

Shooting Softball Photography Grimm C-6

As always, 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 may be changing during the course of the game. This is especially true during tournaments; use that to your advantage.

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.

1. Be professional at all times! This rule supersedes all others and always shall!!! When you fail to do this you jeopardize the future rights and opportunities of other photographers who follow you and must work with these umpires and coaches. Failing to act in a professional manner will result in your not shooting sports for us again.

2. Be certain of your exposures. Do this by one of these two techniques: ask a more experienced professional or bracket your exposures. Which do you think would be the more effective choice?

3. Always arrive early and use the time to improve coverage. Be certain that the first thing you have done is to ask your coach to ask for a "photographer's position" if such a request is necessary. In our league a photographer may not stand or sit against the fence inside the park regardless how far down the line he/she is unless this has been arranged when the lineups are delivered to the umpires. Next, consider the angle of the light and be sure you will not be shooting into the sun. Look for the shots which involve the coach as well as the team members; you're far less likely to have an occasion to shoot them later. Consider a shot while players are still on the bus or are disembarking

4. Plan to work from both first base and third base. From the first base position you can more easily shoot right handed batters and left handed pitchers. You can also photograph balls hit to the shortstop more easily. From third base you'll find that you can shoot pick-off plays very easily and relays to second that set up the double play to first. Also you can shoot right handed pitchers' and left-handed batters' faces far more easily. If you have a long telephoto such as a 135mm or a telephoto zoom that includes that length you might wish to try shooting through the backstop behind the umpire. Great shots of the pitcher's release and intensity/concentration are possible here. If you have two or more photographers they should work at separate locations at the same time; don't group in one place. It's too easy to talk and thus miss the action and it's too easy to miss the best angle on a particular play. Additionally, I've never seen a photographer tossed for talking to himself, but I have seen two tossed for talking to others when they should have been shooting quietly.

5. Try to get at least one photo of everyone on the team. Much too often we concentrate only on the stars of the team. Watch the action and the emotions within the dugout while the players are on the field. You'll often find great shots of those players who are intent on watching the action!

6. Be predictive. Watch the action on the base paths and try to anticipate where there will be high action. Usually the best photos are made at second base:

runners stealing from first, catchers trying to throw out runners, double play attempts, etc. Most pros shoot this “hot spot” with a telephoto lens on a camera with a motor drive mounted on a tripod and pre-focused at second.

7. 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 incorporate the concept of “team” in others. Don’t overdo any particular type unless another photographer is shooting a different lens at a different location, even then you would be wise to change lenses from time to time.

8. 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-game warm-ups, during the game, and after it is over. Look for that emotional shot that says, “We won” or that says, “I lost it for us” (But always be careful when deciding whether to run this type of photo). Remember also the “rule” that odd numbers of people are generally more visually intriguing than even numbers of subjects.

9. (Almost) always shoot to freeze the action first and to get depth of field second. You want to try to minimize the grain by using the lowest ISO you can. Higher ISO films will allow you a greater depth-of-field because they will allow a smaller aperture. The greater depth-of-field will allow a greater margin of error in focusing the fast moving subjects. The exception follows...

10. Shoot from your backside most of the time. As with baseball you should probably sit down when shooting inside a softball park. This reduces the number of important body parts that can be injured by foul balls!

11. “Works well with others” 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 players if they will shoot ours. Give them the name of your advisor and the school’s address and request the same information from them.

12. See also “Shooting Baseball”