



# Zippin Propels Tropicana Field's Budweiser Porch to Record Performance

Located in St. Petersburg, Florida, Tropicana Field is home to the Tampa Bay Rays. Plans are in the works to open a state-of-the-art \$1.3B new ballpark in time for the 2028 season. As part of the planning for this new ballpark, the Tampa Bay Rays and their hospitality partner, Levy, alongside Levy's analytics subsidiary (E15), and innovation arm (DBK Studio) went seeking innovative technologies that could become a part of the gameday experience. They aimed to solve the long wait times for food and beverage to give fans more time to enjoy the game. Inspired by the success of deployments at other sports venues, they decided to invest in Zippin's checkout-free technology.

## The Zippin Solution

The Rays collaborated with Zippin and their design and construction partner, Dan Gallery, to retrofit the Short Stop into a checkout-free store. The site had some unique design elements, including overhead wood beams, that required thoughtful consideration. "Retrofitting a bar of this size required a solid project plan and coordination across all parties involved," said Dan Gallery, President of Gallery Carts. "I'm grateful for the tremendous commitment everyone showed. Once construction began, we were able to build and install the technology in this beautiful new concept in just three days."

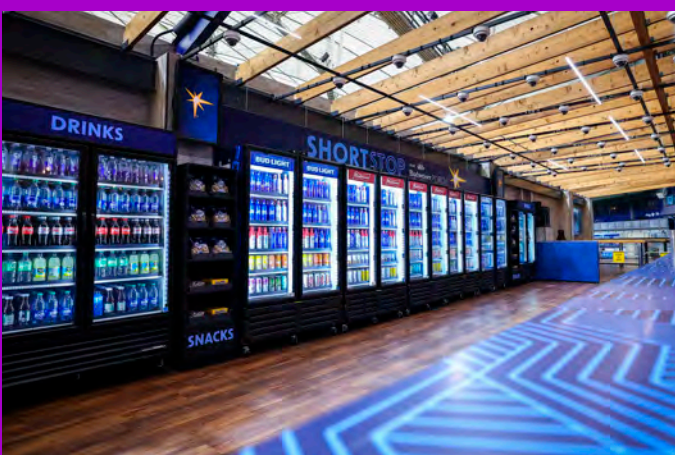
The store made its debut during the 2023 season opener. "We made the decision to go checkout-free before Major League Baseball announced the new pitch clock," said Jimmy Reed, Rays Director of Ticketing and Digital Experience. "With faster games this season, it was awesome to

see fans lined up at the Budweiser Porch railing watching the end of an inning, run through the Short Stop for a drink, and get back before the next pitch."

The Short Stop was the first checkout-free store to ever integrate with VenueNext by Shift4, which powered mobile payments within the MLB Ballpark app. Fans could enter the store by scanning their mobile app, which led to an increase in adoption and enabled Season Members to leverage their discounts and use virtual currency (Burst Bucks) at the location. This gave the Tampa Bay Rays the extra benefit of marketing directly to fans to drive incremental sales, push targeted deals to fans, and do some brand testing with the store's sponsor, Budweiser.



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## The Opportunity

Venues across all professional sports are deploying checkout-free technology. But, the Rays did something unique with their deployment. "We knew the technology worked based on deployments we'd seen at other venues," said Rays Chief Business Officer, Bill Walsh. "We wanted to see how it would scale across a wide cross section of fans. So we decided to go all-in and convert the busiest bar in our ballpark into a checkout-free experience - the Short Stop at the Budweiser Porch."

The decision was not made lightly. There was some initial unease surrounding the decision to overhaul such a highly profitable store. But the Rays wanted to stress-test new technology that could be leveraged in a new ballpark, streamline checkout processes, and create a more social space for fans. So, they took the leap.

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**Bill Walsh**  
Rays Chief Business Officer

## The Results

The store was an instant success with fans. During Opening Weekend, it was the highest-rated fan experience at Tropicana Field, with a rating of 92.5%.

The experience was praised by Season Members and casual fans alike. Over the course of the season, more than 82,500 fans shopped checkout-free, with the average fan buying two items per visit.

The project succeeded in driving incremental revenue while also improving the fan experience. The team estimates an ROI in less than 2 years.



## Lessons Learned

Checkout-free technology taught the Rays how important employees are to a successful rollout. Instead of being stuck behind a cash register, staff members are now greeting customers as they enter. "This really opened our eyes to who had a true hospitality mindset and the key role employees can play in the overall fan experience at a checkout-free store," said Reed. "It's great having ambassadors that encourage and educate shoppers to help drive incremental value."