken to ensure fans' comfort during a game, the unpredictable Texan weather was still a concern—especially for cables exposed to extreme conditions—which could put the open-air stadium's infrastructure at risk.

"It was a challenging site because so much of it is outdoors," says Lee Snedaker, owner of manufacturers representative group Digitech Sales. "There were inherent challenges with cable routing, pathways and conduit. It's not just an indoor environment where you

can run standard plenum-rated cable and expect it to last for 25 or 30 years or longer."

Reliability was also crucial for the stadium's cabling and connectivity. The network infrastructure would need to support everything from wireless connectivity and immersive fan technology to digital ticketing and mobile ordering and payments, as Q2 is a cashless site.

As the June 2021 completion date grew closer, the project also encountered a challenge that no one predicted or planned for: COVID-19, which put aggressive timelines at risk. Much of the installer training was conducted outside so workers could spread out to maintain social distancing.

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Lee Snedaker, Owner of manufacturers representative group Digitech Sales



Discovery

Belden had built long-established relationships with the integrators and contractors involved in the project. Belden's dedicated stadiums and venues team took time to get to know and understand the owner (City of Austin) and operator (Two Oak Ventures) to fully understand their vision for this project and help make it a reality.

A 25-Year Product Warranty and Lifetime Application Assurance, focus on easy installation and known product performance put Belden solutions at the top of the list.

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Solution

Belden provided Q2 Stadium with a complete connection solution that included end-to-end cabling. In addition to high performance, many of the solutions were chosen because of the ease of installation and time savings they provided.

FiberExpress (FX) fiber optic cable, patch cords and Fusion Splice-On Connectors were used for the fiber infrastructure. Because the connectors are pre-polished and pre-cleaved, there are no adhesives, crimping or polishing required for termination, minimizing installation errors.

After trying a few splicers, the installers also chose to use Belden's FX Fusion Splicer. It supports consistent, reliable and high-quality terminations for single fiber splice-on connectors and pigtail splicing. Active cladding alignment ensures that the splicer achieves perfect alignment by automatically adjusting fiber ends in multiple directions while eliminating errors due to dust and other contaminants.

The REVConnect® 10GXW System was deployed as well, including cabling, patch cords and connectivity. Its fast, easy and reliable termination process saves valuable time while also reducing rework. In 15 minutes or less, installers—even those new to the field—can be ready

to go. Instead of learning many different termination processes for jacks and plugs, installers are trained on one methodology that covers any termination style. This made training quick, ensuring that workers could spend as much time as possible on jobsites.

“The FX Fusion Splice-On Connectors and REVConnect Connectors definitely saved time on installation and testing,” says Snedaker. “REVConnect eliminates some of the traditional hardware needed and makes it less time consuming. Both are more efficient to save the contractor money and time.”

Along with Belden's broadcast and AV cabling, copper and fiber cables rated for outdoor applications were also used to ensure lasting performance in the open-air stadium, regardless of any extreme weather conditions that may occur.

Many of these same solutions were also used in the design and construction of St. David's Performance Center, Austin FC's training facility in Northeast Austin.



“Belden was terrific to work with. They were smart, capable and ultimately provided a high-quality product that will be the backbone of Q2 Stadium for many years to come.”

Ryan Fannin, Austin FC's Vice President of Information Technology



Results

Q2 Stadium welcomed fans for the first time on June 16, 2021, to host an international women's exhibition match between the United States and Nigeria. Just a few days later, Austin FC played its first-ever game at Q2 Stadium against the San Jose Earthquakes.

Because the stadium opened its doors without cellular carriers providing service on the distributed antenna system (DAS), fans relied exclusively on the Wi-Fi 6 system for connectivity, testing the robustness and quality of Belden's cabling infrastructure right away.

As Austin's first sports venue for a major league team, Q2 Stadium is a unique reflection of the city's love for soccer and the outdoors wrapped up in an inviting, relaxed atmosphere.

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About Belden

Belden Inc. delivers complete connection solutions that unlock untold possibilities for our customers, their customers and the world. We advance ideas and technologies that enable a safer, smarter and more prosperous future. Throughout our 120+ year history we have evolved as a company, but our purpose remains – making connections. By connecting people, information and ideas, we make it possible. We are headquartered in St. Louis and have manufacturing capabilities in North America, Europe, Asia and Africa.

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