

For Immediate Release

“Like another assistant coach”

Stan Webber didn't intend to develop a suite of software for football coaches when he created digital play cards for a Cincinnati Bengals' assistant. The result was Coach's Office®, a user-friendly program that allows football coaches in the NFL, college and all levels to do in a matter of minutes on the computer what used to take hours manually.

Middletown, OH – A veteran in the coaching ranks, Steve Hagen remembers the days not so long ago when long hours were spent drawing diagrams and handwriting details on reams of paper that composed bulky, spiral-bound playbooks.

The repetition involved in redrawing the same plays and retracing the same practice diagrams each week was simply part of the game. So was the arduous task of breaking down an opponent's games and manually searching through the tapes to locate specific plays which the video department then transformed into cut-ups.

“It was a process that took hours of work and detracted from time we could spend coaching our players,” said Hagen, the Cleveland Browns' quarterback coach who spent 17 years at the college level, before joining the Browns staff as tight ends coach in 2001.

For Hagen and a growing number of NFL coaches, the days of drawing and handwriting information for playbooks, play cards and game plans are history. New computer programs are changing an NFL coach's day-to-day tasks for the better. Chalkboards, VCRs and thick playbooks stuffed with hand-produced schematics are becoming obsolete as more teams are turning to laptops, digitized game film and computerized playbooks.

Using laptops and specialized software, coaches can focus on key plays of opponents, project play diagrams and make assignments. The software that Hagen uses prints play cards from practice scripts and helps produce game plans.

Created by Stan Webber, president of Middletown, Ohio-based Graphware Inc., Coach's Office allows coaches to build playbooks, play cards and game plans. Coach's Office also offers the ability to digitize videotapes of a team's games. Coach's Office software packages range in price from \$95 for simple play drawing to \$1,245 for a complete package that includes video services.

Webber developed the idea for his coaching software after discussions with Bob Wylie, who at the time was part of the Cincinnati Bengals coaching staff and is now offensive line coach with the Arizona Cardinals. Initially, Webber developed a program called Quick Playcard to produce play cards for Wylie and the Bengals. Then coaches from the

New York Giants, Minnesota Vikings and Green Bay Packers joined the list. Webber expanded on Quick Playcard and introduced Coach's Office, a complete software suite that he says is "like Microsoft Office for football coaches."

"I stumbled upon this niche football market quite by accident after a short meeting with Bob," Webber said. "He had a \$5,000 laptop on his desk yet was spending hours each day manually drawing play cards for their practices."

"I couldn't believe that, with the technological advancements, coaches were still writing plays by hand," Webber said. "I felt it would be much easier and less time consuming if there was an automated process that would allow them to do the work on a computer."

His client base is not limited to NFL teams. The last four NCAA Division I national champions – LSU, Ohio State, Miami (Fla.) and Oklahoma –use Coach's Office. So does Division III football powerhouse Mount Union (Ohio) College, which has won multiple national titles.

"We compile our game plan and share it with the players using the slide show component, which is like having a dry erase board on the wall," said Vince Kehres, assistant coach at Mount Union. "Coach's Office has allowed for information to be more readily shared with the players in less time, which helps our productivity on and off the field."

When preparing for a game using Easy Scout XP, a supplemental program of Coach's Office, coaches can call up hundreds of examples showcasing opponents running specific plays. Specific situations such as goal-line plays, nickel and dime pass coverages and red zone work are now at a coach's fingertips. Want to know how often an opposing team runs on first down? It's there. How about how many times they run right, as compared to left? The information is there as well. With these programs, coaches can even research opponents' tendencies early in the game and late in the game, and determine what they do when they are ahead or behind.

"Before computers, there were so many hours when we did busywork instead of coaching," Hagen said. "It would take me a couple hours to do play cards for a practice."

Today, he says he can do it in 45 minutes or less. The bottom line: The new technology allows coaches to spend more time teaching and preparing, which makes them more productive and the players more efficient.

Hagen is in his first season as quarterbacks coach with a new signal caller, Jeff Garcia. The availability of computerized play books, play cards and game plans – and digitized video where he can access plays from any game situation – has made Garcia's learning curve a little smoother.

“You still have to make the plays on the field,” Hagen said. “The software program will not throw a touchdown pass, but it does make the teaching and learning process more efficient.”

“NFL coaches still work long hours, we just spend our time differently than we used to,” he added. “Instead of spending hours drawing diagrams by hand, sifting through bulky playbooks and scanning through videotapes, we can get what we need with a point and a click. It allows us to devote more time to actually coaching.”

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