

Arkansas Football Gains Workflow Yardage With Sony's NXCAM and XDCAM EX Solutions

CASE STUDY

Customer:

- University of Arkansas Football

Industry:

- Sports

Challenges:

- Improve image quality and detail.
- Enhance workflow speed.
- Integrate camera choices with existing technology.

Solutions:

- Upgrade to Sony's tapeless HD system with four Sony PMW-350K XDCAM EX® cameras, three Sony HXR-NX5U NXCAM® camcorders and three VCL-HGO872 wide conversion lenses – compatible with XOS® and easily importable into Final Cut Pro®.

Benefits:

- High quality HD allows coaches to focus on details of techniques and fundamentals
- Long record times for capturing extended uninterrupted plays
- Fast workflow
- Increased online storage efficiency
- Easy extraction from camera to PC enabling production content into system an hour after game's end
- Still captures replaced by HD screen grabs, making it easier to identify players



When University of Arkansas football teamed up with Sony for a seamless transition to their tapeless HD solution, the result was a winning proposition. Andy Wagner, Arkansas football's Director of Sports Video, credits the upgraded system with providing coaching staff and players a more effective teaching and analysis tool.

Their Sony HD technology lineup now includes four Sony PMW-350K XDCAM EX cameras, (recording both internally to SxS™ media for production and backup purposes, and external AVCHD™ recorders for coaches' film). In addition, there are three Sony HXR-NX5U NXCAM camcorders (natively recording in AVCHD codec) and three VCL-HGO872 wide conversion lenses. Careful consideration went into Wagner's choices.

"We wanted what was best for our coaches' film (game and practice analysis), and also what made the most sense for our multiple production-oriented deliverables," he explained. "That solution needed to be seamless with XOS (Thunder Football HD software by XOS Digital) and also import easily into Final Cut Pro."

Working closely with Sony helped the Arkansas football organization clarify what long-term factors must be considered when transitioning to HD, and what camera options would best meet their needs for quality, flexibility and peace of mind. Sony's multi-format approach was the solution.

They now use five cameras for practice (two 350s and three NXCAMs). The two 350s are also used for games, while the other 350s are dedicated for production purposes.

"Once we brought in Sony, we immediately saw where some true benefits existed," said Wagner. "Not only did the handheld NXCAM recordings import natively into our XOS system, but the quality was surprising for such a low data rate. They look so good; the handheld cameras could absolutely be used for game coverage, which is what we did for the first three games (until the 350K units arrived)."

By leveraging both the NXCAM and the external recorders' native AVCHD recordings into his XOS system, Wagner increased his storage efficiency by 400%. That's a significant decrease in file size, allowing for much faster game shares and import.

Wagner's production requirements came into play as well. His needs included content for their coach's show, in-house motivational films, recruiting web sites and stadium video boards. Sony's PMW-350K front end solution provided format quality and flexibility options.

"The durability, quality and file efficiency of the 350 cameras were critical for us," he said. "Since the data rate was about one-third of what else was out there for an equivalent HD format, we found it to be the best bang for our production buck as it works great with Final Cut. Plus, the 2/3 sensor gives us greater sensitivity for the HD video versus only a 1/3" sensor, which really shows up when utilizing Thunder's zoom features. The players and coaches are really pleased with what we're getting to them, and we've received great feedback on how our footage looks overall."

Practice options for the Arkansas team have been positively impacted as well. According to Wagner, "Our current

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head coach

indoor facility wasn't necessarily built with video coverage of practice in mind. The combination of the NXCAM and the wide angle lens adapter has brought back the option of a more traditional all 22 player shot, which has made our coaches more than happy with the coverage we are able to provide indoors.”

Wagner operates a camera position for what he calls his “QB Cam.” By remotely controlling a camera on top of a telescoping pole, he can capture ideal views from behind the quarterback's position.

“The size of the NXCAM was very intriguing to me from the minute we received them,” he says. “The first thought I had was how we could mount them and replace the SD camera that we had currently working as our QB cam. The results were seen immediately by the coaches, players, and video staff. Everyone who works with the content noticed right away, and all have benefited from the improved quality and clarity of the video. This camera became more than just a QB cam at that point as our offensive line started using it as well.”

Bobby Petrino, Arkansas football head coach is equally impressed. “Our move to HD with Sony has benefited us as a program. The improvement in quality of video has truly helped us as a staff, both in how we teach our players and how we breakdown and evaluate film. We are constantly evaluating everything in our program, and we are excited to be able to use this advance in technology.”

“The fantastic quality of the video is important, but the greatly improved speeds of the workflow are the key.”

—Andy Wagner,
University of Arkansas
football's Director of
Sports Video

He added, “Our quarterback camera has been enhanced from the switch to HD footage. This shot is beneficial to not only our quarterbacks, but also the offensive line. The video clarity allows our offensive coaches to focus on the details of techniques and fundamentals.”

Taking still capture shots off the video is a common coaching method at Arkansas. With the changes to HD, the stills now being captured for print out are a night-and-day improvement over the previously captured screen grabs of the SD video. Being able to more easily determine player numbers and personnel groups has proven to be invaluable.

The advantages of adding Sony's HD solution to Arkansas video department continue to be seen. Coaches and players have open access to watch video. Razorback players can view their reps and study opponents' tendencies. Coaches have instant access to recruiting images in order to evaluate future players. The enhanced tools in their video suite can only assist this nationally ranked SEC Western division team in achieving continued success.

“Knowing what I know now, if we would have waited longer to move to HD, we'd be doing our staff a disservice,” said Wagner. “There are simply too many benefits across the board that make HD a phenomenal tool in helping coaches do their job.” He added, “At the end of the day, going HD with Sony's solution was the most sensible way to get there.”