



Editing Software in Sports: What Should We Be Teaching?

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Over the past 18 years of teaching video editing, I have worked with a wide range of platforms, including iMovie, Final Cut Pro 7 and X, Adobe Premiere Pro, Avid, and Hudl. As my focus has shifted more specifically toward sports production, an important question has emerged: which editing software should students learn to best prepare for careers in the sports industry?

The Evolution of Video Editing

Video editing has evolved significantly over time. Early editing was a physical process—cutting and joining pieces of film—known as linear editing. This changed dramatically in 1989 with the introduction of Avid, a Macintosh-based nonlinear editing system that revolutionized post-production workflows. By the 1990s, Adobe Premiere made nonlinear editing more accessible, and in the late 1990s, Apple introduced Final Cut Pro, offering an affordable, software-driven editing solution for desktop users (Delhauer, 2022).

Today, nonlinear editing platforms such as Avid, Premiere Pro, Final Cut Pro, DaVinci Resolve, and Vegas Pro provide comprehensive toolsets that extend far beyond simple cutting. These systems integrate audio mixing, color grading, visual effects, and motion graphics into unified workflows (Ascher & Pincus, 2007). As a result, educators must consider not only functionality, but also industry relevance when choosing what to teach.

Approaches to Video Production

Owens and Millerson (2012) identify two primary approaches to video production: empirical and planned. The empirical approach is spontaneous and exploratory, relying on capturing footage first and shaping the story afterward. While this can yield creative results, it risks lacking cohesion. In contrast, the planned approach involves pre-determined structure and intentional production, resulting in more organized and purpose-driven content.

Similarly, Kirk et al. (2007) distinguish between lightweight and heavyweight video work. Lightweight production emphasizes spontaneous capture and immediate sharing, while heavyweight production focuses on high-quality, carefully crafted content that requires significant planning and post-production effort.

For the purposes of sports production education, this discussion centers on planned, heavyweight post-production, where quality, precision, and storytelling are paramount.

Storytelling in Sports Editing

At its core, sports video editing is storytelling. Strong storytelling techniques are essential for engaging audiences, allowing both professionals and fans to interpret the drama, emotion, and significance of gameplay (Lin et al., 2025). Effective editing transforms raw footage into compelling narratives—highlighting key plays, emphasizing emotional moments, and maintaining viewer engagement from beginning

to end.

Because of this, the tools used for editing must support speed, flexibility, and creative control.

Comparing the Leading Editing Platforms

The three primary systems considered in sports production are Avid Media Composer, Adobe Premiere Pro, and Final Cut Pro.

Avid Media Composer has long been the industry standard for broadcast and high-end production. It excels in handling large volumes of high-resolution footage and supports collaborative workflows across multiple editors. Its stability and media management capabilities make it especially valuable in large-scale productions and network environments.

Adobe Premiere Pro is a versatile and widely adopted nonlinear editing platform that supports high-resolution formats, including 4K and 8K footage. Its strengths include multicam editing, advanced stabilization, and precise speed control for slow-motion playback. Integration with Adobe After Effects enhances motion graphics and visual storytelling, making it particularly effective for highlight packages and social media content.

Final Cut Pro offers a powerful, Mac-based editing solution known for its speed and intuitive interface. It supports multicam editing, stabilization, and efficient workflows, making it well-suited for highlight creation and fast-turnaround projects.

Key Considerations for Sports Editing

When selecting an editing platform for sports production, several factors must be considered:

- Large, high-definition file sizes
- Fast-paced action requiring precise editing
- Multi-angle footage synchronization
- Slow-motion replay capabilities
- Integration of fan, player, and coach reactions
- Output formats for broadcast, digital, and social media

These demands require software that is both powerful and efficient.

Industry Trends and Insights

Historically, Avid has been the dominant platform in sports production. However, recent industry trends indicate a shift toward Adobe Premiere Pro, particularly for digital and short-form content. Many editors prefer Premiere for its faster turnaround times, flexibility, and ability to handle mixed formats with-

out extensive transcoding.

In conversations with industry professionals, this shift becomes clear:

- NBC Sports- Still using Avid
- WWE- Uses Avid
- ESPN-Primarily uses Avid
- MLB Productions: Uses Premiere due to alignment with college training and smoother workforce transition
- New York Yankees: Recently transitioned from Avid to Premiere
- CBS Sports: Fully switched from Avid to Premiere within the past two years
- NBA: Uses a hybrid approach with Premiere and EVS systems
- New York Mets: Use Premiere, though Avid is still respected for its media management capabilities

Despite this shift, Avid remains valued for large-scale collaborative workflows and system stability, particularly in traditional broadcast environments.

Implications for Teaching

For educators, selecting a video editing platform requires balancing industry relevance, accessibility, and cost. Adobe Premiere Pro offers several advantages in an educational setting:

- Lower software costs compared with some professional alternatives
- Widespread adoption across media and sports production industries
- Strong compatibility with other creative applications
- Greater accessibility for smaller programs and student organizations

Adobe Premiere Pro is widely recognized as a leading professional editing platform because of its flexibility, broad functionality, and integration within the Adobe Creative Cloud ecosystem. It supports numerous video formats and resolutions, making it suitable for projects ranging from social media content to film and sports production. Advanced features such as color grading, audio enhancement, multicamera editing, and motion graphics contribute to its popularity among media professionals.

At the same time, Premiere Pro has notable drawbacks. The software can be resource-intensive, often requiring powerful hardware to run efficiently. Users may encounter issues such as slow playback, extended rendering times, and occasional stability problems, particularly with large or complex projects. In addi-

tion, the subscription-based pricing model can create financial challenges for students and smaller organizations. While the software is highly respected within the industry, mastering its extensive toolset can present a significant learning curve for new users.

Although Avid remains a prominent editing system in higher-level professional environments, Premiere Pro is often the more practical choice for introductory and intermediate instruction. Nevertheless, Avid continues to hold value in advanced coursework and should remain available for students pursuing specialized careers in professional media production.

Conclusion

Sports video editing has evolved into a dynamic blend of storytelling, technical precision, and rapid content delivery. While Avid Media Composer continues to play a critical role in high-end broadcast environments, Adobe Premiere Pro has emerged as the most practical and widely used platform in modern sports production—particularly in fast-paced, digital-first contexts.

For educators, this makes Premiere Pro the most strategic primary tool for preparing students for immediate entry into the industry. At the same time, exposure to Avid remains important for advanced workflows and specialized career paths.

As the field continues to evolve, driven by faster production demands and emerging technologies, the most valuable skill students can develop is adaptability. The tools may change, but the ability to tell compelling stories through sport will remain at the heart of the profession.

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