

SIMON FRASER UNIVERSITY

First Canadian University Football Team Joins The NCAA

Victory on the college football field requires careful planning, tireless preparation, clear communication and flawless execution by the team and coaching staff. Being the first Canadian college football program to be granted NCAA membership definitely ups the ante in that pursuit. For Simon Fraser University's (SFU) football team, navigating a return to four-down American football, where even the lines on the field are different, after playing three-down Canadian football from 2002 until 2009, presents challenges.

As a member of the Great Northwest American Conference (GNAC) — a division of the NCAA — SFU begins what will be a two-year probationary membership in NCAA Division II with full membership to be granted in 2012. The road to NCAA membership has been long in coming, but will be well worth it, according to SFU Head Football Coach Dave Johnson.

"We're making this transition in order to grow our football program, expand our competition and make SFU an even more attractive school to potential student athletes," said Johnson. "Still, we're under no illusion as to the difficulty we will have in reshaping the program from Canadian football, with fewer rules, to NCAA rules that are far more intricate. We'll have to know the rules inside and out, so highly effective communication on and off the field will be paramount."

"...it became obvious that our old wireless communication system was a weak link"

— Dave Johnson, Head Football Coach

Right people, right tools

SFU is modifying and expanding its football coaching staff with new, full-time offensive and defensive coordinators with extensive American college football experience. Johnson, who recently signed a five-year extension with SFU and is entering his fourth season in 2010, was quick to point out that the key to a successful transition is in the details. "We know we have the right coaching staff in place and a good mix of seasoned and new players, so it became obvious that our old wireless communication system was a weak link," said Johnson.

To maximize efficiency of game-day coaching commu-

nication for the crucial 2010-2011 season, SFU has selected the HME DX300 Wireless Headset System. "Our wireless headset system must be 100 percent reliable when conveying in-game information and I'd heard great things from other coaches about the DX300," said Johnson. "After careful consideration we decided to replace our old system, which had been less than reliable. We can't afford miscommunication during crucial offensive playcalling, or defensive adjustments during any game this season."



Dave Johnson,
Head Football Coach

Harnessing Technology

Bringing the right players and coaching staff together for ongoing success is about flawless execution and communication, on and off the field. While training builds the foundation for the former, cutting-edge technology must be harnessed to achieve the latter. The basic HME DX300 Wireless Headset System enables five coaches to communicate in two-way, hands-free, 'two up/three down' configuration, with two coaches connected to the DX300 Base Station and three on HME's wireless COMMUNICATOR® series headsets, with the potential to expand the system to accommodate a staff of 20 coaches.

With a staff of fifteen, Johnson may have as many as eight coaches on headsets for any given game (six on the sidelines and two in the booth, connected to two daisy-chained DX300 base stations). "The base station has two-channel operation so we also have the ability to separate offensive and defensive communication, even when we use just one base station," said Johnson. "We can even record the coaching communication to sync with playback film to see where we can improve."

To ensure secure, uninterrupted communication, the HME DX300 uses 64-bit encryption and dual-slot diversity to keep audio transmissions private (even against other DX300 systems) and transmit it twice, at different times and different hop frequencies. The system then selects the strongest returned signal on its diversity antenna system.

Reliability, versatility and durability

While the interference-free wireless reception of the DX300 is paramount, Johnson points out other equally

important attributes of the system. "It takes just a few minutes to set up the system no matter where we are playing," said Johnson. "We don't need a frequency coordinator or any complex antenna setup — so the coaches can concentrate on strategy instead of technology."

Performance must always be maximized for players, coaches and the tools that they use, so downtime due to poor battery performance is unacceptable in a wireless football communication system headset. Johnson comments on how the HME DX300 automatically monitors battery life in the COMMUNICATOR® series headsets/belt packs and sends a voice prompt over the headset some twenty minutes before they need to be charged. "The voice prompts really enhances the hands-free, intuitive operation of the COMMUNICATOR headsets, but with a 20-hour battery life per charge and a four-port charger to back us up, we'll never need to listen for the prompts during game time," said Johnson.

As a full duplex transceiver, the HME DX300 can transmit and receive concurrently, allowing coaches to communicate in an open-line format without push-to-talk buttons. Hands-free operation via the vendor's COMMUNICATOR se-

ries headsets, with or without the optional belt pack, is both light and durable in a sport where equipment takes a pounding. "Knowing that the DX300 headsets and belt packs can take the abuse and still work flawlessly is an added protection against dropped transmission at a critical time," said Johnson.

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— Dave Johnson, Head Football Coach

Moving forward into new NCAA territory, Johnson and his coaching staff feel confident that they are prepared for whatever comes their way. "I think we can build a flagship program that attracts the best players from both countries, but everything starts with the right people, planning, tools and execution," said Johnson. "Over time, coaches learn the strengths and weaknesses in terms of team, staff performance and game execution, but it can all be for nothing without flawless communication on and off the field."



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