

GOLF CHANNEL CASE STUDY

About Golf Channel

Golf Channel is a multimedia golf entertainment and services company based in Orlando, Fla. Golf Channel's cable network, co-founded by Arnold Palmer and a subsidiary of Comcast Corporation (NASDAQ: CMCSA, CMCSK), is available in more than 120 million homes worldwide through cable, satellite, and wireless companies. Today, Golf Channel is the exclusive cable television home for both the PGA and LPGA tours. Golf Channel also distributes the Nationwide Tour®, European Tour, Canadian Tour, and Champions Tour®, with a generous mix of other competition from the USGA and PGA of America.

Exclusive partnerships with the world's top tours allow Golf Channel to feature more live golf coverage than all other networks combined, added to a programming schedule distinguished by golf's best news, instruction, and award-winning original programming, including "Big Break," "The Haney Project," and "Golf in America."



The Challenge

When Golf Channel decision-makers determined the time had come to upgrade both broadcast and production to HD, they recognized that such an ambitious project afforded additional opportunities to enhance operational efficiency dramatically and to improve access to assets stored on videotape. As the project got underway, they also recognized that an initial archive management application provided by Masstech did not meet their needs and would have to be replaced with a more robust, media-centric, and expandable solution.

To address the fundamental goal of operational efficiency, Golf Channel sought to improve its workflow, from ingest to editing to archive, by implementing an advanced file-based system. To facilitate the use of tens of thousands of hours of archived assets, Golf Channel sought an accelerated means of migrating them to digital form where they could be managed, secured, and preserved for the long term.

It was only during the process of shifting to file-based workflow that Golf Channel decision-makers saw the fatal limitations of the original Masstech system. For one thing, the original system could not easily scale to accommodate future growth, and for another it lacked efficiency-supporting features such as partial-file restore. Thus, there was an immediate need to replace it with a solution that also had sufficient flexibility to handle both play-to-air and Avid production workflows.

The Solution

In 2008, Golf Channel embarked on a multi-year project to transition to high-definition operation. Over the following two years, every major operational unit was replaced in the Orlando facility, which now comprises three full HD production control rooms, a digital media center, technical operations center, a digital transfer center, and 12 Avid Interplay® and ISIS® editing suites. At present, three channels are in use: domestic SD and HD feeds, plus one international feed for Asia.

To replace the initial inadequate DAM system, Golf Channel selected DIVArchive™ content storage management (CSM) because it could handle both the broadcaster's immediate needs and its future growth. DIVArchive has unified a fully automated, seamless, digital workflow, including asset management, master control play-to-air, and production archiving in combination with Avid Interplay. In addition, Golf Channel has deployed a Front Porch Digital SAMMArobot to migrate content from its library of some 137,000 videotapes to inclusion in the secure, managed, digital environment.

DIVArchive's robust file management architecture also supports highly particularized logging software from Dixon Sports Computing. The indexing system enables Golf Channel producers to find highly specific content – using search criteria as narrow as a particular brand of golf ball on a particular fairway in particular weather conditions.

"In our Digital Transfer Center, we have put together a thoroughly well-thought-out, robust solution to move content back and forth from acquisition all the way to deep archive," said Ken Botelho, Golf Channel senior director of engineering. "Whether a clip is going to Avid for editing, being sent to producers for logging and review, being pulled up as high-resolution essence or low-resolution proxy, being parked in nearline storage, or being sent to deep archive, it is available in a single unified workflow that relies on best-of-breed technologies. And within that workflow, the system keeping order is DIVArchive."

At Golf Channel, Front Porch Digital's SAMMArobot is digitizing as much as 1,000 hours of content each week. Operating unattended around the clock, the automated system handles seven streams at once, generating multiple digital formats in real time while also performing quality control. It is estimated that migrating Golf Channel's entire archive, most of it now in Beta format, will take about four years.

The Future

In deploying DIVArchive to replace their original, inadequate DAM system, Golf Channel has implemented a reliable solution with the versatility to handle the varied technology demands of play-to-air and production workflows now, while also being scalable. Scalability is especially important because Golf Channel's future includes not only the day-to-day addition of new content, but also the addition of the enormous trove of legacy videotape now being digitized by the Front Porch Digital SAMMA system.

Today, Golf Channel's file-based workflow has achieved its goals of efficiency, access, and broadcast consistency and reliability. Over time, the proven and scalable DIVArchive and SAMMA technologies will continue to facilitate Golf Channel's ability to grow and take advantage of emerging business opportunities.

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