

What do I use to record the video from my coachcam?

The following CoachCam compatible camcorders are available either online or in regular stores as of 9-20-08. This means they all have analog video input. This is not meant to be a complete list, although most of the companies have phased out many of their camcorders with this feature. The anti-piracy laws have scared many of the manufacturers away from including this feature into their camcorders. . . and as most people aren't using vcr's anymore, there isn't much of a demand for camcorders that can accept an outside analog video signal.

The comments listed below are my opinions heavily biased for use with a CoachCam. Meaning, I don't have the time to do a full review of the camcorders features when you're using it as a camcorder (as opposed to a recording device for the coachcam). If you want a full review of this type, google the make and model and you'll find some great sources for reviews.

Also I want to throw in a quick caution about using online stores. . . Be aware that most internet sellers sell you cameras close to their cost, and make their money on trying to sell you a bunch of extras (warranty's, batteries, carrying cases, tripods, ...). Their biggest "add-on" is batteries. One sales pitch I often get is that "it only comes with a factory battery, which only lasts 15-20 minutes". This is nonsense!!! The factory batteries will usually last 1 to 2 hours. They may even take the battery out, and try to sell it without a battery (**I would hang up**). If you need the security of an extra battery, buy a battery from either a store that sells batteries online (and hence they sell at competitive prices) or from your local retailer. You're going to pay a premium price if you get it as an extra when you purchase the camcorder. The extra warranty – that's up to you.

Aiptek Action HD: Available at WalMart \$199

Quality: good for swimmer reviewing

Records to: SD memory card.

Advantages: Price. Can review on a laptop quickly using a 15-17" screen. Video recorded in Mov. format. (Quicktime) Excellent for easy frame at a time use when played through a laptop. In normal camcorder mode, the picture quality is great. . . 1080P or 720P @ 60 frames per second.

Drawbacks: Screen size only 2". Recording format when using the analog input from the coachcam is highly compressed (still about VCR quality), but not good enough to sell as "professional" video. Zoom in regular camcorder mode is only 3X.

My opinion: I use it often, it's quick, light, and simple and reliable.

Hitachi dzhs500A: available only online \$300 - \$600

Quality: should be very good. All DVD and hard drive recorders compress the signal (usually MPEG 2 or MPEG 4 format) and you can usually notice the compression in freeze frame mode, but the quality is usually somewhere between good VCR quality and store-bought DVD quality.

Records to: Hard Drive and DVD

Advantages: Price is great since this unit has been out for 2 years. Hitachi still has it on their website so I assume they are still producing them, although I do not see them in any mainstream stores. This is the only unit that gives you a choice- record to Hard drive or DVD. You can choose to record to hard drive and then put portions of what you've recorded onto a DVD.

Drawbacks: The "finalizing" of a disk, if you intend to send it home with your athlete, will take a couple minutes (which can be a problem if you are working with multiple athletes).

My opinion: If I didn't already have 7 or 8 camcorders I would strongly consider putting this one in my bag-o-tricks while it's still available. The prices are great.

JVC GZ-MG335 and GZ-MG365: mostly available online - around \$400 for the 335 (30GB drive); and around \$500 for the 365 (60 GB drive).

Quality: Same notations as above . . . very good. All DVD and hard drive recorders compress the signal (usually MPEG 2 or MPEG 4 format) and you can usually notice the compression in freeze frame mode, but the quality is usually somewhere between good VCR quality and store-bought DVD quality.

Records to: Hard Drive or memory chip

Advantages: Good screen size 2.7" . . . great for use as camcorder – great optical zoom- very clear. Quality when using a/v input is good. Plugging the unit into your computer for video transfers is a piece of cake.

Drawbacks: I can't think of any unless you are looking for "the sharpest picture you can get". (see Canon HV20 and HV30 below)

My Opinion: I have a model from 2007 GZ-MG155 – works very well. I can only assume the 335 and 365 have made a few tweaks to bring the size down slightly. I like it (my 155), and feel it's easy to use, and gives you very good quality video.

Canon Vixia HV20 and HV30: Available online and in some mainstream stores \$500 - \$900

Quality: The best quality you can get right now in a camcorder that still has A/V input for use with a CoachCam.

Records to: Mini DV tape

Advantages: Both are great High Def camcorders with great features! So you're not just getting a camcorder that works with the CoachCam, but also getting a super deal on a High Definition Camcorder. The big advantage is picture clarity when recording to tape. Other recording media compresses the video signal anywhere from about 10x to 100x which **can** look pretty good at regular speed but is anywhere from noticeable to very poor in freeze frame. For the highest quality video, tape is the way to go.

Drawbacks: Although tape will capture the highest quality picture (worthy of that 60"inch widescreen TV), it takes more time to save files to your computer and have the instant accessibility of the newer media (memory cards, hard drives and DVD's). If saving and editing files is important to you, plan on playing the tape back at normal speed to your computer through a firewire connection to record it to your computer.

My opinion: If you want the best quality video from the A/V in (from CoachCam), as well as the best quality in the normal camcorder mode, and you don't mind spending the extra time it takes to work with tape . . . this is it!

Salamander DVR X1: Available exclusively from us – UCCA \$129 (will be on our website by October 1st, 2008)

Quality: good for swimmer reviewing

Records to: SD memory card.

Advantages: Price. Can review on a laptop quickly using a 15-17" screen. Video recorded in 3gpp format. Plays in (Quicktime) excellent for easy frame at a time use. Large 3" screen. Lightweight, small. Also stores workouts, plays your mp3's and games.

Drawbacks: Recording format when using the analog input from the coachcam is highly compressed (moderate VCR quality). Looks great on 3" screen. Good enough for swimmer review, but not good enough to sell. If you play on a 40" screen the quality will appear poor. Occasional "dropouts" in video (it may skip 2-3 frames). No slow motion directly from unit. Must use a laptop or computer to have slow motion and frame-by-frame advance.

My opinion: If quick, easy on deck review, at a great price is what you're looking for this is your pick.

Note: This is not a camcorder, it's a personal media player (if you're not sure what that is . . . think "i-pod" – it's kinda like that). It will record and playback video from a CoachCam.

Final note:

If you look at the "compatibility list" from Nov. 2007 you may be able to get some great deals on some of these older models online. (Most swim teams probably have parents with some of these older models collecting dust that they would be happy to donate).