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How To Shoot Video Of Your Kids Sports Team So That Anyone Else Will Watch It!

By Kevin Rockwell

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- 1.You bought a video camera
- 2.You want to shoot sports of your kid
- 3.Here is how to do it

What a wonderful age of technology we live in. You can buy the greatest gadgets now days to record video and music and play them in all sorts of ways on other great technology gadgets from computers, DVD's, MP3 players, VCR's, and many more. It is all great stuff. But they all come with thick owners manuals that do not always get you going the right direction. You may eventually learn to use your great new camera for instance, but that does not mean you will necessarily take pictures that are worth looking at down the road. Rolling tape in your camera is one thing and creating video that is high quality and interesting is another thing. The goal of this product is to bring you up to speed with using your video camera (whatever format, and whatever brand) to get the best results for recording those precious moments of your kid's athletic achievements.

We as parents spend plenty of hours out on the field, court, pool, or track watching our kids take part in and compete in youth sports. If you have a video camera you are going to want to record some of these events for posterity and perhaps education. Following the simple steps in this guide will help you to capture them in the best possible fashion so that it is watch able but also usable down the road.

My video expertise stems from two decades as a network television cameraman and as a parent with several kids actively involved in youth sports. In my years of shooting video professionally I have been around the world and seen just about every type of news event. I also spent 15 years covering pro sports events for my employer. These were the best type of assignments as far as I was concerned. In my entire career the things I have enjoyed most is being able to go to places where the average person cannot. In sports that usually means being on the field, next to the court, in the press box, or in

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the pit. I have shot football games of all levels up to and including NFC and AFC championship games. Living in the Bay Area has allowed me to cover many baseball pennant races and several World Series. I was right behind home plate the night the earth shook in the 1989 World Series. Talk about a shock. I had to give up covering a World Series between the two Bay Area teams to go and cover a huge news event. Baseball seemed small for a while after the magnitude of the earthquake. The point in this is that I love sports, have been around sports my whole life and I know how to shoot video of sports. With that in mind I will do my best to give you advice on how to do the same.

Gear

Now whether you have the latest DV camera in your hands or an old VHS format camera there are basic things you will need to keep in mind if you are going to shoot sports. As we say in the video business your camera is only as good as the glass that you hang in front of it. The better the lens the better the results will be no matter what kind of recording format you use. Now you already have a

camera in hand and may never have heard this particular bit of advice so it is too late to factor it into the equation. However if you have camera in hand and it has any limitations on what it can do due to the lens being less than wonderful there are things you can do to mitigate the situation. We will discuss those things in more detail later on.

The key factors before setting out on your game day video assignment are to make sure you know the operating functions of the gear, have a tape supply in hand (soon to be DVDs with the revolution in gear design that is taking place right now), and batteries fully charged. I know these may seem like the simply obvious things but even the pros have to constantly remind themselves to check and double check these items.

A little aside here about preparation. Over the many years of covering news I learned lots of little tips from other photographers in the field and applied them to my work regimen. In the early days of video we always had to carry around a portable hair dryer because the record decks would seize up if the moisture levels got to high. So in the winter time if you came in from the cold outside into a nice warm building the air would condense inside the machine and cause moisture build up. The warning light would come on and bang we were dead in the water. One of us would have to run to the car and get the hair dryer, fire it up and chase the water away from the record heads of the deck. It caused some very funny moments in public places I can assure you. (This by the way can still be a problem even today with electronics/VCRs/lenses. Too much moisture can cause havoc. So just remember a portable hair dryer can save your day)

Another thing I learned from others is the value of backup. A few years ago I was out on assignment and we had a young eager college intern along with us in the field. This young man wanted to learn all about what we did in our job. He was very interested in how to take pictures, unlike most of our interns who only wanted to become reporters or anchors. He asked many questions and after seeing that he was really paying attention I decided to take him under my wing and really fill him up with information. One tidbit that I shared with him was to always have an emergency stash of tape in his car when out on assignment. He didn't quite understand the importance of this at first since I had already drilled him about always bringing tape stock with him when going out on assignment. I filled him with stories of

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times when something or other happened and I'll be darned if you didn't need another tape and there under the seat of the car was that emergency spare. So anyway he went off to graduate from college and get a job in a small market TV station. He would send us progress reports from time to time, which I really enjoyed. Then lo and behold one day he sends me a letter telling me how he got into a jam one day on a story and needed that emergency tape. He had dutifully tucked one under the back seat and it was there to save the day. I hope that what you learn in this book will in some way keep you from having a video failure down the road. What I learned in my career is that video production is 80% of it is dealing with the curves and problems that are thrown at you and 20% talent. If you can learn to trouble shoot then you will always be successful.

My first suggestion for shooting your kids sports activities is to go watch TV. Yes sit down put your feet up and watch some sports on TV. Really watch how they make it interesting at the top level. Then watch the news and see how they cover the games from a news perspective. Don't pay attention to the content; just watch how it develops visually. Now of course you can never duplicate what the networks are doing with just your one camera. However if you can glean anything from watching it should be how they try to bring intimacy with the athletes out in the broadcast. All the new improvements in covering sports have to do with getting you the viewer as close to the athlete as they can. Bring you into their world. From cameras on wires overhead that swoop along the field to cameras in the net of a hockey game to cameras inside the cars at Daytona, it brings you into the game. Now you cannot

stand on the pitchers mound at your kids' baseball game but you can learn some techniques that can make your baseball video more intimate and therefore more compelling to watch.

A side note here, if your task is to capture the whole game or sporting activity for review as a coaching tool you should focus mainly on getting a good high view and putting the camera on a tripod. Pan slowly to follow action and don't zoom in and out. My main goal here is not to teach you this skill since it is pretty darn basic. However if this is what you are doing you should do it right. Find the right framing to keep as much of the activity in the frame and follow it carefully. Some sports move quickly from one end to the other and you will have to be smooth. Resist the temptation to follow the ball on full zoom. You will lose. Those guys that shoot sports on TV are full on pros using much better gear than you will ever have at your disposal.

Now in order to get a good video of your child's game you need to find that emotion and excitement that exists in any game. Think of it as capturing a few of the things that occur and making those golden. Does the team do a pre game cheer? Get up close, stick your camera wither way up high over their heads looking down or get underneath looking up and shoot it in a way that takes the viewer where they can't go. Capture an at bat in baseball by taking a full pitch cycle in close-up of the pitcher, and then one of the catcher and then as close as you can of the hitter. Show their face if you can. If they get the big hit don't go crazy rushing to zoom out. Follow the runner down the line. It will be almost impossible to follow the ball so stay with the runner. Look for the angles that will give you these emotional shots.

Some sports are more of a challenge due to the size of the field and the amount of movement up and down the field. Take soccer of instance, if you follow the ball the camera is moving all over the place and the viewer gets queasy. To capture some good video of your kid playing you need to focus on

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specific shots and not try to follow the play. Look for moments such as throw ins, free kicks, kick offs when things are predictable and you can get closer to the action. Walk down the sideline and wait for the action to come to you. If you child is playing right forward then get ahead of the play and when you see the ball moving towards you then you can find you child and roll tape in anticipation of them playing the ball. Be sure to get some shots of the crowd cheering, the coach watching (not yelling I hope) the goalie waiting in anticipation.

Hold your shots steady for 6–10 seconds at a time. If you are taking a shot of someone watching the game actually count it out in your head (thousand one thousand two...) This will ensure that you get good solid shots and that you don't run on and on with the shot. Brace your arm against your chest for stability and use your other arm across your belly underneath to create a stabilizing platform. This is in lieu of a tripod of course. If you have a tripod it can always be a good thing to use if it does not get in the way.

Use creative angles as much as possible. Get down low and wait for the action to run by you. Don't pan with it but rather let the action race through the frame. At a swim meet get the camera down on the deck for more of a swimmers perspective of the action. Of course you may not want to stay there when the swimmers approach for a turn. Digital electronics do not like water inside them. I was getting the most awesome low angle shots of some open water ocean swimmers one time and the boat lurched on me and salt water sprayed over the camera. I had a cover on the camera but salt water seeped into the crannies and it caused us much grief getting it cleaned out so as to avoid damaging the electronics of the camera.

Kevin Rockwell worked as a network TV cameraman for 20 years shooting news and sports. Now a devoted fan of digital photography and video he works to gather information, tips and news for digital camera users. Oh and he loves to shoot pictures of his kids playing sports.

Team Sports For Your Special Needs Child?

By Alexa Simmons

Although all kids are different, I will share with you my views on sports and kids with special needs.

If your child is having difficulties socially in school, you may be tempted to sign him or her up for basketball or soccer with the other kids.

You know your child better than anyone. Just be sure that you're setting your child up for a positive, rather than a negative experience.

The things I have heard from Coaches about kids on their team would make you spit nails. "Oh, he's an awful player. He's got some kind of disorder or something." "I hope he doesn't sign up next year."

And, the parents in the stands are just as bad. "What is wrong with that kid?!" "Put him on the bench."

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And, that was all heard in reference to kids in the regular 3rd - 6th grade classes. I know. It made me sick, too.

Now, I'm not at all saying that team sports should be avoided. Just make sure you know who will be coaching your child, and make sure that he or she is someone who you want in charge of your child's self-esteem for the next few months.

There ARE wonderful coaches. Coaches who understand the impact they have upon children and make sure that it is positive. And, of course, there are special camps and organization with coaches trained in encouraging and training special needs kids.

However, if team sports are not your child's strong suit and he or she gets very stressed or has that "lost" look while participating, then here are some alternatives:

Camping as a family Going on Long Walks with You Bike Riding (go on bike trails if you are concerned about safety) Playing Tag Swimming Going to the Park (just being a kid!) Karate (again, make sure the people in charge of the facility are warm, loving, patient people, before signing on the dotted line)

Each of these activities will help strengthen your child physically and give him or her the benefits of self-confidence as well.

Yes, all kids need to be physically active, but at what cost? Surely not at the cost of feeling like they aren't good enough. Don't feel pressured into pushing your child into a team sport that may do more harm than good.

Alexa Simmons invites you to visit

- where you'll find a growing

collection of information to help you and the child you love. She recommends

for ways to spend time with your child.

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