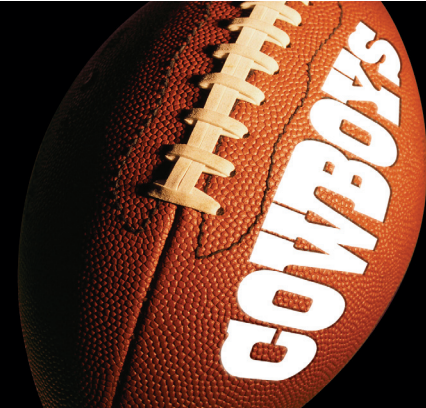


Dallas Cowboys

A Breakthrough Competitive Advantage



Applications

Clustered storage to support the digitization, online delivery and disk-based archiving of game video and statistics from every NFL game.

Challenge

The Dallas Cowboys required a highly flexible and highly scalable storage system that could easily and quickly automate storage administration tasks and help the team best utilize its video-based competitive analysis resources.

Isilon IQ Benefits

The Dallas Cowboys selected Isilon IQ because the system offered:

- Unmatched ease of use
- Unparalleled reliability that freed the Cowboys' technical team from having to make manual copies of data
- Fully scalable and distributed access that allows Cowboys coaches full and simultaneous access to all video assets via standard Microsoft Windows network protocols

"The more video I can store and filter for the coaches to utilize, the deeper insight they'll gain and the better our game planning and preparation will be. Before we worked with Isilon, we couldn't have done that."

—Robert Blackwell, Director of Coaching Video, Dallas Cowboys

The Dallas Cowboys Utilize Isilon Systems Scale-out NAS to Enable Deeper and Richer Analysis of Game Video and Other Critical Data

The Dallas Cowboys, widely recognized as one of the world's most popular and visible sports entities, has long been known as the most innovative team in the National Football League. From on-field breakthroughs like the Flex defense and Shotgun formation to (now common) off-field innovations such as dedicated specialty coaches and a comprehensive scouting system, "America's Team" has an unmatched history of success that includes five Super Bowl victories in eight appearances.

In a fast-paced and ever-changing sport where extensive video and statistical analysis of upcoming opponents has been raised to an art form and pre-game preparation is understood to be a critical factor in game-day success, the Dallas Cowboys have continued their history of innovation by selecting Isilon IQ to handle their ever-growing stores of complete NFL game footage and detailed statistical analysis. In a high-pressure environment in which every second of preparation counts and the slightest insight can mean the difference between victory and defeat, the Cowboys rely on Isilon scale-out NAS to deliver "game changing" performance and reliability.

"The Dallas Cowboys have always sought to provide our coaches and players with innovative, forward-looking tools that give them every possible advantage before they ever take the field on game day," said Dallas Cowboys Owner and General Manager, Jerry Jones. "By working with Isilon, we have given our coaching staff an invaluable tool in the weekly race to analyze our upcoming opponent and develop a winning game plan."

The Dallas Cowboys Prepare to Win with Isilon Scale-out NAS

Players win games on the field. But it is great coaching that gives players the chance to win those games. Assuming that's true, what then makes for great coaching? In the words of legendary football coach Paul "Bear" Bryant, "It's not the will to win that matters—everyone has that. It's the will to prepare to win that matters most."

In the NFL, vast amounts of game video and scouting reports are the lifeblood of how coaches prepare to win. Each week of the NFL season, the coaching staff of the Dallas Cowboys has the monumental task of understanding every element and nuance of that week's opponent in the hopes of developing the appropriate offensive and defensive game plans and schemes that will maximize the chances for victory. By understanding their opponent's strengths and

weaknesses—and most importantly, their situational tendencies—coaches strive to gain insights that will enable them to predict an opponent's on-field behaviors and define appropriate strategies to most effectively take advantage of opportunities. This is all done in a race against the clock as game day relentlessly approaches.

Each week, the Cowboys video staff, led by Director of Coaching Video Robert Blackwell, receives game video from that week's and upcoming opponents. This video (one for each game's offensive plays, defensive plays and special teams plays) is then digitized and uploaded to the Cowboys' Isilon storage cluster, and then overlaid with detailed situational data—down and distance, among many other data points. Each game generates approximately 20 gigabytes of data.

From that point, the video assets are filtered into more than 120 categories ("Third down and long," "First down running plays," etc.) based on game situation to provide more meaningful insight for the coaches. They are then made available to 28 coaching workstations located throughout the Cowboys' training and practice facility.

According to Blackwell, the team's reliance on video analysis has grown significantly over the years. "Coaching football today is like a chess game. And the better our guys can understand what our opponents are thinking and doing, the more successful we'll be. Video study—and lots of it—is the key to that understanding."

Isilon IQ: Performance and 'Peace of Mind'

Prior to streamlining and accelerating their digital workflow with Isilon IQ, the Cowboys supported their video stores of game footage and statistical data with 48 individual 183 gigabyte disc drives. "The reliability issue was scary to me. But since we've worked with Isilon, I have had no reliability problems at all and that gives me real peace of mind."

The size of the Cowboys' video collection, combined with the rate of new additions, strained its traditional storage system and forced administrators to navigate a complicated maze in order to modify or expand capacity and performance. By creating a single, modular and expandable pool of clustered storage, Isilon IQ enables the Cowboys and other customers to easily and reliably add tens, hundreds or even thousands of terabytes of storage—dramatically reducing both capital acquisition and ongoing IT management costs. Unlike most traditional storage systems, which require costly custom hardware that is delivered in complex, monolithic architectures, the Isilon IQ family of scale-out NAS systems offers unmatched mission-critical performance in a modular form factor that combines Isilon's award-winning OneFS® operating system software with industry-standard hardware. This powerful combination enables true pay-as-you-grow flexibility.

The performance and scalability of his Isilon IQ scale-out NAS solution has enabled Blackwell to efficiently and cost-effectively store not just the current season's games, but the entirety of the previous season as well. This, coupled with the performance advantages of a true all-digital workflow, provides the coaching staff with a much larger database of footage from which to draw, resulting in a richer and deeper understanding of what the Cowboys will face from each week's opponent. "The more video I can store and filter for the coaches to utilize, the deeper insight they'll gain and the better our game planning and preparation will be. Before we worked with Isilon, we couldn't have done that."