Top 5 Apps for Coaches

Introduction

The rapid growth and acceptance of tablet technology has led to significant capabilities that were previously unavailable to coaches. Tablet PCs now have significant battery life, are lightweight, have fully integrated cameras and videos, are set up to operate like your mobile phone through wireless technology or through local wi-fi networks, and with a little bit of nano-technology (see www.p2i.com) can be made completely waterproof.

Today, there are now limited excuses for not adopting technology to support and enhance your coaching process. The availability of quality information at any time and anywhere can enhance the quality of coaching experience for your athletes.

The inevitable consequence of such accelerated growth this technology has been a growth in the software tools (or apps). This short article aims to showcase five applications that could help support your role as a coach. These include applications to track competition results, accurate timing systems, pacing tools, apps to help monitor and track training details and video analysis off your iPad.

Timing - sprintTimer – Photo Finish (£1.49UK)

sprintTimer is a unique timer and photo finish app that employs the same techniques as the professional equipment used at major sporting events. Start the timer and point the camera towards the finish line. sprintTimer will build an image of narrow slices of the finish line. You can then scroll along the photo to get the time when each competitor crosses the finish line with a 0.01 sec resolution. sprintTimer also includes a motion controlled lap timer and a video finish tool for longer races. sprintTimer has several advantages over a manual stop watch – these include the ability to time all participants at once with better accuracy that stopwatch alone, automated calculation of differences between competitors and the timing system can be triggered by sound, e.g. start gun.

Figure 1: sprintTimer
Pacing - PaceDJ (£1.49UK)

PaceDJ is an app that can work off your iPhone using an athlete’s favourite music to help pace efforts when training. This is primarily targeted at the health and fitness market but can also be used to help with training sessions to give some real time auditory feedback to help athletes with training efforts. Different music can be used to pace different efforts and the beats per minute (BPM) can be changed manually if not quite accurately enough.

TrainingLoad graphs all individual training sessions so that you can see the daily progression in the TRIMP and Session-RPE. Tapping on ‘View Graph’ will display the data as both individual sessions (DAILY) and as weekly totals (WEEKLY). The weekly graph for TRIMP displays the percentage change from the previous week. The weekly graph for Session-RPE also displays the monotony, percentage change from the previous week, and strain.

Monitoring training - TrainingLoad (free)

TrainingLoad allows anyone to record and track the ‘dose’ of exercise for a single person with two common methods - Session-RPE (rating of perceived exertion) and the Training Impulse (TRIMP).

Both methods integrate training intensity and training duration into a single number representing the overall dose of training. TrainingLoad allows you to enter the RPE, the maximal and resting heart rate, the mean heart rate for the training session and the session duration. By entering these values via the sliders it takes just a single button tap to then calculate the TRIMP and Session-RPE.
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**Tracking competition results – Running Coaches Clipboard (RCC)**
*(current price £6.99UK)*

The Running Coach’s Clipboard (RCC) (Figure 1) allows coaches and spectators to time and track splits of up to 100 athletes across multiple events in any race, meet or workout. This clipboard of results can be stored, printed e-mailed and/or retrieved for later review or reference. With RCC for IPad, a few touches retrieve athletes from an internal database, events and associated splits are quickly dialed, and a running printout tracks splits as runners go by. You can attach photos of your athletes to the database, various timers and events making it easier to identify runner, jumpers and throwers during a fast moving meet.

**Video analysis - Excelade**
*(free for 30 days and then £2.99UK)*

Excelade is a video analysis tool that allows you to capture, share and review video clips from various training and sporting performances. It provides the basic functionality to allow rapid review of skills executed in the training environment. Excelade allows slow motion playback, playing videos simultaneously for comparison, editing with text and drawings, and sharing with others once an account has been set up. The app is a low-level entry into the video playback market and provides a simple but effective feedback tool.

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**Figure 4: Screenshot of the Running Coaches Clipboard**

**Figure 5: Excelade**
Summary

The rapid growth in tablet PC technology has opened up the opportunity to bring simple technology into the daily coaching environment to support the coaching process. The basic tablet functionality matched with growth in ‘apps’ has opened up the capabilities for coaches to enhance the quality of the coaching experience.

This article has outlined five of many such apps covering data storage from competition results, an automated timing system, pacing tool, monitoring of training load and a low cost video analysis tool. These will give you a head start into a rapidly evolving market but there are many others that can provide similar functionality.

Please note: the author has no involvement with any of the commercial companies or products mentioned in this report.

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