

MVC football teams get in the HUDL

Written by Mark Dukes

Sunday, 21 August 2011 21:09 - Last Updated Sunday, 21 August 2011 21:37



Scouting has come a long way from the days football coaches would load reel-to-reel film and project it on to a screen. The days of coaches traveling to scout a team on an off-night also are nearly gone.

A company called HUDL is in use by dozens of high school, college and professional teams – including the Mississippi Valley Conference. The league mandated that its members use HUDL a few years ago.

"It all depends on the age of the coach," said Craig Jelinek, who retired after last season at Cedar Rapids Prairie. "We all still liked to actually go out to the games to get a feel for a team, but I suppose younger coaches now are using (HUDL) more. We probably spent 15-20 hours a week with it."

HUDL (www.hudl.com) is a software company based in Lincoln, Neb. It can break down game film in a multitude of ways. Users can search for tendencies of a team on, say, 3rd-and-7. They can look at footage of specific players and various situations.

"It really helps you prepare quicker and more thoroughly," Jelinek said. "And there's no shenanigans, either."

He was referring to a situation several years ago on a film exchange. Prairie's coaches were watching film of the opponent's game and just before the opponent scored a touchdown, the camera mysteriously panned to a clump of trees.

Schools certainly incur some added costs for the HUDL membership, cameras and software updates. There is also a need for people to film the games and download film to the website.

MVC football teams get in the HUDL

Written by Mark Dukes

Sunday, 21 August 2011 21:09 - Last Updated Sunday, 21 August 2011 21:37

But the tradeoff appears to be well worth it. Not only can coaches use the software, but passwords can be given to players so they can review footage on their home computer or laptop.

"The amount of information is far greater than what we've seen before," Jelinek said. "But it can be a double-edged sword, too. You can almost get too much information. We would only go back a couple games of an opponent because if you're in Week 9, it doesn't make much sense to go back to Week 1."

No longer do coaches feel obligated to spend a night off traveling to Dubuque to scout Hempstead. And staffs don't have to arrange a film exchange halfway between Waterloo with the East staff.

The cost of HUDL packages ranges from \$800 per year for basic service to \$3,000 per year for its Platinum version with all the bells and whistles. The price differences mainly reflect the number of hours of storage available for each package.

This week, when all the Valley teams are in action, a designated person from each school is required to make sure game footage is downloaded to the HUDL website by midnight of game night. The footage then is available to all the MVC schools.

"Back in the day when you had a film exchange, some schools would use VHS and some had DVD, and you never knew what you were getting," Jelinek said. "It was a pain. But now there's just no surprises anymore."

(Mark Dukes is former sports editor of the Cedar Rapid Gazette. He is co-host of The Gym Class radio show weekdays from 3-4 p.m. on KGYM-AM 1600.)