

Case Study

Connacht Rugby
Sport
Interactive whiteboard technology

Connacht Rugby signs up Ricoh to boost pitch performance



Connacht Rugby in Ireland used to have a TV and laptops to monitor play during a game and present possible improvements at half time to players. Since deploying a Ricoh interactive whiteboard, coaches no longer carry

heavy and difficult-to-setup equipment. Not only does the Ricoh technology save time, it also provides a much better way to plan and present match analysis and tactics to help players improve performance on the pitch.

Executive summary

Name: Connacht Rugby
Location: Galway, Ireland
Size: 60 staff (Pro team players & management)
Activity: Sport

Challenges

- Existing training aid equipment cumbersome and difficult to use
- Analyse and communicate critical match-play tactics during short, half-time period

Solution

- Ricoh Interactive Whiteboard

Benefits

- Enables coaches to communicate key messages to players at half time quickly
- Provides a fast and intuitive way for the team to collaborate on game-play
- Simplicity allows anyone to use the technology without training
- Enhanced visual aids improves information retention

Challenges

Connacht Rugby was established in 1885 and is one of four professional rugby teams in Ireland. The professional team is based at the Sportsground in Galway, a venue with a capacity of 8,000 spectators. The team was Guinness Pro12 Champions in the 2015/16 season. There are 45 players in the squad and four coaches, along with support and medical staff. As well as the professional team, the club has a wider community role administering rugby across five counties in its province. *Grassroots to Green Shirts* is the club's vision to grow and develop the club, but also foster rugby at all levels.

A key part of the club's development is success on the pitch. This is improved by several factors, but most important is player quality and performance. Coaches invest time and effort in analysing the team and then communicating back to players mistakes, how and where they can improve, and developing new tactics and moves. But for Connacht Rugby one of the challenges in performance analysis was at half time during a match, especially at away games. In a short space of time, coaches need to gather and analyse first-half play and then communicate with players before going back on to the pitch for the second half.

Video aids are central to this, and the team had used a cumbersome set up of a TV connected to as many as three laptops. This also needed software to draw out moves and plays and re-run them on screen. The equipment was not particularly mobile and at away games, the big problem was uncertainty around quality and type of equipment available and connecting laptops to it.

The club wanted to make performance analysis, particularly during half-time, faster and more efficient. When visiting other clubs, the head coach had seen other teams using

modern whiteboard technology so the club knew there were better options available.

But it was when a team from Glasgow came to Connacht Rugby, that the club found the solution it wanted. The Glasgow team had brought a Ricoh Interactive Whiteboard (IWB) to the game. Connacht Rugby coaches saw the Ricoh IWB in action and were very impressed with how effective it was.

Simon Kavanagh, Head Performance Analyst at Connacht Rugby, says, "After watching how the Glasgow coaches used the Ricoh IWB, we decided it was so good that we wanted one. We didn't even look at any other solutions."

Solution

Shortly after seeing the Glasgow rugby club whiteboard, Connacht Rugby acquired its own Ricoh IWB. It is the IWB 5510 which has a specially designed flight case with pneumatic arms so that the screen rises out of the case. This makes the IWB very portable, but also incorporates a screen large enough for groups to view easily and comfortably. It can be used at Connacht Rugby's home ground or just as easily taken on the team coach to away matches. The team plays around 28 matches in a season with more than 50 percent away.

The Ricoh IWB has internal storage enabling several different files, like pdfs, to be preloaded. The touch screen and the drawing software can be conveniently operated using either a finger or the supplied interactive pen. Laptops can still be connected to the whiteboard if needed. But now players and coaching staff can immediately draw out and amend plays, freeze video footage and annotate it directly on the screen without the need for additional software or complex keyboard commands.

Ricoh supplied the equipment and half a day's training, but little effort is required to set up the IWB or learn how to use it as it is so intuitive. Even players who have never used an IWB can start doing so instantly.

Benefits

Ricoh's interactive whiteboard technology is helping Connacht Rugby transform the way it analyses and communicates match-play performance between coaches and players. Its portability and ease of use makes the process quick and simple especially during short, half-time periods.

"You don't want technology to be a barrier, you want it to be useable and accessible by anybody including players. When you are disseminating your message, there is a much greater chance of the players taking it on board if they can visualise it. What the coaches are trying to do is educate the

continued overleaf



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players and get the correct message across. The Ricoh IWB transcended all those problems of setting up equipment and means we can work with the team far more efficiently and accurately than we could before," says Kavanagh.

The IWB has also introduced more versatility so that different team groups can focus on their own tactics. For example, the forwards coach uses the IWB to analyse scrums, and line outs and then, at half time, he can take the forwards aside, show them what had gone right or wrong and work with the players to develop new moves and strategies for the second half.

The technology is flexible and feature rich. While coaches tend to use drawing tools most of the time, the ability to incorporate pdfs is also proving very useful. Pre-developed game plans can be used and then accessed instantly to refresh players and change tactics during a game. Once displayed on screen these pdfs can even be annotated if, for example, first-half events or opposition tactics demand a change of plan. This was a feature that the club was not aware of until the Ricoh trainers showed them how simple it was to do.

The Ricoh IWB is also proving useful off the pitch. Its mobility means that it can be wheeled into different rooms to help one

group of players, then quickly moved to the next location to support another. The club has been using it to make presentations to partners and potential sponsors. "The whiteboard helps in corporate meetings by adding that professional touch and making everything look a lot smarter," says Kavanagh.

Although the Ricoh IWB is a rugby training tool, it is seen as an important part of Connacht Rugby's vision to grow and expand the club both on and off the pitch. Kavanagh says, "It's vital that any investment we make or piece of equipment that we use is targeted at helping players and coaches and our performance on the pitch, but also for the whole club and the wider rugby community that we serve. The Ricoh IWB is certainly making a significant difference to the way we analyse, communicate with and educate our players and that will begin to show through in success on the pitch."

Ricoh Solution/Products

- Ricoh IWB 5510 Interactive Whiteboard
- Equipment set up and training

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