

The Future Of Coaching

Area Coaches Use The Latest In High-Tech Apps And Gadgets To Help Their Athletes Get An Edge On The Field Of Competition

FROM P&D STAFF REPORTS

It is said that the best teachers use ingenuity to find the best ways to connect with their students.

For those teachers of athletics, known as “coaches,” it’s no different. And more and more, those teachers are utilizing the latest technology, especially mobile technology, to connect with their athletes.

Here is a look at some of the many area coaches who are utilizing the latest technology to help make their athletes, and their teams better.

Yankton Football

Arlin Likness and Dan Mitchell remember using 8-millimeter film to record games like it was just yesterday.

It wasn’t — nearly 20 years ago, in fact — quite that long ago, but as times have changed and technology has advanced in the football coaching circles, the Yankton Bucks have been quick to keep pace.

The combination of a Hudl video software program and streamlined stat programs have made life easy on both the coaches and players.

“Coaches still do the same things, but it’s just easier now,” said Mitchell, a long-time assistant coach with the Bucks who also works with students to record YHS home games and matches.

“When I started, we used eight millimeter film and we had to send it through the mail,” Mitchell added. “It was hard to break down.”

Yankton phased out film in 1985 or 86 for VCR, which still required coaches to either mail tapes or meet opposing coaches somewhere — for a Brookings exchange, for example, coaches would meet in Sioux Falls.

On some occasions, Yankton volleyball or basketball teams would bring back a tape for the football coaches from wherever the volleyball team played.

“It really helps, especially the Hudl because we can trade tapes without leaving the room,” Likness, Yankton’s head coach, said. “We can exchange with teams without having to drive across the state.”

VCR tapes were phased out seven years ago, Mitchell said, for DVDs. The issue there, though, was that not every team had a suitable recorder.

Around three or four years ago, Yankton began using a digital format that eventually became Hudl. Mitchell said Yankton originally purchased the Hudl software for only football, but after a year, bought the software for \$1,600 for other sports — basketball, volleyball, wrestling, track and gymnastics.

“It’s streamlined in their software, so that it recognizes what was plugged in, a DVD or whatever,” Mitchell said.

Hudl allows teams to break up their plays by offense, defense or kicking, and even further into downs, formations, hash marks, etc. “You can get a feel for



Whether it's using a smart phone to track athletes or an iPad to break down film, more and more coaches are using the latest in technology to help teach their athletes.

PHOTO ILLUSTRATION

what their tendencies are at certain times,” Mitchell said. The drawback to having so many video options?

“You can spend a lot of time watching film,” Mitchell added, chuckling. “It can make for a lot of late nights.”

The Yankton coaching staff can also set up player accounts in Hudl, so the Bucks can watch games and clips on their own — on the team bus through an iPad or through Hudl’s smartphone app.

With all that information right at their fingertips whenever they want it, the Bucks can visualize an opponent’s plays whenever they choose, Mitchell said.

“You’re putting it in players’ eyes more than before,” he said. “The old way (film and VCR), you had to watch it mostly as a team. Now they can watch it at any time.”

In short, times have changed.

“If you would have told me that was possible when I first started, I’d say you were crazy,” Likness said. “We’ve come a long way.”

— Jeremy Hoeck

Creighton Football

The Bulldogs have been using digital technology for so long, they started with a Palm Pilot. Now they send scouting material to student-athletes’ iPads and more.

“We had gone to ‘Digital Scout,’ which started out on a Palm Pilot,” said Creighton head coach Jeff Jensen. “Of course, Palm Pilots cease to exist, so we transitioned to iPad. This year, our kids have iPads as well, so everything from our scouting reports, post-practice information, reminders, workouts and Hudl. Hudl has an iPad app that actually allows you to do things you can’t do on the computer.”

One of the apps Jensen uses to help track athletes’ workouts and send information is called eBackpack, a program being utilized by the Creighton school district for academic purposes. “That is something all of our teachers are using to provide students with assignments. It gives a student management system for the student to turn all their materials in,” Jensen said. “Your disorganized student becomes very organized, because it gives you what day everything is due, how many days you have left, when that assignment was given to you, when you submitted it back. It basically gives you a cloud network that everything can be accessed and turned back in to.”

Jensen uses it to send out scouting reports and workouts, and track how many athletes are paying attention to it. “All of my scouting reports are now digital,” he said. “I can take screen shots off of Hudl of the opponents’ formations, defensive fronts, base plays, personnel, all of that, and put that all on eBackpack.”

“Then what we do is a ‘winning edge’ test, and they send that back based on the information I provided them. They have a few questions that they have to answer.”

While this is the first year of utilizing eBackpack for football, Jensen expects it to pay off.

“That’s how kids respond these days. They don’t respond to paper and pencil. You need actual visuals, as opposed to chicken scratch on a piece of paper,” he said. “I think it will pay dividends, in terms of catching their motivation and how they learn. I’ve had times where I send them a post-practice assignment at 8 o’clock at night, and by 8:05 I’ve got 10 of them back.”

Jensen expects to see teams use more technology in the future. “The game continues to evolve,” he said. “I think you can continue to do your traditional ways and, for a lot of people, it will work. But if you want to get student response or athlete response, you have to change and adapt to what they’re interested in and how they work. Right now it’s the digital age and, to keep up with

them, you have to adjust to their style.”

— James D. Cimburek

Bloomfield Cross Country

When Kirk Hamm stepped into the head coaching position for Bloomfield cross country this off-season, he knew he had to find ways to keep runners involved and motivated, especially since the squad also picks up runners from Wausa through a co-op that started in 2012. To do that, he borrowed an idea from his son, former Bees standout and current South Dakota State runner Austin Hamm.

“I found Flotrack through Austin,” Coach Hamm said. “We can use it to track miles, but there is a lot of information and videos on running: strides, why hills help you, why it’s good for distance runners to run 400s and 200s.”

What those information and videos help with are explaining the “whys.”

“Students can feel more informed about why they’re

doing something,” Hamm said. “They’re more willing to do something once they know how it will help them.”

Hamm also used more common high-tech methods of staying in touch with his athletes.

“I set up a group page on Facebook so that the kids could keep up with me and I could keep up with them,” he said. “I will also email them to remind them of what they need to be doing and what’s coming up.”

Hamm said that if a team like Bloomfield is going to get attention for its athletes, they need to utilize the latest high-tech tools and methods to help their athletes gain an edge.

“If we want to make our team well-known, we have to use technology to help make them better as athletes, and help make us better as coaches,” he said.

— James D. Cimburek

Rice Throws Camp

When one of the state’s most-recognized throws coaches, Tom Rice, held his annual camp in Yankton in June, he didn’t just bring a shot put and discus, he brought a tablet.

With an app called “Coach’s Eye,” he was able to break down film, telestrate what he wanted to see on the screen and share everything back with athletes.

“At our throws camp, (Bon Homme track and field coach) Byron Pudwill and John Baumann, who is the throws coach at Oklahoma State University, were doing that,” Rice said. “When the student was done throwing, they would watch the throw (with the student) and say, ‘This was good’ or ‘Do you know what I mean by ‘Load your left foot?’ or whatever they were trying to focus on, and the student could see it.”

While many video apps allow you to view video frame-by-frame, not all of them allow for telestration.

“The great thing about this is that on this application is that you can use your finger, put a dot on it, draw a line, and say, ‘This is the position you need to be in,’” Rice said. “It’s a great application as far as helping the students.”

It remains against state regulations to show athletes video during a competition — or even for the athletes to have an electronic device in the competition area — but it is a good teaching tool for practice, Rice said.

“It is a great practice tool. I can still use it to film them during competition — I just can’t show it to them during competition,” he said. “It’s going to make my life even easier, because I can give them instant feedback.”

Rice also uses the internet to connect with his throws camp clients, who will touch base with him from time to time during the season.

“I have so many kids that send me film over the internet. We say every year with the camp kids that, if they are struggling, send us a video and we’ll take a look at it,” Rice said. “It’s not uncommon for me to look at five or six of them a week. In the time that it takes me to watch it, within a minute, I know what they’re doing wrong.”

— James D. Cimburek

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Football					
8/30	Corsica-Stickney	7 p.m.	10/4	@ Avon	7 p.m.
9/13	@ Tripp-Deilmont-Armour (in Tripp)	7 p.m.	10/11	Viborg-Hurley	7 p.m.
9/20	Burke-South Central	7 p.m.	10/18	Andes Central	7 p.m.
9/27	@ Scotland	7 p.m.	10/24	@ Marty Indian	2 p.m.

Volleyball					
9/3	@ Marion	6:15 p.m.	10/8	Irene-Wakonda	7:30 p.m.
9/5	@ Alcester-Hudson	6:15 p.m.	10/10	Irene-Wakonda/Menno (Dig Pink Night)	4:30 p.m.
9/10	Centerville/Scotland	4:30 p.m.	10/12	Gayville-Volin Tour.	9 a.m.
9/12	Freeman	6:15 p.m.	10/19	Eagle Showdown (Lake Andes)	9 a.m.
9/17	Viborg-Hurley	6:15 p.m.	10/22	Omaha Nation/Marty	5 p.m.
9/19	Baltic/Freeman Acad.	5 p.m.	10/28	Avon	6:15 p.m.
9/24	Canistota	6:15 p.m.			
10/3	TVC Tour. (Gayville)	5:30 p.m.			
10/5	TVC Tour. (Alcester)	4 p.m.			

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