

Shooting Baseball Photography

Grimm C-6

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

How does this game differ from shooting football or basketball ? As a general rule, baseball is easy to shoot because it is most often played in daylight. 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. Additionally baseball is easy because it is fairly predictable in terms of where the action will take place.

Coach Turner is easy to work with if you are acting professionally and he will appreciate your being there so long as you do as instructed.

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 teams on the field, 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. Always be ready to avoid the ball! Guys should sit between the batters box and any female photogs. Two guys should trade out positions at the end of the third inning.

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.

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 and in the dugouts, fans in the first few rows, etc. This might require your pushing the film to a higher ASA/ISO. In the time prior to sunset you can probably shoot at 400 or 800, after dark it's better to shoot at 3200 or at least 1600; more on that later.

6. Note the loss of light as you near the outfield and change your f/stop or shutter speed. From the shortstop out the light will change a stop so you must be prepared to shoot a slower shutter speed (go to a knee or use a monopod) or have negatives that are too light/underexposed.

7. 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 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.

8. Watch the scoreboard to keep track of runs down then use this information to predict what type of play might be run (suicide squeeze, hit and run) and pre-focus for the location where the play may be going.

9. If you shoot film at two different ISOs, be sure you know which roll is which.

10. 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 Also consider moving from first base to the third base line when the team is getting ready to score from third. Take a couple from behind home each game and perhaps even a few from within the dugout, purposefully allowing the chain link to show.

11. Dress warm; it is easy to maintain muscle control when warm, but nearly impossible to remain still when shivering and sitting on cold ground. If you have a trash bag in your bag or fanny pack, sit on it.

12. Shoot the majority of your film while you have plenty of light. Don't try to save it for a "big play" that may come later in the game.

13. HAVE FUN. IT'S AN ADVENTURE !