Champion Data delivering Analytics & Sports Graphics with Bluefish444 Epoch and Vizrt

Champion Data has been working in the world of sports data, capture, analytics and distribution for over 20 years. Over that time, they have worked with rugby league, cricket, netball, horse racing, golf, soccer, and have been the official data partner for their key market, AFL, since 1999.

Champion Data has partnered with the likes of Channel 7, AFL Media, Racing.com, McGuire Media, and Fox Sports to provide data and analytics together with broadcast graphics to create informative content for sports consumers.

The preferred on-air sports graphics solution employed by Champion Data is the Viz Engine 3.11. Vizrt's Viz engine is a real-time graphics engine, providing low-latency media workflows for graphics, live video and fill/key outputs. It's a mainstay in the broadcast industry for sports, news, and any other media that requires 2D and 3D graphics to be integrated with live video.

Andrew Mott, broadcast and design manager at Champion Data (no relation to the Bluefish Managing Director, Craige Mott), explains that for their 2019 hardware upgrade cycle, they chose to integrate Bluefish444's Epoch | 4K Supernova S+ into their pre-existing Viz Engine workstations. "Having personally worked with Bluefish for many years, two things really stand out when it comes to their products. The outstanding quality and reliability that their products bring, and the local support here in Australia."

Champion Data have also been using Epoch | 4K Neutron cards in their Viz Arena workstations for the past three years. Viz Arena drives insertion of match day graphics, augmented reality (AR) elements, sponsor graphics and overlays. When it came to upgrade their Viz Engine configurations in 2019, Champion Data's positive experience with the Viz Arena turnkeys, drove their decision to once again integrate Bluefish video cards.

Champion Data were able to install the Epoch | 4K Supernova S+ cards into their existing HP Z840 systems with ease. The Z840's, integrated with NVIDIA graphics cards, are part of their flyaway kits that are shipped around the country, so high reliability and durability are a must. "Due to the logistics of OB trucks and remote environments, it's critical that we don't have issues with the cards on-site," comments Andrew Mott.

Being local in Melbourne, Andrew Mott mentions that it makes the process easy for any support they need for integration or issues that arise. "We've always had a great relationship with Bluefish. They have great local support and are always open to suggestions and feedback to create a better product for both companies." Andrew Mott continues, "BlueInfo and the other bundled SDK tools

makes Bluefish cards easy to use, with things like card temperature, input ID, video mode and other data helps the technicians on-site diagnose and troubleshoot any problems."

Bluefish have recently expanded their toolset with the latest v6 SDK, including the new BlueToolBox management tool, signal generators, sample apps and a number of other tools to help developers get the most out of their cards.

With Bluefish's free SDK supporting the Epoch | 4K Supernova S+ cards, Champion Data's software development team are looking at alternative uses for the cards, such as integrating them into their match centre applications, video feeds or other SDI I/O projects for future installs.
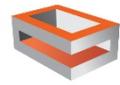
Viz Arena   Viz Engine
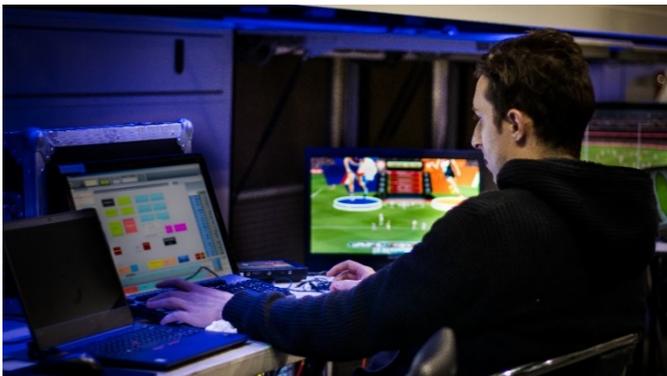
Moving to the future, Champion Data are looking forward to new workflows from Bluefish and Vizrt. Firstly, 4K/UHD Fill/Key support for Viz Engine using the KRONOS K8, and secondly SMPTE 2110 Fill/Key HD support for Viz Engine using the forthcoming KRONOS Optikos.

Optikos has customisable SFP+ modules, allowing multiple interfaces such as SMPTE 2110, 12G/6G or HDMI 2.0 to be optionally installed on a single card. The KRONOS K8 has higher-density SDI I/O than the Epoch range which frees up PCIe slots in the system, a feature that will help to consolidate some of Champion Data's kit in future.