

Shooting Football at UT's MEMORIAL STADIUM (Austin) Photography

What you are about to read is ONLY A GUIDE; you must make decisions about the practicality of this information as you shoot because events change from game to game. Remember, this is only a guide.

How does this game differ ? It should be a little warmer because it is the sunny portion of the day. The field runs North-South, as do almost all in Texas except at Pennington. This means you will have sidelighting. Shoot with the sun to your back late in the game if the sun is out. Avoid shooting into the sun. If it's real cold drink coffee even if you hate it or chocolate to keep your hands warm and your body temperature up.

1. Be professional at all times ! This rule supersedes all others. Follow the lead of pros and the demands of coaches.
2. Keep ready at all times. Watch the action on the field and only allow yourself to be distracted when the play is momentarily over; even then recognize you have only 10 - 30 seconds before it starts again. During these interludes, timeouts, changing of possession, etc. are when you should look back for shoots occurring behind you on the sidelines and in the stands. If you see something happening away from the field that is uncommon, ignore the game and concentrate on the other event.
3. Communicate with the other photographers and watch them, especially the pros. They will notice things you don't and vice versa. Help each other; you are all out for the best photos you can get and though you compete, you also get better by sharing and learning from someone with different experiences.
4. Observe the rules at all times. Stay out of the area from the 30 yard line to the other 30 yard line and stay behind the line that is about two feet behind the field even when you see pros cheat on this. This belongs to players and coaches while you have from the 30 to the end zones on both sides. When you move from one end to the other, move behind them and move quickly so as not to miss the next play. Enroute to the other side you might watch for good shots of those inside the 30s.
5. Shoot with the longest lens available, at least most of the time. Ignore this when shooting other things than the action on the field. Examples of when a shorter lens is better include: players and coaches on the sidelines, cheerleaders, fans in the first few rows, etc. This will also necessitate your pushing the film to a higher ASA/ISO. In the time prior to sunset you can probably shoot at 800 or 1200, after dark it's better to shoot at 3200 or at least 1600; more on that later.
6. Always shoot to freeze the action first and to get depth of field second. Depending on when you begin shooting the light on the field can easily

change 3 stops or more. You want to try to minimize the grain by using the lowest ISO you can early while there is still natural light early in the game (assuming there is natural light). You might be able to push to only 800 at this time. By sunset you should go to at least 1600 and I'm not opposed to you shooting at 3200 ASA, just be sure you know how long to develop before you do. The higher ASA will allow you a greater d.o.f. because it will allow a smaller aperture. The greater d.o.f. will allow a greater margin of error in focusing the moving subjects. If you are at f/2 and focused in the middle of the field you have far more d.o.f. than you have at the same aperture by focused on your partner on the sideline. It is not likely you will shoot any f/stop larger than 2.8 or the lowest number your lens will allow.

7. Watch the scoreboard to keep track of downs and yards to go for the first down then use this information to predict what type of play might be run and pre-focus for the location where the play may be going.

8. If you shoot film at two different ISOs, be sure you know which roll is which. Consider using the rubber bands to designate pushing a roll of film - each band is signifying it's pushed a stop. Most likely you won't be pushing at Memorial.

9. Shoot from a variety of different camera angles. Don't ever be afraid to go to a knee to get a slower shutter speed if it won't affect your subject (do this for Troy-Anns in the stands more than a pass play). Also consider moving to the end zone when the team is getting ready to score from short yardage. Take a shot or two from the stands when you aren't on the field.

10. DRESS WARM. LAYER YOUR CLOTHES. DON'T WORRY ABOUT WHAT YOU LOOK LIKE - WORRY ABOUT YOUR SURVIVAL IN THE 4TH QUARTER.

11. CONSIDER SHOOTING AT A SHUTTER SPEED FASTER THAN YOU MIGHT OTHERWISE BECAUSE OF SHIVERING.

12. This game rates an exception to a rule we've discussed before. Although we stress not to shoot pain (injuries, sadness, etc.) this is the Championship and as such there will be tears of joy and tears of hurt following the final buzzer. Be discrete when shooting crying cheerleaders or drill teamers. Be even more discrete when photographing a 300 lb. lineman who's crying !

13. HAVE FUN. IT'S AN ADVENTURE !

14. If something happens that prevents your going to the game or shooting all your film, be sure to get your film and/or camera to another photographer. This is critical ! These are other photographers covering the game: