

Faces of Security

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Faces of Security: Scott Ashworth from Overtime Elite

By Joe Bebon, Editor Jul 28, 2022

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Like many security professionals, Scott Ashworth began his career in law enforcement before transitioning to corporate security. Now, Ashworth is Head of Security for Overtime Elite (OTE), a new sports league that aims to offer high school basketball stars a different path to the NBA.

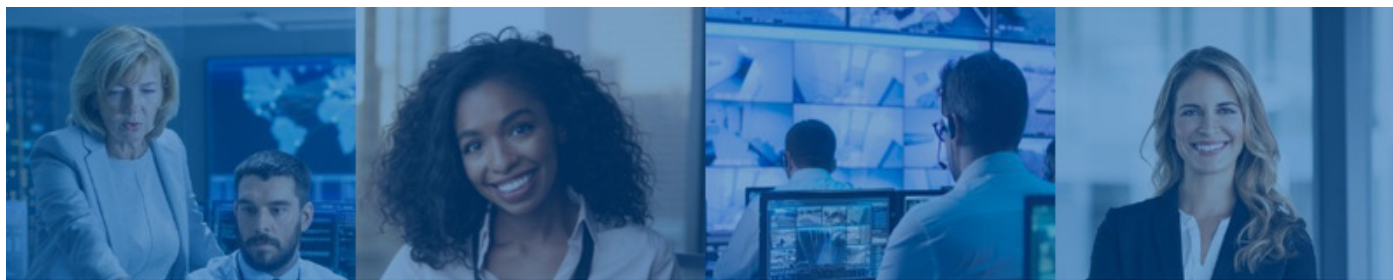
Backed by major investors such as Amazon's Jeff Bezos, rapper Drake, and dozens of NBA players, OTE has a 103,000 square-foot facility in Atlanta where its young athletes train, study, and compete in a year-round development program.

Ashworth joined OTE in 2021, and his team is responsible for ensuring 24/7 security. Concentrating on the OTE Arena, player residences, and travel safety, the team leverages various technologies including CCTV, access controls, analytics software, social media monitoring tools, and screening devices.

Ashworth first entered the corporate sector as Director of Security for the Major League Soccer (MLS) team Atlanta United FC. During his tenure there, he also helped oversee two Super Bowls, Atlanta Falcons games, an MLS championship, an MLS All-Star game, College Bowl games, Concacaf matches, and concerts.



Before that, Ashworth spent 10 years in law enforcement, reaching the rank of Lieutenant and leading an investigation unit in a metro Atlanta police department. He has earned degrees in criminal justice, a graduate certificate in Advanced Counterterrorism and Homeland Security from Southern New Hampshire University, and a CPP certification from ASIS International.



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How did you get your start in the security field?

I began my career in law enforcement after taking advice from my eight-year-old self. After high school I attended three years of business school where I wasn't quite catching my groove. At that time, I thought, *What would my eight-year-old self say when asked the question, "What do you want to be when you grow up?"* So, I did that and became a cop.

As an officer, I flourished and went back to school, leading to where I am with my long educational journey. It's that thirst for learning which continued to motivate my growth in the security industry.

In law enforcement, a fondness I held prior to joining the force for protecting people grew stronger. When I made the decision to transition to corporate security, I found that same driver was present.

Who is/was your biggest influence in the industry?

I would say that I don't have one single "biggest" influence. I have such a wide-reaching and unique network of security professionals I follow, work alongside, collaborate with, and learn from daily. Each of them has different strengths and accomplishments that make them worthy of earning the title of role model. This is especially true in the smaller niched world of sports/event security.

What are the biggest security issues at your organization? Are there any unique challenges (or benefits) compared to some other organizations?

I would say that Overtime Elite's biggest security challenge is also one of its greatest benefits. In most sports organizations players go to practice, training, and games. When they leave, they live in their personal homes, where team security will often support them if requested, but not to the extent of 24/7 security.

Conversely, players for OTE live in residences provided by the company, and due to their age and notoriety, it is imperative to have around-the-clock security. The parents of the young men in the program entrusted me with their security, and I take that duty very seriously.



The complex nature of keeping a robust security program as efficient as OTE's is not an easy task, but it's extremely rewarding. We get the opportunity to play a role in helping these young men achieve their dreams of being professional basketball players. Due to the protective role and the nature of the business, you become more invested in their continued success, which in turn shows far more ROI than other similar positions.

What's your favorite part about working in the industry?

Hands down, the best part about the security industry is the camaraderie. Most other industry professionals don't work across different businesses or share successes whether it's to protect trade secrets or protect market advantages. I can't imagine a scenario where PepsiCo innovates a new technology that positions them to own most of the soda market but then their CEO instantly calls the CEO at Coca-Cola and delivers them the needed information to emulate.

Well, that happens in security! Our mission is the same: safety and security of people, property, and brands. Universally throughout the security industry, it's understood that what's best for people's safety and security should be practiced in every business. Go to our industry seminars and just listen to everyone giving the blueprints on how to successfully keep people safe. I've received some of my best advice and ideas from the security professionals on other major league sports teams, including ones that constantly had heated rivalries (on field, in standings, and in the stands) with the organizations I protected.

What changes would you like to see in the security industry?

I would like to see the security industry enhance its image within the business community. Often, when I tell professionals from other industries that I work in corporate security they don't have a deep understanding of what we do, other than stereotypes about people watching surveillance video screens and making sure their Maglite's batteries are working.

Our jobs are often high level, complex, essential, and exciting, yet people think these roles are the complete opposite. It's extremely frustrating to attempt and recruit an intelligent young professional who is going to become a true asset to whatever industry they join and have them grimace at the mere suggestion of a career in corporate security.



Additionally, security leaders should continuously articulate the value of mitigating negative events to a company and its brand. Sadly, companies fail to recognize the value of corporate security until they're affected by a crime or critical security threat. The ability to make threats and mitigation strategies digestible to business leaders at the helm of a brand is one that must be honed by security leaders at the top of their departments.

Where do you see the industry heading into the 2nd years? Are you noticing any major trends?

Our industry is on an upward trajectory. Sadly, the world we live in constantly reminds us of the necessity for the services we provide in security. With that comes a higher demand to not only be safe, but even further, to feel safe. Threats continue to grow, but our security tool belts continue to get stronger at the same time. The tools of our trade are getting more powerful, smarter, and increasing in reliability.

Cyber threats are the most striking trends I am seeing in security. Cybersecurity units are being developed and are more regularly absorbed into corporate security departments. Why would corporate security departments oversee this and not an IT arm of a business? Plain and simple, cyberattacks are criminal acts. Corporate security teams already have the networks with local, state, and federal law enforcement agencies, they are seasoned in running investigations, and it's important to remember that even though a computer was the tool it is still a human being committing the act.

Having a keen understanding of both the physical security and cybersecurity disciplines can truly put a security professional in a league all their own.

What are you most proud of?

Regarding my career, I am most proud of the fact that I get to protect people every day I go into work. Even though it's never cinematic and much of it is through strategy and preventative measures, the equation still equals the same result. It's without a doubt that from policies I've created, practices I've enacted, and measures I've deployed, I have saved at least one person from a traumatic event. There is no benefit that can deliver a genuine boost like the feeling you can get from being a guardian of others.



Do you have any advice for people entering the profession?

I would recommend that any person entering this field should dedicate themselves to being a lifelong student. We are locked into a world that is fast moving and ever-changing, leaving people who get stuck in their ways to fall behind and leave their businesses more vulnerable. In being a lifelong student of the security field, professionals entering the field will allow themselves to continue to grow and evolve into an unstoppable force.

