

How to Improve Your Sports Photography



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Action and sports are some of the most thrilling and frustrating things you can shoot, but when you nail the shot, there's no better feeling.

Capturing the action of a thrilling sports event, whether it is, is a wonderful feeling for all involved. But just how can we get shots we see in the magazines and newspapers?

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Learn the Sport

A big part of sports photography is anticipating action. You will never get that fantastic shot of a diving shortstop spearing a line drive by simply reacting; you have to be as ready for that play as the player is himself. You need to have a strong and instinctive understanding of a sport to really shoot it well.

Baseball Watch the defense and see where they shift. They know the scouting report on the batter and are moving accordingly. Pay attention to whether the batter is left-handed or right-handed, same for the pitcher. Know the situation and plan accordingly.

Football

Is the same thing, watch how the teams line up, know where they are on the field, and position yourself to take advantage of that.

Basketball

Basketball can be a lot of fun because it's more confined and somewhat more Predictable. Pay attention to the tendencies that players display throughout the game. Watch for people that seem to be emotional or play a certain way.

Soccer, hockey, tennis, golf, fighting, racing: it's all the same. Doing research and Knowing the sport will provide a big lift to your images. Getting a feel for a sport also allows you perfect the shot with a single frame instead of spraying

Back-Button Focus I

If you bought your camera new, then chances are it came set up to initiate autofocus a certain way: by half-pressing the shutter button. This is all well and good, the professional photographers use –the back button focusing, most.

The back focus button is located right around where your thumb would normally rest. if you don't have that button, you should be able to go into your camera's custom settings and enable whatever button is back there to initiate autofocus. There are several good reasons to move to this setup. Half-pressing the shutter while shooting sports, can often lead to accidentally triggering your shutter you don't mean to. This is an annoying and sometimes rage-inducing experience.

Moving focus control to the back button ensures that you're only taking photos when you want to. Shooting sports means constantly engaging and disengaging your AF, and having a single button right under your thumb dedicated to just that task is a life saver.

Think about it; two of your camera's most important functions, focusing and exposing, are both controlled by the exact same button with only a tiniest bit of pressure separating the two. Separating the two functions helps to minimize mistakes in situations where you don't have time to make up for them.

3. Tell a Story

At Little League or the Super Bowl. Great athletes aren't what make great images. Two things separate the pros of sports photographers from the rest is practice and storytelling

story telling should never be undersold. If you have good gear that you know how use and a good level of comfort with the sport, you can be a solid action photographer.

Anticipation

And luck are going to give you a good action shot 9 times out of 10 if you have all these things down, but the ability to tell the story of a game or event is a completely different thing

A great photographer knows what is on the line for any given game they knows the major players they knows the sport they know tendencies. The pay attention to what is going on in the stadium; maybe there's a fan who is dressed a certain way or has a funny sign that can be incorporated into a shot. Maybe a family is in attendance, or an old coach, or a special guest.

You should have a running list in your head of shots you want to get, so that when it does, you're ready. to capture those story shots You need to always be ready tin order to catch the unexpected;

Chimping is necessary at times, when covering an event for a publication, for instance. Many photographers are quickly reviewing their shot sequences and tagging potential keepers in-camera so that they're easy to find when they go to edit and caption later. It's an essential part of the workflow, but it should be done with careful discretion. even if you just got some amazing shot of a fantastic play, wait for the right moment to check. Don't let your own excitement possibly rob you of an even better shot than the one you're gawking at on the back of your camera.

Be Critical

It doesn't matter that "it was such a great catch!" it's out of focus or you can't see the ball or the face is obstructed, then chances are, it's not a great photo. The sooner you can accept that you have the innate ability to take really poor photos, the sooner you can start to figure out why they're poor and learn how to take really good photos. We can't improve on our mistakes without acknowledging them, and we don't correct our flaws by accident. Be brutal with yourself; find someone who is more experienced than you to be brutal as well, then listen to them. Never settle when you know you could improve.

It's Always About the Face

Faces are the most important aspect in a sports image. Faces personalize and humanize the image; they connect the viewer to the moment and draw them in. Yes, there are photos that capture such a powerful moment that they can get away with not having the face in them,

Step Away From *the* Crowd

If you have the ability to move around a venue, use it. Find angles that no one else is shooting. Get high or get low; no one wants to see your point of view. Everyone knows what the world looks like from a few feet off the ground. The overhead angle telling the story of the fight better than anything ringside could. Don't underestimate what you can get when you combine a tight or wide angle with an extremely high or extremely low angle.

Don't Stop Once the Whistle Blows

Coaches tell players to keep going until they hear the whistle; you need to keep going after the whistle and then some. That's how you get moments of celebration and failure, coaches and players losing their minds, the moments that oftentimes define the game more than any individual play. Never stop once the catch is made, and don't ever assume that a whistle means the play is over. The most compelling shots of runners are always after they have crossed the finish line. Always keep your camera ready, and you will catch some of your most compelling photos.

Make Smart Gambles

You ever wonder how this photographer managed

To get the shot that they did? How could they possibly know that the ball would be fumbled and returned 90 yards for a touchdown as the expired? The answer is that they didn't know, but they were willing to take a gamble. Now, just like in real betting, there are smart gambles and dumb gambles. A dumb gamble would be positioning yourself for a shot that you hope will happen, even though it means sacrificing your ability to get other important images. You can sit in a single end zone all game long, just in case something totally crazy happens, but you're completely missing other opportunities to tell the story of the game. A smart gambling Photographer is extremely mindful. They know what they have shot so far that day, they know the potential storylines and outcomes from the game, they know who the big players are, they know their tendencies. The smart gambler is constantly calculating risk vs. opportunity and is able to decide in a moment whether or not it's worth missing shot A to potentially get a one-of-a-kind shot

Shoot Tight, Crop Tighter

Keep the action tight, crop even tighter later. Lose extraneous and distracting elements; draw the viewer into the action. Athletes are perceived as larger than life; let your photos play off that feeling. As with all rules, of course, this one is made to be broken, but it is a good rule of thumb and a good thing to have in mind when you're shooting and editing.

Shoot, Shoot,

Then Shoot Some More This holds true for all genres of photography and really anything in life you choose to pursue. You can't get better at something if you aren't doing it. Shoot a lot, get critiqued a lot, correct your mistakes, and shoot more.

Challenge yourself; look at images of photographers you admire, and go to a game with the mindset of trying to emulate something you like about their style.

Find new ways to tell stories, and accept that you will probably fail a lot along the way.

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Bio

My name is David Wright.

I have many years experience writing procedures on how to test high tech electronic equipment. Re wrote technical manuals so that the average person could understand them.

Set up numerous training programs to train Junior techs.

My documenting skills are excellent paying attention to details satisfying the toughest ISO auditors.

I have enhanced my writing skills by successfully completing a course in Writing for Children's literature.

Completed course from AWAI in Copy writing service ,B2B copy writing, Seo management , Email marketing and web design

This has helped me write how to articles and Information Books that you will find on my website Discount E Books <http://www.discount-ebook-s.com/>

I have had a Camera in my Hand since 1965 Gone pro In 1999

Took the course from ICS in Photography

I am now at a point in life I would like to share my knowledge with the world and the best way I know how is by Print either electronically or Hard copy paper.

David Wright

Electronic service technician

Professional Photographer

Experience writer