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For NFL Teams, iPad Is Valuable Playbook

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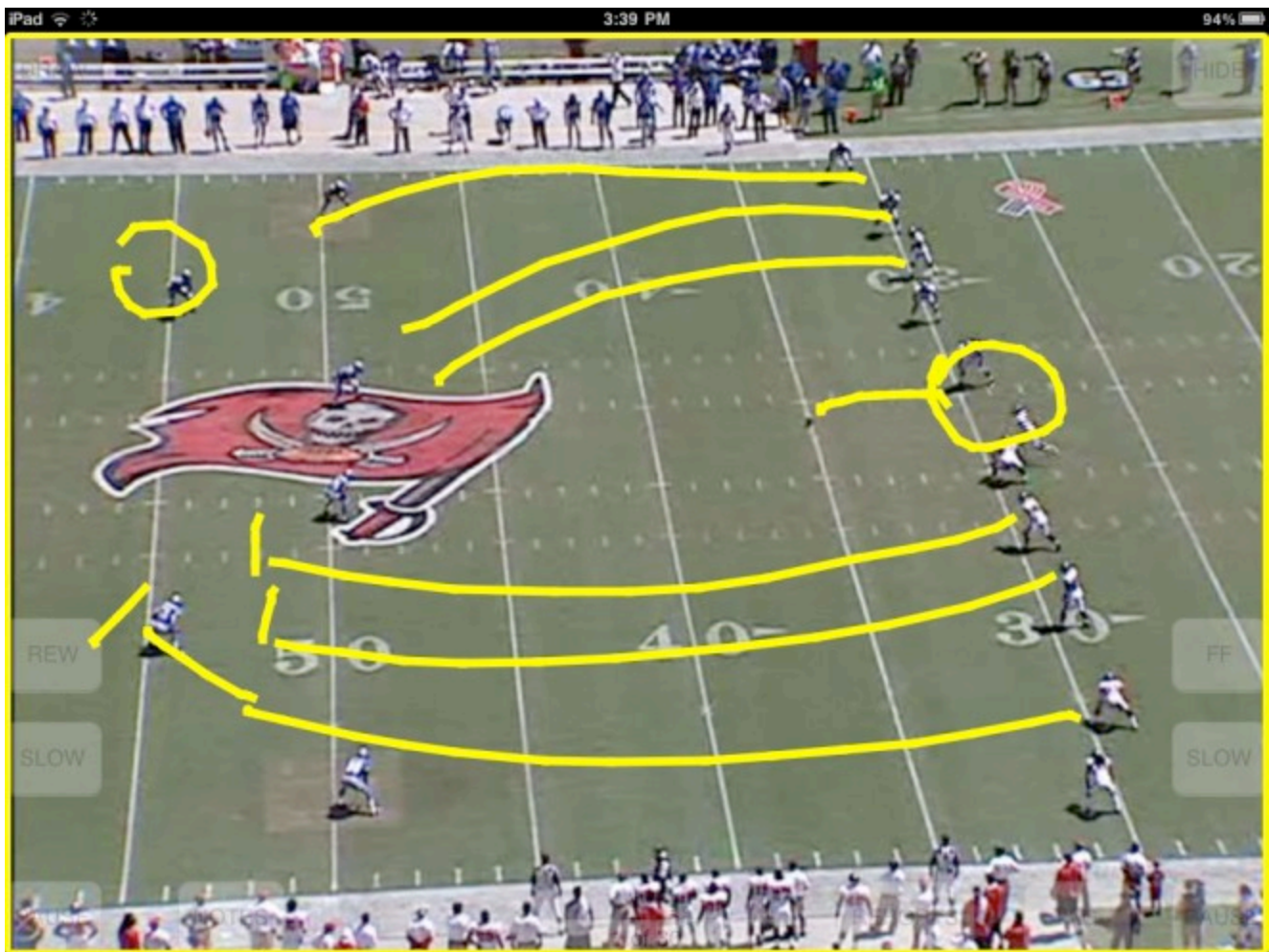
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At the beginning of each week, members of the New York Jets wander over to a computer in the player's lounge and select video clips they'd like to review ahead of the next game. But rather than burning these clips to a DVD they'll watch on their laptops or sitting in a darkened room staring at a screen, players have the films sent to their Apple iPads.

The Jets are but one example of how the ubiquitous tablets are changing how teams throughout the National Football League prepare for, and review, games. The iPad is quickly replacing traditional "films" and even printed playbooks in the NFL, much like it is [replacing charts in many airliners](#). A growing number of teams find the devices are faster, cheaper and easier than ripping thousands of DVDs and compiling reams of paper. Tablets also provide far greater flexibility in when, where and how players and coaches prep for upcoming games, allowing them to, say, review annotated game clips or new plays just about anywhere.

"All the video that our players want to see, whether it's all the third downs that the Patriots ran or all their red-zone plays, they'll have all that stuff on their iPads," said Jets video director Tim Tubito.



Many teams said they like the speed, accuracy and ease with which the iPad and various third-party software applications allow them to edit, annotate and review video clips.

The Baltimore Ravens and Tampa Bay Buccaneers have purchased 120 and 150 64-gigabyte [iPad 2s](#), respectively, in recent months and transferred their playbooks to the devices. The Jacksonville Jaguars and Arizona Cardinals love the technology, which also is making inroads in collegiate football. It remains to be seen how deeply the [iPad](#) will penetrate the NFL, but it is emerging as a versatile, and vital, tool within the league. Five teams outlined to [Wired.com](#) exactly how they have embraced the devices. Another dozen said they use the devices but declined to explain in detail exactly how.

The ability to edit and watch game day video from virtually any location — one team's defensive coordinator kept up with team practices from his hospital bed — is among the iPad's greatest selling points for the NFL, and it is changing how players, coaches and support staff prepare for games. As soon as the iPad was introduced, the Jets were using third-party applications to transfer files from DVDs onto tablets. Now it uses Hudl, a system developed by Agile Sports that allows professional and collegiate teams to view game film clips, also known as cutups, on a secure online network. Players can select the videos they want using a password-protected computer in the player's lounge. The team also sent video of every practice to offensive consultant Tom Moore, who lived in Hilton Head, South Carolina, before recently relocating to northern New Jersey.

The team has since 2006 been searching for ways to ease its dependence on DVDs. First it used SD cards to put game footage on PlayStation's PSP portable gaming devices. Then it began using iPods — a method Major League Baseball has used for years — before trying Archos, a software company specializing in [Android-powered tablets](#) that also was used by the Ravens. Tubito can't say yet whether the team has saved any money by ditching DVDs, but he did say he would have ordered as many as 6,000 DVDs so far this season. The team's embrace of the iPad means he needs a fraction of that number to satisfy any Luddites on the team.






The Jaguars also have embraced tablets. Players and coaches break down game tape on their iPads using XOS Digital's Lightning program. The software allows teams to study practices and games using features such as fast forward and rewind controls and visual tools like arrows in order to diagram plays. The program also features text so coaches can add notes and other information. It's proven so popular that 54 players and 34 coaches and administrators use it, even though it meant buying their own iPads.

Shuttle, a similar software application developed by DVSPORT, is another option. Shuttle, like Lightning, gives users full control options with which to view practice and game footage. Craig Davis, vice president of sales and marketing for DVSPORT, said such features are invaluable to coaches, who may watch a single play a dozen times in succession.

"If you sat in a room and watched a coach watch video, they'll go through that video 15, 20 times," Davis said. "They'll be on play 15 and they'll watch that running back go through that hole, then they'll watch what the linemen do [on the same play], then they'll watch what the quarterback does. They'll watch that four seconds of play — we call it 'scrubbing' — five, six, seven, eight, nine times until they get the information they want from it."

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