

### General Sports Shooting Tips

- Try and shoot peak action. The moment in a play that is the decisive moment. This could be when the ball just leaves the basketball players hand or when a football wide receiver just gets his hands on the ball.
- Telling reaction. Celebration shots, Dejection Shots, Player reaction after a big play.
- Learn the sports you are shooting, so you know where the action will take place.
- Learn who the star players are - they will be the ones with the ball/big plays.
- Follow the ball, but keep an eye out for other things.
- Fast Shutter speed - You need the fast SS to stop the action, unless panning
- Wide aperture - shoot with a longer lens and wide F-stop like f4 or 2.8 to blur the background and isolate your subject. Makes your player pop.
- Great action shots are good, but great action shots that tell the story are better, like the game winning TD or basket. Also look for the reaction afterwards whether it be celebration from the winner or dejection from the loser or both in the same frame.
- Look for images on the sidelines like the star player who has been injured in the big game and can't play. Don't rub it in and get in his face, but try and make a telling, discreet image showing his frustration at being sidelined. Also a coaches reaction to a big play or bad call.
- Like Kenny Rogers sang, "You never count you money when you're sittin' at the table. There'll be time enough for countin' when the dealing done." Or in sports photo speak, don't chimp (look at the rear LCD) until there is a real break in the action. You could miss something good.

Be sure to go out and buy or subscribe to The Capital/Maryland Gazette newspapers, my place of employment. You can see a lot of content online and even a wider selection of photos in the slide shows, but without people buying the newspaper, I would not be able to give these presentations, shoot the images we are talking about tonight, or pay my bills.

PDF copies of this guide can be found on my Photo Monkey blog at <http://photo-monkeys.blogspot.com/>

Also be sure to check out my website [www.pwgphoto.com](http://www.pwgphoto.com)

### Shooting Indoor Sports: To Light or Not To Light?

In my days of shooting film, I had two choices of film speeds, 400 and 800, and I did not have the ability to push process the film to get extra speed. Because of this and since I was new to newspaper photography, a lot of my indoor sports were shot with on-camera, direct flash. Not the best looking way to go. You get harsh light and a mean side shadow, depending on what is behind the subject. On occasion, I still will use it if I am in a hurry and the light is really bad.

With my move to digital cameras in 2000. I still was using on-camera flash because the early digital models had horrible noise above ISO 400-800. But at this time, I started to experiment with strobes off-camera. The LCD screen and some radio slaves I had from my wedding shooting days made it so I could see what my lights looked like and fire them without wires.

As time went by, I started collecting all kinds of flashes that I would use to light the caverns that the local high schools call gyms. At first I was using old Metz potato mashers, again from my medium format wedding days. Then I was lugging around a huge, two light, Dynalite Uni Jr 400 kit I have - oh my poor back. Now I have it down to a couple of older Canon 540ez flashes and some Pocket Wizard radio slaves.

I mount these on a couple of 8-12' light stands or some Bogen Superclamps. These are placed where needed, mostly in the corners of gyms, as high as I can get them - sometimes on the gym floor, sometimes in the bleachers. You have to be really careful on placement of these lights. They can be knocked over easily. I try and clamp them down or make sure they are out of the way. To be honest, I don't think most schools/gyms will let you put them up unless you are with a newspaper/media outlet.

I really like using off-camera flashes for indoor sports, they can give a dramatic effect and your colors really can pop.

Some sports, like volleyball and cheerleading, will not let you use flashes at all. The officials say it can distract the athlete and could be dangerous.

With the advance of digital technology, the need for the use of flashes has become less necessary. Today's cameras can shoot at much higher ISO's and get usable, even good, images. With my Nikon D3, I shoot in a lot of gyms at 1600-2000 ISO and get really nice, clean stuff. And for the newspaper, I have regularly pushed it to 4000-6400 ISO and got usable images. Now these would look pretty bad bigger than 5x7 and printed on photo paper, but in newsprint they are acceptable.

## Tips For Different Sports

### Football

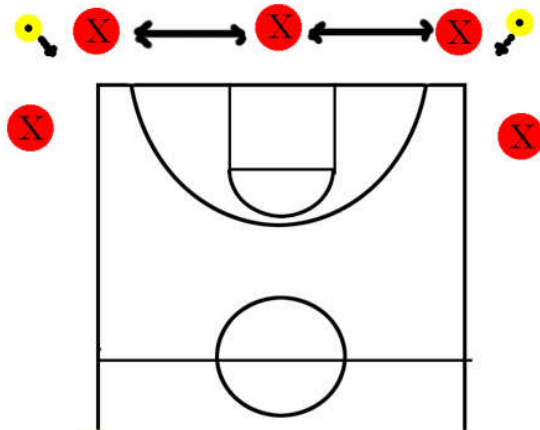
- First and foremost, be careful. Keep your eyes on the action. Many of my colleagues and I have been hit by players, refs, balls, you name it. And this is with us trying to be careful and our eyes open. This goes for any sport. Don't check cell phones, Facebook or anything if you are close action on the field of play. I got hit by a 250-lb. football player this year shooting a practice. I was well away from the action, I thought, with a group of players standing between me and the plays. They didn't stop the guy running and I got nailed. I should have went to the emergency room, but just went home instead. I was sore for a month.
- I like using a 400-mm. lens to shoot football on my main camera body. Sometimes I will use a 1.4 extender to increase my focal length. It can take some getting used to when shooting with a long fixed focal length lens.
- In a perfect world, I would use a second camera body and switch between a 70-200-mm. lens and a 17-35-mm. lens depending on the play, but our second camera bodies are old and don't shoot as well, so I find myself changing lenses on my D3 when the play calls for it. This could be a tighter play close to the end zone or other plays that are too close for a 400-mm.
- Follow the action down the sidelines, but don't go into the team areas between the 30-yard lines. At smaller games like recreation league or high school you may be able to get away with it, but on the college or pro level you will get in trouble. (This assumes that you have on-field access to begin with.)
- I will shoot the plays from many different spots depending on what I think is going on. I might shoot the play from behind the line of scrimmage. In front of the line or even from the end zone, down the field with a long lens. They all have advantages to capture different parts of a play. Mix it up.
- Cover the quarterback from behind the line of scrimmage to cut down on the number of players between you and the subject.\* You can also get good running back plays from here or quarterback hand offs.
- Use longer lenses and work from farther down the field to reduce the angle and open up your coverage zone. Ground plays will come at you and you will be in a better position to cover pass plays.\*
- On fourth down in a kicking situation, move behind the line of scrimmage to cover a blocked kick or kicker's jubilation.\*
- For a good jubilation picture, position yourself between the driving team's bench and their scrimmage line when they are in scoring position. When a team scores, the players usually run back towards their bench celebrating.\*

### Lacrosse

- Many of the football tips will work for lacrosse such as lens selection and follow the action. Move around and find what works for you.
- I like shooting from close, but not too close, to the corners towards the goal.
- Watch for the cutter. A offensive player who will cut across the front of the goal, get a pass from a teammate and take a shot on goal.
- Again be careful, especially with lacrosse. These balls move fast and can come flying at you. Don't position yourself on an angle that may get a lot of shots in your direction like the corners or end zone without protection of safety netting. You can shoot through it.

### Basketball

- I like to shoot along the baseline under the basket, but again you have to vary it and move around or you get all armpit shots.
- Most of my basketball is shot with a 70-200-mm. lens. A 300-mm. lens is good for getting players at the other end of the court, at the basket. I might use a real long lens, like a 400-mm., at Navy basketball and shoot from high in the stands for an above the rim type angle. This helps isolate the player.
- Watch for player reaction shots, like after a big basket, the bench if a team is losing, a coach screaming at his players, anything that might make an emotional image. This goes for any sport.



● Lights (2 strobes on lights stands with radio slaves)

⊗ Shooting Positions

### Baseball

- Again watch for flying balls or bats. No checking cell phones or chimping unless during a game break or in a safe spot.
- When I can I like to be in the or near the dugout and I try and line up between either first and second or second and third looking at the pitcher. This gives me equal distance to the bases and makes both bases in focus. This is only doable if you are friendly with the coach and most likely because you are with the paper. And only if you are allowed field access, which most folks are not. Always check with the umps. Most people will not be allowed on the field.
- Most people will have to shoot from outside/through the fence. This is doable. Use a longer lens and put it right next to the wire, careful not to scratch it. Use a wide f-stop for a shallow depth of field. This will minimize the distortion from the fence.
- If no one is on base and the batter is right handed, try focusing on the third baseman or shortstop. They are most likely to handle any ground balls. A left handed hitter probably will hit towards the first or second base.\*
- If the runner is on second or third, be prepared to cover home plate since any hit, or a long fly ball will move the runner.\*
- If the runner is on first, with one out or less, be prepared to swing to second base to get the double play attempt. If the pitcher is at bat, watch for a bunt.\*
- Always shoot the starting pitchers and any relief pitchers. They will figure in the game story, win or lose.\* Sometimes this is the only good action shots we get at high school or lower games.
- If a slugger is at bat, drop your coverage of the rest of the game and concentrate on the batter. If he hits a homer, it's a good picture, and if he strikes out, it is significant and he may react to the lost chance.\*
- When a batter hits a home run, swing your coverage over to the pitcher to get a reaction. Move back to the batter as he passes third and gets congratulations from the third base coach and players at home or at the dugout.\*
- The pickoff play at first base can be a good, albeit too often used, shot.

\*This tip reprinted from Associated Press Guide to Photojournalism.