

UNIVERSITY OF TULSA ATHLETICS GOES TAPELESS WITH SONY XDCAM HIGH-DEFINITION CAMCORDERS

*School's Athletic Department Using Optical and EX Series
Cameras for On-the-Field Shooting Flexibility*

When the University of Tulsa built a new stadium, Mike Bilbow recognized it was the perfect time to take the school's video production into the high-definition arena.

“We had a stadium renovation project and part of that was a new control room facility,” said Bilbow, director of the athletic department's video production team. “We figured it was now or never as far as going HD and we had to make the move.”

They made the move using Sony's high-definition tapeless technologies – the PDW-F355 optical disc XDCAM® HD camcorder, and the new XDCAM EX series PMW-EX3 solid-state compact camcorder.

Bilbow and team handle all video production for the school's sports teams: content for the LED screens in the football stadium and basketball arena, video content for the web site, game podcasts, weekly coaches' shows, and highlight videos, as well as fulfilling requests from local and national media for game footage.

He said that using the XDCAM high-definition systems have resulted in increased image quality and a more efficient tapeless workflow, saving the team a significant amount of time when shooting content and editing footage.

“The quality is amazing, and I love the fact that I can put a whole football game on one optical disc and still have plenty of space left to do post game content,” he said. “And what really sold me on the XDCAM system was that when the game is over, I can take the disc, label it, throw it on a shelf and it's always there.”

Each member of the video team has a PDW-U1 XDCAM external drive next to their workstation, and “it makes things so much easier,” Bilbow said. “If somebody needs footage, I can just hand over a disc and they can dump it on to their computer. It’s great, we export back out and we’re able to take it to the control room to make dubs or whatever else we need to do. If somebody is not working in HD, we can dub it down to Betacam® format. It’s worked out great for us so far.”

Additionally, the time-savings have really impressed the team.

“In the past when we had to go through and actually log ins and outs on tapes, it added three hours to our day, especially when we had to edit a coach’s show on a Sunday,” Bilbow said. “Now, I take the XDCAM disc, plug it into my editor, import it, come back in the morning, and all my clips are there and ready to go, and I can get right to editing. It saves two to three hours every time I cut a show.”

He said that a perfect example of this benefit came as a result of a recent, rarely scheduled Sunday night football game.

“That was unusual since we run our football coach’s show on Sunday nights,” he said. “So, we had to bounce the show to Monday. But that meant that in addition to having to do all the usual Monday tasks – archiving, getting content ready for the web site, the coach’s press conference – we also had to edit the coach’s show to air Monday night.”

“With all the time saved by not having to watch things digitize and setting ins and outs,” he added, “we were basically able to do our full normal Monday routine and get the coach’s show done on top of that. Without the XDCAM systems’ tapeless workflows, it would have been a nightmare.”

During games, the video team sends all content shot in the field back to the control room via fiber, where it's switched on a Sony MVS-8000G production switcher, then sent back on fiber to the scoreboards.

“Essentially, these are our studio cameras,” he said. “We use them with studio kits. “We use them online when we're home, but we also breakaway the 355's and those go on the road for football, since we have outfitted them with lenses with extenders. The EX3's will stay here and be used to shoot soccer, softball, some of the events that are happening on campus while we're on the road with football.”

He said that both cameras have worked together well and the footage has inter-cut seamlessly.

“You really can't tell the difference between the two in the timeline when you dump it into your editor,” he said. “They work together so well.”

He added that for football games, the 355's are up in the press box or on the sidelines as roving handhelds, and the EX3s are used as end zone cameras.

“We ask a lot of each of the cameras,” he said. “For example, with the EX3s in the end zone, we're asking them to shoot at a pretty good distance and they've really come through well. I couldn't be happier with the way they've both worked out. It's been everything I hoped for and a lot more.”