



Redefining the game

Paterson native brings NFL into the computer age

Kai Patterson doesn't throw touchdowns or tackle running backs but his impact could soon be felt in locker rooms throughout the National Football League.

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Patterson, president and CEO of KDP Digital Systems Inc., East Rutherford, is the inventor of 'Game Prep—a computer program that Patterson believes will one day make playbooks and videotapes a thing of the past for football players and other athletes.

The program will give players access to diagrams, notes, statistics and game films on a laptop computer. By using the program, players can access the information they need by touching a few buttons.

'It's everything a player is required to understand,' Patterson said Last week. 'Its easier than carrying a big binder around and it makes preparation easier by eliminating steps.'

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— Kai Patterson

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The Washington Redskins have already signed up for it, and five other teams are interested, he said.

Although the program would cost about \$50,000 for NFL teams, Patterson said it could be more affordable for

High schools that already have computer hardware.

He has already impressed Passaic High School football coach Frank Pratkanis. "I met with (Patterson) during the preseason and I was very impressed," Pratkanis said. "It's incredible. It could be a great teaching aid."

Still, Pratkanis said money would be the main factor in determining whether schools buy it. "Cost is the No.1 priority, but I was thrilled just to see it," he said.

Patterson, 34, was born in Paterson and lived in the Grand Street projects until his family moved to Newark when he was 4 years old. He graduated from Hampton Institute Virginia, where he studied mathematics, physics and computer science. He said he planned on being an Air Force pilot but instead ended up writing software for NASA. "I fell in love with program writing and software and decided that's what I want to do," he said.

He said he has also done some work for AT&T, developing a calling card detection system for the communications magnate.

However, it was through his work in

repairing computers that Patterson said he met a lot of NFL players and coaches. That was when he conceived the idea of taking everything a player has in a playbook and putting it into a computer, he said. "This was developed by players for players," Patterson said. Among the players who have worked with the company are former Giants Stephen Baker, Joey Smith and Otis Anderson, he said.

The program was also a way for Patterson to make a contribution to his favorite sport. "I've always loved football," he said. "I never played it, but I loved it from an analytical point of view." One aspect of the product is the ability to enter the highlights from past games. Players can access up to 250 filmed highlights which are programmed into the laptop by the coaches, he said. The highlights can be used by players to study their own plays or the plays of their opponents.

The program also comes with safety features that prevent anyone but the assigned players from accessing their laptop. The information cannot be duplicated or printed out, preventing opponents from obtaining a team's plays and strategy. "We thought of that after Malik Skyles lost his playbook," Patterson said, referring to the Indiana Pacers forward who made news during the 1993 NBA playoffs when he lost his playbook in New York.

While much of Patterson's current efforts involve selling the program to NFL teams, he said the product could be used for any sport or virtually any profession. He said an ophthalmologist has expressed interest in using it to demonstrate surgical techniques.