

In terms of personnel, the just-completed Lions tour to New Zealand was the largest rugby tour in history, the Lions arriving with more than double the usual quota of players and management. With little time to adapt to each other and prepare for New Zealand conditions, technology was the key component in getting the players and coaches on the same wavelength.



From the outset, Lions video analyst Gavin Scott said the tourists were quick to embrace SportsCode, the simplicity, flexibility and easy use of the equipment be-

ing the cornerstone to the quick transfer of common information. Bringing together four nations to play as one within a minimal amount of time was the most pressing challenge facing the Lions and where SportsCode played a pivotal role. "Using SportsCode meant we could take a lot of information and get through it quite quickly," Scott said.

"From a coach's perspective, a number of them hadn't used the system before so it was important it was simple to use and easy to pick up because they were going to be using it a lot and they didn't have a lot of time to have a lot of training.

"That's the beauty of SportsCode, it's such an easy system to learn that the guys, particularly the England coaches who had never used it before, picked it up really easily and really enjoyed using it."

With minimal training required, Scott was able to leave the coaches to their own devices, enabling the respective team mentors to build their own presentations. In essence it cut down the time spent on the training process.

"It was the same with the players," Scott said. "There were a reasonable number of players who had used SportsCode before but also a lot of them who hadn't and the ones that hadn't picked it up really quickly and found what they wanted from it without having to do too much training."

Before the tour, the Scotland, Wales and Ireland rugby unions had all used the SportsCode system. "England don't currently but I think they are just about to buy some because of what they've seen on the tour," Scott said.

With computers providing coaches the luxury of having the game at their fingertips, there is the opportunity to review real time information of specific incidents as well as the overall unfolding of the match for debriefing purposes afterwards.



Because of limited time during a game, real time information usually relates to something a coach didn't see properly and wants to have

another look at or a couple of different plays that can be compared, rather than delving into plays that need deeper analysis.

"The coaches may look at a lineout or a backline move and see if there's anything different that can be done next time they do it to improve it during the game," Scott said.

"A lot of the stuff that we do during the game cuts down the time we have to spend doing other things after the game but it also allows coaches to review certain parts of the game that they want to review for talking to the guys about at halftime or for getting messages onto the pitch and that sort of thing."

With the mid-week team and the test team having their own set of coaches throughout the tour, both teams benefited from an equal amount of video work and the associated input. Six laptops were available in the team room at the respective hotels so players had access to their own games as well as opponents matches that they could look through during the preparation for matches.

Scott said player use of SportsCode during the tour had been fairly equal and was not frequented more by those who were familiar with the system but rather usage had followed traditional paths.

“You tend to get a lot of lineout forwards who will be fairly heavy users because they like to look at their own and opposition lineouts and certain other players will use it a bit less,” he said.

The use of Apple equipment had also received strong endorsements throughout the tour. Initial hesitation at using something new quickly evaporated when it was found they weren't all that different at all. “Because you can use things like Microsoft Office then it's almost the same as having a PC anyway,” Scott said.



“Because some people were using them fresh, and again it's similar to SportsCode, it would have taken them less time to learn how to use

an Apple than it would have done to use a PC for the first time. It's such an easy thing to pick up. You know where everything is on your Apple and connecting to the internet is dead easy and all that kind of thing. I think everyone's been really impressed and really enjoyed using the machines.”

Scott needed no convincing that the SportsCode/Apple platform was the best set-up available.

“It's good because it's so flexible,” he said. “You can design your own templates and you really get out of it what you put in. It can be designed so coaches can look at specific things in different ways and that's been one of the good things about this tour.



With so many different coaches from so many different places we have been able to put some things together quite quickly that suits all of them and in that respect it's gone very well.”

Scott has been a SportsCode user since 2002 and before that had used two or three other systems. He acknowledged “all give similar things” but SportsCode was the standout product in its field.

“SportsCode's definitely the most flexible out of them all and it's the most powerful as well,” he said. “You're able to compile lots of games and lots of information together and analyse it reasonably quickly. You can prepare presentations very quickly which is the key thing because that's what we're doing on a daily basis.”