

Sports Photography Photo 249 SAIT – Instructor R. Berdan

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Web page with notes, slides shows and assignments:

http://www.canadiannaturephotographer.com/sports_photography.html

Time 9-4 pm Friday, Monday, Tuesday July 20-24th.

Objective: To provide an overview of equipment, techniques and approaches used in sports photography. Students will be required to complete a photo assignment whereby students will show a portfolio of sports images to class for a critique. Evaluation is pass/fail feedback will be provided when students show their images.

Field Trip for additional Sports Photography Instruction:

Saturday, July 21 – Wildrose Motocross association, Southern Alberta, Motocross Championships July 21 and 22. Saturday July 21 – practice:

Practice Times -> Bike Classes

- 10:00 am – 10:20 am -> Slow Bikes
- 10:20 am – 10:40 am -> Fast Bikes
- 10:40 am – 11:00 am -> Mini Bikes
- 11:00 am – 11:20 am -> ATV's
- 11:20 am – 11:40 am -> Slow Bikes
- 11:40 am – 12:00 pm -> Fast Bikes

See website for map to the site. <http://www.wildrosemx.com/soab/>

I will be at the track between 10 am and 12:00 noon to offer guidance or assistance in photographing the bikes. The best lens to bring is a telephoto zoom lens e.g. 70-200, or 300 mm lens. Also you might bring an umbrella if it rains or a raincoat – check the weather. A tripod or monopod can be helpful but is not required – goal is to try some panning shots with slower exposures.

Additional Sports events Around Calgary - July 21-22 weekend

Saddle Dome UFC MMA fight on Sat, July 21 – Scotia Bank Saddle Dome – but cameras will not be allowed. They have some demo fights for promotion - check newspaper.

No Events at **Canada Olympic Park** Saturday July 21-22, but there are Mountain bike and skate board racing events held throughout the summer and fall.

Calgary, Rugby – Friday July 20, Saturday, July 21 – held at different schools in Calgary check the web site: www.calgaryruby.com for a schedule.

Carstairs Rodeo Friday, Saturday and Sunday. Friday starts at 6pm, Saturday Starts at 1pm, location 10th Ave South in Carstairs, AB about 30 minutes north of Calgary.

Canmore Alberta July 21 and 22

July 21 The World Solo 24 Hour Championship mountain-biking event is held in Canmore on Saturday July 21. The race includes a figure eight course at the Canmore Nordic Centre which can be well viewed along the way by cheering spectators. This much-anticipated event attracts 1,400 athletes, competing in teams, and about 3,000 spectators. [Canmore Nordic Centre](#) Address: 1988 Olympic Way

Jul 22 Nestled in the spectacular Rocky Mountains, this racecourse is comprised of a competitive swim in Quarry Lake, a bike course along the magnificent Three Sisters Parkway and a run through paved tree-lined pathways surrounding the Nordic Center. An array of modified race offerings are available for beginner to advanced triathletes. [Canmore Nordic Center](#) Address: Canmore Nordic Center Canmore Alberta Canada T1W 1Z4

July 27, 28, 29 Bragg Creek – T'suu Tina Rodeo and Pow Wow. Cameras are permitted into the rodeo but in the past I was not allowed to photograph the Pow Wow.

Sports Photography Day 1

1. Sports Photography Tools and Techniques (See downloadable Slide Show 73 slides approx. 90 min)

- Define what a sport is
- List some common sports and some not so common sports
- Photo Jogging a new sport? See YesMan YouTube Video trailer.
- Film vs Digital Cameras – brands of camera, Megapixels, main controls
- For sports look for a camera with more than 5 frames per second
- Lenses – focal length affects angle of view and magnification
- Lens Speed (F2.8) and autofocus
- Internal vs external focusing lenses
- Telephoto lenses what to look for how or how to spend lots of money

- Sports photographer dream lens 400 mm F2.8
- Supertelephoto lenses 600 mm and bigger
- Teleconverters 1.4, 1.5, 2 and 3X – avoid 3X (light loss 1-3 f-stops)
- Focus limiters & vibration reduction
- Best lenses for Sports Photography
- F-stops and how they affect the depth of field – use most telephotos wide open, with no filters attached.
- Autofocus settings, S, C, M - autofocus tracking Dynamic or AI Servo
- Trap Focus
- Colour Space sRGB vs Adobe RGB
- Camera File types JPG, TIF, RAW – advantages & disadvantages
- ISO speed – low vs high, advantages and disadvantages
- White Balance – Kelvin scale, different types of lighting JPG vs RAW
- Camera shooting modes can affect saturation even shoot in BW or Sepia
- Metering Modes spot, average, matrix – evaluative
- Reading a Histogram to determine exposure
- Exposure Compensation
- Filters - polarizer, grads, UV – generally don't use filters on telephoto lenses
- Flash – great for fill, but not allowed at many sporting events. FP high speed synch. Slow synch, front curtain, rear curtain synch Guide Numbers
- Choosing a shutter speed - 1) stop action or 2) to create blurred affects
- Panning with your camera to blur the background
- Monopods, Tripods, bean bags and other supports
- Tripod heads – geared, ball, swivel – best for sports

- Camera bags, vests and other accessories
- Shooting in the Rain - umbrellas, plastic bags, pelican cases and other specialized rain gear
- Non competitive sports – sports that entail danger
- Shooting on the water, from a boat or kayak – shooting on the ocean
- Covering professional sports, using remote releases e.g. soccer behind the net
- Remote Trigger releases
- Know your equipment – importance of reading or keeping your manuals close by for reference.
- Summary

Break

Topics for Discussion:

Camera Brands, equipment, lenses – what do you need to get the job done?

Why film is Dead!

How many megapixels do you need to shoot professional quality images.

Why do some photographers shoot JPG when RAW files offer better quality.

How important is post processing in Adobe Photoshop?

Black and white – why you should always shoot in colour.

Permission to shoot at certain sporting events which ones you can shoot at. Do you need a model release – it depends is the person recognizable, are they famous, and who are you selling the image to. Some sports you are OK e.g. rodeo, but it's always safer to have release and for the release to be valid you must compensate the individual.

Shooting children – again requires special permission from both parents. You can photograph children in a crowd – but need to be cautious.

Slide Show 2 – Composition for Sports Photography 45 Slides – time approx. 60-90 minutes.

- Define composition and understand its importance in photography
- Choice – vertical or horizontal orientation
- Aspect Ratio and framing
- How to Achieve Unity – or a sense of belonging
- Dominance and how to achieve it through size, colour, position
- Dominance through repetition
- Convergence can lead the eye and simulate 3D depth
- Use of light to achieve dominance
- Compositional Guide lines rule of thirds, Golden mean, Positive and Negative space, shape, form, colour, rhythm
- Distractions – avoid the middle most of the time – cropping
- Follow the action
- Unequal distance from the sides
- Using Lines: horizontal, vertical, angled and curved lines
- Backlighting can be used to enhance form – makes the image appear 2 dimensional
- Establishing shots – important in video, but also in shooting stories or magazine articles.
- Take Closeup shots of the athletes
- Include a face – even if it means getting in front – e.g. squash tournament
- Group and Team shots – arrange in triangles, most important people up front and in the middle. Get them all looking at you and take several shots.
- Get shots of the crowd or folks on the side lines
- Power of the Background - Lake Louise hockey game

- Selective focus and shallow depth of field to make a subject dominant
- Capture the Action and sometimes show the background
- Experiment with long exposures and panning
- Come prepared with some ideas, scout the area out beforehand e.g. Motocross racing.

Discussion

1. Is Ok to put subject in the middle and crop afterwards?
2. How important is the lighting – what about inside? What can you do to compensate for low lighting, or coloured lighting in a stadium?
3. What makes for a great shot – decisive moment, emotion – both winning and losing
4. How about the role of humour in sports photography?
5. Agony of defeat, personal tragedy, accidents.

Lunch Break

Motorsports and Rodeo photography – in preparation for weekend shoot.

50 Slides about 60-90 minutes – see PDF

- Preparation and research, visit the site the day before or shoot during practice runs to identify best locations.
- Note the direction of light at the location and where it will be at different times of the day.
- Getting close, some sports they may not allow you close to the track for you own safety. Also you need to be able to get above the crowd – anywhere where you can get a clean shot.
- Model releases – also get the riders names and contact information, you may be able to sell them some photos most athletes like this.

- Hpro Video cameras – get action on the track this requires that you know the athlete or compensate them somehow.
- Race City – unfortunately is now closed - Straatotech park in Emonton
- WildRose Motocross Association – this weekend Saturday and Sunday race.
- Panning – shutter speed depends on how close you are and how fast the subject is moving – slow subjects 1\15 to 1\60 sec fast subjects 1\500 sec
- Rodeo photography – try both fast and slow shutter speeds and panning. Most small rodeos allow you get very close. Carstairs this weekend.
- July 27, 29 – Tsuu T’ina Annual Rodeo & Pow Wow July 27, 28, 29th.
- Summary

Discussion

What can you do to prepare for a shoot?

What shutter mode should you be using C, S, M?

Prefocus on a spot you expect action to appear and use your peripheral vision.

Saturday – Wildrose Motocross 10-12

Break

Shooting exercise:

Have students visit soccer field and get some of the students to run and have others try to shoot them fast shutter speed and slow shutter speed with panning.

Also demonstrate how to set up a group shot, have the class pose as the team and have every one take a shot.

Key features of group shot:

1. All faces should be visible and looking at the camera
2. Always take a few shots

3. Different count down methods 1,2, 3 and 1, 2 shoot
4. Use of flash can be helpful
5. Don't have people looking directly into the sun, find a shady area or area with even light, use a fill flash.
6. Try to arrange the heads in triangles. Use your people skills.
7. Use a tripod have the camera set up and prefocused take a quick exposure test before you are ready to take the real picture. You have only once chance so be sure you have the image before you pack up.

Day 2 – Sports Photography

Discussion – re weekend shoot, problems, questions?

Plan: Monday morning lectures on sports photography and composition from 9-12

Monday afternoon from 1:30 – 3:30 – Photograph Speed skaters at the Olympic Dome at the University of Calgary. Meet at the Entrance of the Dome inside at 1:15 pm. U of C is hoping to use some of the images with credit – so this is a real shoot.

What make a great sports Photograph? PW Photo249 33 slides ~ 1 hr.

Note these images are copyright and are only being used for teaching purposes.

- Capturing Action
- Capturing Emotion, winning, losing, failure, humour, struggle, tragedy, unexpected
- Isolate the subject
- Timing –capture the peak action or essence of the competition i.e. winning goal
- Lighting and visual elements of design
- Castastrophe and Tragedy
- Capture a face if possible

- Panning emphasizes movement, speed, grace

Four Questions to ask yourself when setting up a Sports Shot

- Where will the action occur and where is the best place to capture it?
- What is in the background?
- Where will you get the best light?
- What is the best angle, lens, F-stop and shutter speed to use?

Break

Sports Photography

1. What does it take to make a living at sports photography? Business acumen is more important than photographic skill.
2. Know the sport
3. Aim for images that tell a story
4. Study images in the top Sports Magazines and on the Web
5. Be prepared, show up early, leave late
6. Focus on the Star – they usually produce the money shots
7. Ability to write good captions for the photographs. “Photo journalism”

How do you get started – select local events, market yourself and start by selling images to the athletes, community papers, post and promote on Flickr, your own web site etc.

Modern Photo-journalists are expected to shoot and edit HD video as well. Note the quality of video is good enough that you shoot continuously and grab a frame from the video i.e. shoot at 30 fps. The image can't be enlarged much, but good enough for a magazine or newspaper.

Summary

1. Sports is about action and movement
2. Sports is about emotion, the struggle, triumph, tragedy and defeat
3. Take note of the background and position yourself accordingly
4. Concentrate and anticipate
5. Know your camera(s) so you can use them without thinking about the controls
6. Look for unexpected angles
7. Know the sport – be interested and knowledgeable about the sport
8. Hard work – understand lighting and design elements
9. Luck

Look at some of the YouTube instructional web sites and videos

1. Tim Tadder – top advertising magazine and sports photographer

View sports portfolio – web site is new and updated, also Flash

Discussion what makes his photographs so outstanding?

- Lighting
- Extensive use of photoshop to add things that can't be done in camera
- Unusual angles below, low, excellent composition
- Most of the photos are studio or controlled situations
- Images have a graphic or art look to them
- Note swimmers – he is in the pool below the water
- High speed flash
- Combines images in studio with HDR images from outside for stronger backgrounds

- Good photography is about imagination and creative ideas “previsualization” especially in advertising as opposed to “event photography”.
- Importance of looking at other great photographers work – and also art.

Jerry Lodgriguss – Free online notes on Sports Photography - home work is to read his web site and notes and bring any questions you might have. Note he is also a great astrophotographer!

View his portfolio of sports photographs – but remember he has been doing this professionally for many years.

Videos – hold short discussion after showing each video :

- 1. Cycling Shots by Tom Jenkins - uses fill flash on bikers**
- 2. EOS sports 1, 2, 3, 4 horseracing in winter in Swiss (each clip is only 2 minutes)**

Camera position – planning

Use 200 mm zoom lens

Find a sport that has not been photographed much

Editing and cropping

- 3. Race City video and Rodeo clip at the bottom of the page.**
- 4. Adventure sports with Nikon D300s Robert Bosch – how to shoot and edit video**

Note how important the use of sound and music is

Note how the pace gets faster throughout the video and the music builds

Note the camera on the bike for shooting and underwater housing

Why do you think DSLR video is becoming more prevalent and important in a photographers skill set? What different skill sets are needed to shoot video?

- News, web sites, Youtube

- Ability to grab a frame while shooting 30 fps, 60 fps you can slow down the action
- Adds to story telling
- Requires editing skill and software.
- Sound plays a very important part.

Ask students if they have the ability to shoot video to shoot a small action sequence with their camera.

LUNCH

Break for Lunch and Head over the University of Calgary by C-train and meet at the entrance of the Olympic Saddle Dome – about 15 minute walk from the C-train station. Bring your camera gear. The shoot will go from 1:30 to 3:30 pm after which students can return home or back to SAIT via the C – train. Be sure to charge your camera batteries the night before.

Day 3 - Tuesday July 24.

Photo Assignments - Due on Tuesday afternoon, slide show numbered .jpg files or PDF Students to present their images in class.

1. Individual athlete photo and\ or one team or group photo - 1
2. Action photos - freeze action pictures at the peak moment fast shutter speed - 2
3. Action photos demonstrating motion blurr e.g. by panning - 2
4. 5 other sports images of any sporting activity - slide show of a sport event or portfolio of work - 5

Although students can include existing images at least 5 images should have been taking during the course.

Evaluating your Photography - see PDF

If you think you have a really great picture, you can try to sell it, or enter it in a photocontest. There are local camera clubs that have contests monthly, there are also numerous contests online.

Grading systems e.g. CPS Calgary Photographic Society uses 10 point system and three judges.

- Technical quality 3 points
- Composition 3 points
- Impact 4 points.

Technical Quality of the images is the easiest feature to evaluate and includes:

1. Proper exposure
2. Sharpness – should not be oversharpened
3. Tonal value, absence of colour banding
4. Lack of dust spots, cracks, other flaws
5. Quality of the print and presentation
6. White balance and colour balance
7. Level horizon unless intentionally tilted
8. Good contrast, lack of flare unless flare is intentional

Composition

1. Does the image have a sense of unity? Is there anything in the image that does not belong?
2. Is there too much in the image, could something be cropped out or left out?
3. Is the placement of main subject effective or would it be better placed elsewhere?
4. Does the image appear flat or does it have a 3D quality to it or sense of depth?
5. Has light been used effectively in the image.
6. Does the image feel balanced?
7. Is the image too simple or does it hold your attention?

Impact - Subjective it depends on the audience, their interests, and their previous experience (memory).

1. Does the picture hold your attention - this can be measured by timing viewers at a gallery.
2. Does the picture make you think?
3. Does the picture make you feel something?
4. Does the picture make you feel like you should do something? Call to action?
5. Impact is the most important element of a picture – technical flaws might make you lose a competition, but a technically perfect image with no impact will never win.
6. When showing pictures always consider the audience's interests and how familiar they are with the subject or their interest in the subject.

Note that some images may not place in one competition but win in another. If you believe in the image trust yourself. Listen to some criticism, but beware, not all critics know what they are talking about, listen to those you trust and who genuinely mean to help you. If more than two people you trust give you the same advice –you should probably take it.

One way to improve is to look at and try to emulate those photographers whose images you admire. Then you will eventually begin to develop your own style – it is important to try and distinguish your work from others. Developing a unique style can take years to develop.

“Try to drink upstream from the herd, if everybody is doing one thing – then you should try and do something different”.

Keep in mind that criticism from a mentor or people you trust can speed up your development as a photographer. Also don't study only photography, but also art. Also look at bad photographs or those you don't like and ask yourself why those images don't appeal to you. Sometimes learning to see or understand another photographer or artist's work can open your eyes to seeing things you did not consider before.

Questions or Discussion

What are your thoughts on effective composition and how to achieve it?

Colour vs. Black and white – Does BW still have a place in sports photography?

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6. White balance and colour balance
7. Horizon is evel unless tilted deliberately then really tilt if you do!
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LUNCH BREAK

After lunch students will show examples of their work – i.e. 10 images\students. 20 Students
Each student to get approximately 8 minutes each, total 160 minutes plus 10-15 minute break
half way through.

Instructor and other students offer critique. Stress the importance of giving constructive criticism.

Suggestion: Start with what you like about the image, than state what you think the photographer might do to improve the image. It's OK to have different opinions – but how you state your opinion is even more important. You can be critical, but do so in a professional manner.

Saying you don't like an image is not enough, why don't you like the picture? Is it the subject, how the photographer portrayed the subject, the lighting. If you think the image is flawed point out the flaws and how the photographer might improve.

As a critic show some humility and try not be arrogant even if you are a more skilful photographer. E.g. Audobon – couldn't get funding when he boasted his art work was so much better than a person he was seeking funding from. Better to be humble. If you are trying to teach someone – be specific and make suggestions.

If the image is great say so and why you feel it is such.

All artists and photographers experiment and based on their audience response may choose to do more of that type of work simply because it brings financial rewards. E.g. Robert Bateman. If you photography or artwork does not require financial compensation you are totally free to do what you like – we call these people Amateurs because they do it for the love of it and not financial gain. Professionals have to please their clients and meet or exceed their expectations.

Questions or Discussion - thoughts on effective composition and how to achieve it.

Is Photography Art?

What is Art?