

How to shoot sports

Tips for improving your sports photography

Different sports provide different challenges for your photographers. Here are some guidelines to follow when taking pictures of particular sports:

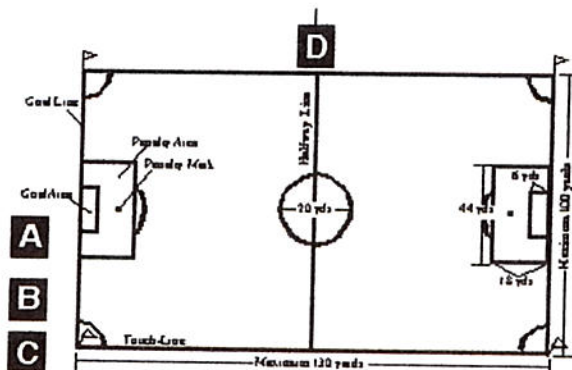
Soccer

Most photographers get a kick out of shooting soccer since few camera positioning problems exist.

Shooting soccer is, in many ways, similar to shooting football. A large field makes it frustrating at times but there are also lots of possibilities since lighting is seldom a problem and much of the action tends to take place in four areas.

Lighting is not a problem because most games are held during daylight hours. Even slow lenses can be used with great results. The four areas tend to be behind the goal, directly off to the side of the goal, in the corner of the field and on the sidelines shooting towards the large center area.

As with football, a telephoto lens (135mm or longer) is needed if you hope to bring the action up close and personal. If you do not have a long lens, you simply must wait until the action is on your side of the field. A wide-angle or normal (50mm or less) lens may work from behind the net or off to the side of the net but if you are producing a photo essay or a yearbook soccer spread, you will want to vary the types of photos you use so all photo angles are not from the same shooting position.



As with shooting any sport, get to know the rules of soccer and spend time watching a game through your camera lens so you get a feel for where much of the action takes place before wasting a lot of film and/or time.

Position A

A wide-angle or normal lens (50mm or less) may give you some dramatic photos of action near the net, a goalie going for saves or players celebrating after a made goal.

Position D

From about halfway up the sidelines, you will be able to capture action that occurs in the back court, usually passes to a server by a player saving a hit.

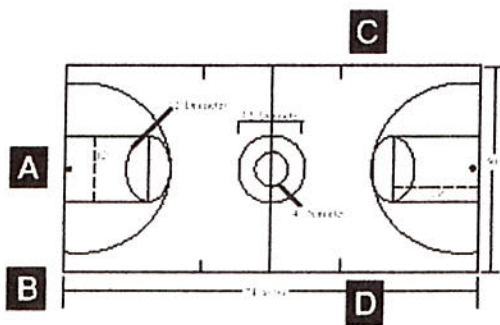
Basketball

With seconds left to go on the clock, photographers need to focus on getting spectacular shots.

Basketball tends to be a difficult sport to shoot because it is played in a gymnasium. Most high school gymnasiums are not well lit, thus it is very difficult to get a shutter speed high enough to capture the action unless you use a very high ISO film (3200).

Basketball is also difficult to shoot because the action moves very quickly and covers a large area. When shooting basketball the best spots for shooting tend to be around the baseline of one of the goals. From this position you can cover a wide variety of action shots on both defense for one team and offense for the other team.

The two basic methods of shooting involve pre-focusing on one specific area and waiting for the action to come to you, or continually focusing the camera as you follow the action around. The technique you use depends on the type of shot you are looking for.



If you want to picture a layup or a specific player taking a jump shot you are better off focusing on a specific area and waiting for the action. If you are looking for a defense picture or one of dribbling then you are better off following the action with your camera and focusing as you go along.

Position A

Using a 24mm to 35mm lens from under the basket gives you a different lower angle than you might have used before. A longer lens could give you a close-up of a free throw shooter.

Position B

Using a 50/150 lens from the corner of the court lets you shoot a variety of action, including shooting, rebounding and defense.

Position C

Using a 50/105 lens from the side corner of the court allows you the chance to get good rebounding and shooting shots. Tight shots of players up near the rim are available with a 105mm lens.

Position D

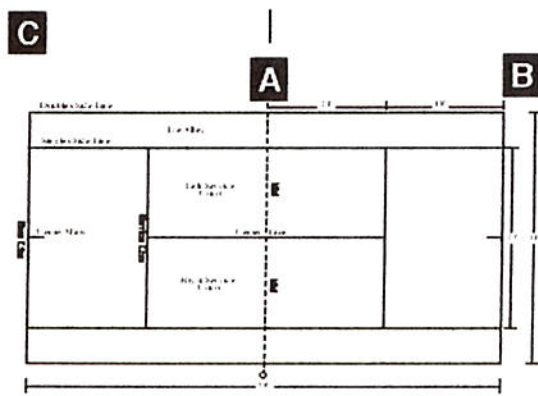
Using a variety of lenses from near midcourt, you could shoot crowd shots, court action and coach/player reactions from the bench.

Tennis

Although lighting is seldom a problem, finding good shooting locations, unfortunately, can be a dilemma.

Tennis is one of the most interesting sports to shoot but it can become the most frustrating as well if you're limited in your shooting positions. During matches, photographers are usually not permitted to shoot within the fence unless it is from a court that is not being used. Most student photographers do not have the access professional photographers have at court side; drool over those wonderful Wimbledon and U.S. Open photos in Sports Illustrated but be realistic about what you can capture based on your access to the court while a match is underway.

If you have access during a match, that is great. If not, get the camera lens right up to the chain-link fence and shoot through the largest opening you can find. It works, and you might get a usable photo if you use the right lens (usually normal to short telephoto- 50mm-105mm).



Some bleachers at many schools are located outside a fence but are high enough to give you an unobstructed view of the court. If that is the case, get a long telephoto (135mm or longer) and shoot away. Posed photos, of course, may be shot during practice or before matches but your best action photos are always shot during matches.

Position A

If allowed to be on the sidelines

near the net, lenses in the 50mm to 135mm range can give you the variety of photos you're probably after.

Position B

If you like to take photos of players serving, you probably want to get near the baseline and use a normal-to-short telephoto lens (if you have access to the court during play).

Position C

If you are stuck shooting from behind a fence, place your lens right up to an opening. Your frames might have blurring edges from the fence, but you might be able to crop out those areas.

Position D

High angles from bleachers may be your only choices. Be sure to bring a telephoto lens (105mm or greater) based on your distance from the action.

Football

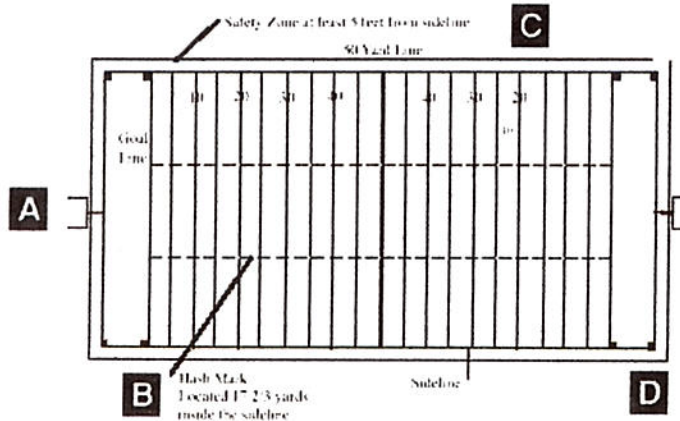
Any gridiron match-up has moments of raw courage, grace and emotion. It takes a keenly positioned eye to find it.

As a field team sport, football's action can range over a considerable area, so shooting opportunities are difficult to predict. Most of the important action is likely to be concentrated close to either end. Goals and touchdowns are important for professional photographers, but a photographer shooting for his own pleasure may find more opportunities from a midfield touchline position.

Less important and "friendly" games give more open access to photographers. As the distance from the action is unpredictable and varies, a zoom lens (such as 80 to 200mm) can be useful, or else a combination of two cameras, one with a medium telephoto (such as 100mm or 150mm), the other with a medium-to-long telephoto (300mm to 400mm).

In virtually all circumstances, it pays to follow the ball. A ground-level position often gives the

least complicated views with a telephoto lens, setting players against the unfocused background of stands and spectators. A motor-drive is useful.



Position A
 Want a photo of a kicker kicking an extra point or field goal as the defensive line tries to block him? A wide-angle lens from here may give you this and much more.

Position B
 Want to get big play photos

with impact? On pass plays, keep the camera focused in a certain area on the field where you think the play is going to be. Learn the team's plays; you might hear the play called ahead of time.

Position C
 Want some intriguing sideline shots? Roam the sidelines and watch for intense coach and player reactions during the game. Do not forget to use a longer lens and check crowd reactions as well.

Position D
 Want good action photos of the running game? Stay about five to eight feet in front of the line and let the action come to you.

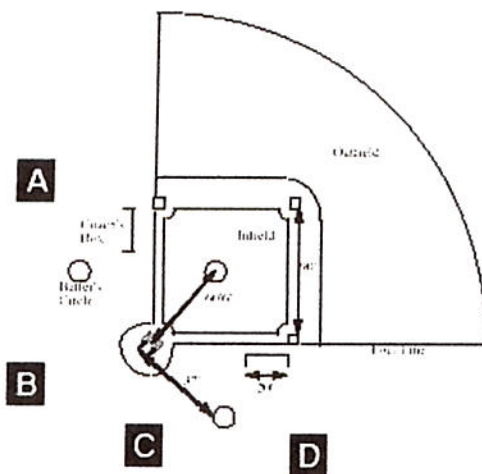
Baseball & Softball

When they kick the dirt off their cleats, it is time to click your shutter and find the diamonds in the dust

Most of the action takes place at known points—the bases and the batter's box—but distances are great, and a 300mm or 400mm telephoto is usually necessary. Flood-lit games at night are common, and call for high-speed film and ideally, a wide-maximum aperture. One of the classic baseball shots is of a player sliding into a base in a cloud of dust. This is best caught with a ground-level position. Pre-focusing on the base may help.

Position A
 Want a slide into second or a close-up of a left-handed batter swinging? Try shooting from behind third base coach's box or beside one of the dugouts with a 200mm to 300mm lens.

Position B
 Want a shot of the pitcher as the ball is just being released or a distorted foreground view through the backstop fence or netting? Try a relatively short lens from behind the batter/umpire.



Position C

Want some crowd shots or photos of players in the dugout or in the batter's circles? Try a short lens from this position. Be very careful of foul balls, however, from this area.

Position D

Want a good shot of the second baseman or the shortstop making a relay to first base? This angle will give you that as well as some close outfield plays.

Want even more ideas on photography? Be sure to visit the Resource Center at walsworthyearbooks.com.

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