

Shooting Cross Country

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 changing as the sun rises. Your light will create longer shadows with the early races and shorter with the more experienced runners. Remember, this is only a guide.

Shoot with the sun to your back if the sun is out, but only after you've chosen the best shooting locations. If it's overcast, you'll have no severe shadows, but your contrast will be very low. Add a yellow filter in front of the lens if you're shooting B&W on a very cloudy day.

If it's real cold drink, or simply hold, coffee or hot chocolate to keep your hands warm and your body temperature up. Too much will give you jitters though as you'll have too much caffeine in your system. Keep your hands as warm as possible to prevent camera shake. Increase your shutter speed a stop or two if you think you're chill is causing you to shake a great deal.

1. Be professional at all times! This rule supersedes all others. Break no rules and stay outside the designated course.

2. Arrive early and use the time to improve your shots and coverage. By arriving an hour before the first race you can walk it with your schools' runners and not only shoot them as they walk, but also get a feel for the course. During this time you will also get photos in which the coach is discussing strategy with the squad and when competitors are resting, warming up, psyching themselves and talking with other school's runners. Look for sweats with the school's name and/or banners that can be used as part of the images you want. Use normal lenses at this time. If you have arrived before sunrise consider taking a silhouette against the rising sun or the morning light in the sky.

3. Work with the other photographers from your school. It will make for better coverage if you will shoot from different locations on the course. You should walk the course before the first competition begins and then talk with the other photographers about which places provide the best backgrounds. Be sure that the backgrounds are free of distractions such as telephone poles, street signs, trash, etc.

4. "Works well with others" Do you remember when your elementary teachers wrote this on your report card? Does it still apply? If you are the only shooter from your school you would be wise to talk to photographers from other schools and try to make an agreement to shoot their runners if they will shoot yours. Give them the name of your advisor and the school's address and request the same information from them

5. Be predictive. Watch the action on the course and try to anticipate where there will be challenges for the lead or for a higher finish. Runners running uphill early in a contest will be packed together tightly by a telephoto lens

. 5. Take a variety of lenses and use all that you take. This way you can isolate your team's individuals for some shots and yet show as much of the course as possible in others. Don't overdo any particular type unless another photographer is shooting a different type at a different location. Even then you would be wise to change lenses.

6. Vary the number of people in a photograph. Some shots should be singles and others should involve multiple people in the shot. Do this in the pre-race shots, during the races, and after the races are over. As always, the rule is that odd number of people are visually more intriguing than even numbers of subjects.

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 course can easily change 3 stops or more. You want to try to minimize the grain by using the lowest ISO you can later in the morning. 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.

8. 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 all the photographers to the finish line when that is the best location, but place yourselves at different sides of the finish.

9. DRESS WARMLY. LAYER YOUR CLOTHES. DON'T WORRY ABOUT WHAT YOU LOOK LIKE - WORRY ABOUT YOUR SURVIVAL. CONSIDER SHOOTING AT A SHUTTER SPEED FASTER THAN YOU MIGHT OTHERWISE BECAUSE OF SHIVERING.