

Action Photography

This month's issue of *Studio Photography Magazine* leaves the studio and enters the diverse and exciting field of sports photography.

As photographers, we strive to capture "the decisive moment." When photographing a portrait sitting, fashion shoot, or sporting event, we constantly look for the precise moment that will honestly and accu-

rately illustrate the personality behind the face or the excitement of an event.

The essential goal of *Studio Photography Magazine* has always been to explore the many profit-making alternatives the field of photography has to offer. Sports photography is one of those alternatives and can open a new creative outlet for you.

Iceing The Action

Bruce Bennett

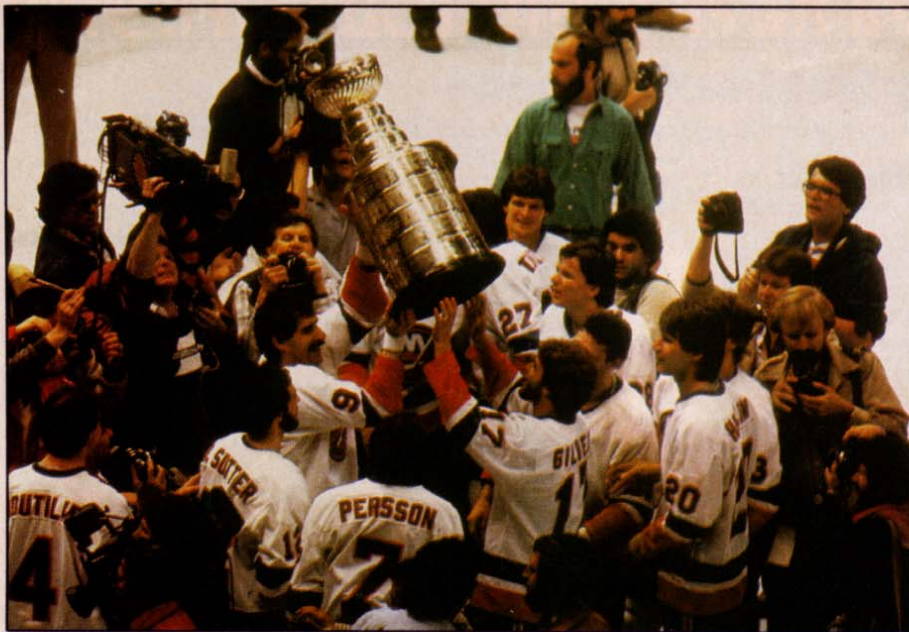


Mr. Bennett is the team photographer for the New York Islanders and has worked closely with other N.H.L. organizations.

When I was asked to pen an article on hockey photography, my first impulse was to type the word 'anticipation' and leave it at that. However, I needed another 999 words to fill the allotted space. Later the word 'instinct' came to mind — the importance of knowing the sport you're shooting. This knowledge

will help you anticipate where the flow of the game is headed.

Some photographers say that hockey is the toughest sport to shoot and they may be right. Anytime you combine high speed and low light levels, there's sure to be some difficulty. Players move in excess of 30mph, and pucks can fly



Emotion and excitement became evident when the Islanders won the Stanley Cup.

over 100mph. The sport is so unpredictable that even after putting in ten years you can still catch me ducking as the puck flies in the opposite direction. This is the nature of the sport. Why did I choose this one to specialize in?

After a brief "career" in high school hockey, a short whirl with a camera, and a strong desire to get into hockey games for free, I sent a letter and a few samples of my work to a publication in Montreal asking if they needed a New York based photographer. Much to my surprise, they did.

Actually, the pictures I produced in my first few years were terrible. I made the same mistakes all amateurs make. Most of the frames were too loose as the only lens I had was a 135mm. Many of the shots centered around the goalie as that seemed to be where the action always took place (and it was the easiest place to prefocus on). Many amateurs also let the bright white ice throw off their exposure readings resulting in underexposure.

Varying The Shooting Locations

There are several different shooting locations for the working photographer in most arenas. The best and most frequently used are on ice level near center ice in a photographer's box. The best lenses for this position are in the 180-300mm range. Another popular position is across the goal line just 40 feet from the net. Lenses ranging from 85mm to 135mm are ideal, but after a few games the shots begin to look alike.

Some arenas offer elevated positions at center ice where a 300 or

400mm lens is just right. From this location and distance the apparent speed of the players decreases making it easier to keep everything in focus.

Processes and Preferences

My own preference is to shoot from ice level between the blue

lines in the vicinity of center ice. From here a 300mm lens is fine for the entire arena. I normally shoot with Nikon FM's and a Nikon F3. Color is shot with a 300mm f/2.8 and, if light permits, the black & white is shot with a 300mm f/4.5. I sparingly use a Nikkor 180mm f/2.8 to get a little variety.

Black and white film is pushed to ASA 1600 and usually shot at 1/500th between f/4 and f/5.6. Processing is in Edwal FG-7 Method #7 which includes a 9% dilution of sodium sulfite. Many photographers, newspapers and wire services develop their pushed film in Acufine because of the short processing times and excellent quality, but we have more time and flexibility in our processing schedule.

The type of color film used depends on the arena (daylight or tungsten illumination). If you're going into a new arena, it's best to check with the electrician to see what the lighting is. Kodak's High Speed Ektachrome is normally used and pushed one stop or more if necessary. Remember, the more you push, the greater the grain. Color is often shot at 1/250th of a second which is the absolute mini-

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GRETZKY'S RECORD BREAKER

I was sent to Buffalo in 1980 to capture Wayne Gretzky's attempt at scoring his record breaking 77th goal of the season. *Time Magazine* picked up the airfare, hotel, and miscellaneous expenses and guaranteed a \$325 shooting fee. Two photos were used so I 'beat' the day rate by overcoming the \$325 in page space rates. Two photos were used in varying sizes paying \$250 and \$175 so, instead of receiving the

guaranteed rate, the payment was \$425. The picture was later used in the *Time* "Pictures of the Year" issue and paid another \$250. All slides were returned, and subsequent stock sales of the record breaking sequence of photographs has exceeded \$1500.00. The value of my stock file was also increased by photos of the Buffalo team in home uniform which helps when trying to button up a complete package.