

Shooting Sports

By Rob Sturgess (Nikon Canada)



Rod McLean (Victoria)

Shooting sporting events is all about “capturing the action” keeping it “sharp” and in-focus.

Here are 10 tips:

1. First and foremost the camera’s shutter speed needs to be fast enough to stop the action. If you like shooting in “Program Mode” then choose a SPORT PROGRAM option which tends to be shutter speed biased over standard “AUTO.”
2. I would use Aperture Priority exposure setting to ensure the fastest shutter speed possible and shoot “wide open”. Generally you will want to shoot at a minimum of 1/1000 to 1/4000 second minimally to stop action, depending of course on your angle and the individual sport. (Choosing Shutter Priority can sometimes underexpose or even overexpose the scene depending upon the light level)

Shoot “wide open” or at your largest F/stop (ie: F2.8 - F4) to separate your subject from the background (called “blowing out the background”). This allows the eye to go directly to the subject which is the whole idea of the shot.

3. If the light level is low you might have to raise the ISO of the camera to get a fast enough shutter speed. Today’s D-SLR’s (at least the good ones) allow the shooter to shoot at ISO from 800 to 3200 with minimal noise levels, ensuring that the camera can choose a fast shutter speed. A lens with a maximum aperture of 3.5-4.5 is fine.
4. Make sure “noise reduction” is turned on, either to AUTO or to a manual selection.
5. Choose a longer lens for dramatic results. My favorite lens is the 70-300 VR lens which is reasonably priced, not too large or heavy to hand hold, brings in the action very close, blows out the background and offers “4 stop advantage vibration reduction” for easy handholding. This lens would have the 35mm equivalent of a 105-450mm lens. It also has Nikon’s ED glass incorporated, so it is very sharp.



Andy Mons (Vancouver)

6. Choose the largest resolution (file size) so if you have to crop the picture for a more dramatic result, you have enough pixels to do so. Big cards are cheap these days. Set your camera to continuous motor drive and shoot bursts. (approx 3-6 fps).
7. Depending upon the color of the subject, select spot metering or at least center-weighted metering, so the camera exposes primarily on the subject and not so much on the background.

8. For truly dramatic results and when the action is coming from the sides, try “panning” the subject. This involves moving the camera laterally with the subject.

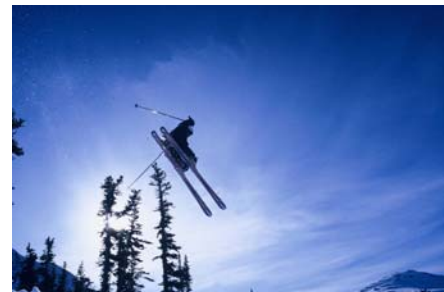
It takes a lot of practice to keep the subject centered. Use a slow shutter speed somewhere around ¼ sec.- 1/30 sec. A lot of experimentation is necessary to perfect this.

9. For panning, if necessary, use a monopod to steady the camera & keep the camera level.

Above all, shoot lots of pictures..... skilled photographers shoot a lot and sometimes still need luck on their side, to nail that “once in a lifetime” action shot.

Good luck!

(Photos are taken by our employees, as indicated, using their Nikon cameras)



Rod McLean (Victoria)