

Online Off-Season

LUGGING AROUND A HEFTY PLAYBOOK? THAT'S SO TWO YEARS AGO.

By Eddie Matz

ROOKIES IN NEW YORK AND Cleveland, rejoice. The NFL learning curve will be a little less daunting this year.

That's because the Jets and Browns are the first teams to incorporate Hudl Pro into their training programs. Developed in 2006 for Nebraska's football team, the cutting-edge software—which ex-Huskies head coach and current New York O-line coach Bill Callahan brought to the Jets last year—allows teams to house their entire playbook and video library online. It's eliminated the need for encyclopedia-size binders and stacks of DVDs. “Rookies come to minicamp already speaking our language,” says Jets assistant Mike Bloomgren.

The Jets once mailed parts of their playbook to new players, only to spoon-feed overwhelmed rookies and FAs at camp. Now a guy like QB Mark Sanchez logs on to a website and learns the offense before the ink dries on his contract. “We like the immediacy,” says Bloomgren. “That’s the best thing.”

Newbies aren't the only ones reaping the software's benefits. Veteran receiver Jerricho Cotchery spends three hours a day watching film and messaging teammates from home. That's time he used to spend at the practice



facility and away from his wife and baby daughter. Says a grateful Cotchery: “It brings the facility to my house.”

Although game tape is usually accompanied by a coach's voice only in the team meeting room,

Hudl Pro allows voice-overs. (Other features include spot-shadowing and a Madden-style Telestrator.) “It's like going from silent movies to talkies,” says Tulsa coach Todd Graham, whose D1 squad is also Hudl-ing up.

While several other pro franchises are considering Hudl, some clubs are still wary of sharing all their secrets online. (Cautious teams can plunk down up to 40K to host secure servers at their own facilities.) Still, it's a risk some perennial bottom-dwellers are willing to take. “If this saves one player from making a mistake and that wins us a ball game,” says Bloomgren, “it's worth it 10-fold.”