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# What It's Like to Photograph the 2022 Winter Olympic Games

by John Ricard

March 17, 2022 | 4 Comments



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Olympic

more than a dream for many photographers. For Getty Images' Bruce Bennett,

photographing the Olympics is just another day at the office. I spoke with Bruce about his experience covering hockey at the 2022 Winter Olympic Games in Beijing.

Like many old-school sporting and event photographers, Bruce got his start by sneaking his camera into venues in the '70s. He photographed Islanders games from the cheap seats at Madison Square Garden in New York City and began sending photographs to Hockey News in Montreal. Eventually, they were buying photographs from him regularly, and his journey to becoming a professional photographer had begun.

Fast-forward to 2022 and Bruce has over 45 years of experience photographing hockey and serves as Director of Photography, Hockey Imagery at Getty Images. For the Beijing 2022 Winter Olympic Games, Bruce was part of a team of over 60 Getty representatives, which included 27 specialist sports photographers. These photographers captured 1.5 million images in total. On a typical day, the Getty editors would post 3,000 images. Bruce photographed 42 games in 18 days, although he was in Beijing for a total of 26 days.



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2022 Winter Olympics, Beijing, China. Photo by Bruce Bennett/Getty Images

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for both celebration and dejection as the competition takes place. Interactions between the players can make for great images.

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strives to have both teams represented in one frame whenever possible. Bruce's experience in photographing over 6,000 hockey games is key. Knowing the players and how they play the games helps as well. One player might tend to go straight through the defense, while another might be more likely to tuck around the sideboards and go around the defensemen. "You bring experience and that helps you anticipate the action," Bruce said.

For regular season hockey, hard hits between the players are part of the coverage. This friction can lead to some very emotional images, as conflicts can serve to either motivate or frustrate a player or team. During the Olympic Games, fighting is not permitted, so capturing these images is rare. Pre-game warmups can produce interesting images that show a different side of the athletes as scenes of players joking and having a good time are commonplace. Bruce also captures as many headshots as possible on players. These images are in demand if the player is being written about in a mainstream news article. Although Bruce's eye is trained to look for even the smallest interactions between players: "sometimes, the remote cameras produce interesting shots during the warmups," he said.


As you might expect, the schedule for covering so many games is grueling. Because there is a 12-hour difference between NYC and Beijing, Bruce arrived five days early to acclimate himself. During this period, Bruce familiarizes himself with the venue, makes connections with the photo venue managers, and figures out how he will be getting from one venue to another. Traveling in a foreign country can be complicated, and making an effort to reduce any potential confusion in the days to come is time well spent.

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2022 Winter Olympics, Beijing, China. Photo by Bruce Bennett/Getty Images

uncomfortable throat swab COVID test. The bus to the press center arrives around 9 am, and most days, Bruce stops by the camera swap equipment or just touch base with the editors and people in charge. From there, Bruce takes another bus to the arena.

Bruce arrives at the arena around 10 am. He checks all of the remote cameras, making sure cards are formatted and batteries are charged. The [Canon EOS R3](#) with [70-200mm](#) is the most commonly used remote camera but the [EOS 1D X Mark III](#) is also utilized remotely. The standard procedure is for six remote cameras to be set up around the arena. Bruce can trigger these robotic cameras by Pocket Wizard, but these cameras can be triggered and exposure settings can be adjusted by Getty editors from anywhere in the world. One remote camera is placed in the scoring net, and Bruce takes special care to adjust this camera since the most important shot of the evening may be captured by this camera.

All of the cameras are hooked up with ethernet cables. The images go directly to 30 editors around the world who caption the images as they are received. "We could get an image from the camera to client in 30 seconds. In Tokyo, 2 years earlier, that time was 60 seconds," he said. Captions are often written in advance to ensure the immediacy of delivery.

The R3 can shoot 20 frames per second and the number of images adds up quickly. Bruce is fortunate to have editors who handle captioning and post-processing for the 1,500 to 2,000 images produced each game. Everything is captured in JPEG mode. "Nobody shoots RAW. We couldn't handle the storage or the speed," he said.

Using a fast and reliable Ethernet connection, Bruce sends 150-200 images to the editors during the game. He uses the rear dial to scroll and the center button to select and send. "My thumb has no fingerprint left," he said. Ethernet is fast and more reliable than a wireless connection. The first game ends around 2:30 pm, and there is a two-hour break before the next game begins. This time is spent downloading the cards from the camera onto a hard drive and also changing batteries in the cameras and Pocket Wizards.

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2022 Winter Olympics, Beijing, China. Photo by Bruce Bennett/Getty Images

After photographing a second game around 4:30 pm, shooting wraps around 7 pm. Dinner is often nothing more than microwaved Chinese food. "Not great," he said. On some days, a final game starts around 9 pm and Bruce exits the arena around 11:30 pm. There are no buses to take Bruce back to the hotel at this hour. Getty had some drivers on call to assist photographers and editors in getting back to the hotel, but Bruce also relied on a local, app-based taxi service. "We called it Bad Uber. Sometimes the app worked and sometimes it didn't," he said. It was difficult to communicate with the drivers and translation apps from Google and Microsoft were invaluable.

Back at the hotel, Bruce downloads images and charges batteries before going to sleep, only to repeat the entire process the next day. Even though he wasn't home in his bed, "Getting to sleep wasn't a problem," he said.



2022 Winter Olympics, Beijing, China. Photo by Bruce Bennett/Getty Images

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shots of players crashing into the boards. Both the 24-70mm and 70-200mm lenses were useful for scenics taken outside the

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neither was used during the games because of their relatively limited focal range. The [28-300mm lens](#) is Bruce's lens of choice for game coverage. "That lens isn't very popular with anyone except me," he said. The lens allows Bruce to shoot without having to switch bodies during the action.

Bruce has photographed many Olympic Games in the course of his long career, and he will be 70 years of age in a mere four years. He isn't sure whether or not he will shoot the next series of the Olympic Games. The allure of the next Olympic Games is that it will take place in the beautiful city of Milan, Italy, but Bruce is quick to point out that he doesn't get to see much of the city when he is working the games. This isn't the first time he has considered retiring from covering the Olympics, but somehow, he always finds himself back in the pit. "Maybe not each image is in focus, but we are like a golfer who goes out and he's hoping for that one great shot. That's how we feel. You are always hoping that the next game will give you that one great shot."





Lead image 2022 Winter Olympics, Beijing, China. Photo by Bruce Bennett/Getty Images

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**About John Ricard**

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John Ricard is a NYC based portrait photographer. You can find more of Ricard's work on his Instagram accounts, [www.instagram.com/JohnRicard](http://www.instagram.com/JohnRicard) and [www.instagram.com/RicInAction](http://www.instagram.com/RicInAction)

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**David McClure** - March 17, 2022

Wonderful article about the organization, talent, and hard work that goes into such a project!! I would have liked to see a paragraph or two on the strobe placement and horsepower used to capture such spectacular images.

👍 2 🗨️ 0

**Michelle VanTine** - March 18, 2022

WOOOOOW. I love this article. One of my career goals is to shoot the Olympics. I wonder what cameras and lenses they put inside the goal with that puck flying around. The images are STUNNING. Great piece

👍 2 🗨️ 0



**John Ricard** ↩ Michelle VanTine - 4 days ago

I'm so not into sports that shooting the Olympics doesn't really interest me. My equivalent for that would be shooting the performances at the MTV Awards. I've shot the red carpet for events of that scale and I've been fortunate to shoot from the pit at MSG many times, but I haven't photographed the performances at a really big event like that.

👍 0 🗨️ 0

**Michelle VanTine** ↩ John Ricard - 3 days ago

That's so funny. I'll take a synchronized swimmer over a celebrity any day! Thanks for another great article

👍 0 🗨️ 0

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