

Viewfinder

TAMRON

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Keeping
Score
With

BRUCE
BENNETT

PRODUCT
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AF28-300XR

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AUTUMN COLORS
PHOTO CONTEST
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He Shoots ... He Scores! Anticipating the Action With **BRUCE BENNETT**

Taking a time-out from pro sports photography to focus on the younger set on the field and on the ice.

When Bruce Bennett was a teenager, he spent his free time sneaking his Argus Cosina camera into Long Island's Nassau Coliseum, where he'd crouch down for furtive photographs of some National Hockey League action. He was able to sell these "stolen" shots to Montreal's *The*

Hockey News (they also provided him with a much-needed press pass), jump-starting his professional sports photography career.

Today Bennett still makes the pro sports rounds as the official team photographer for the New York Rangers and Islanders, the New Jersey Devils, and the Philadelphia Flyers. He also loads up his gear bag for the American Hockey League, arena football, and the New York Power, a regional women's soccer team.

It was at pro hockey games, however, where Bennett found his next calling: kids' sports. "A lot of hockey games will have what they call 'Mites on Ice,' where kids come out and play a 5- or 10-minute hockey game," explains Bennett. "With digital photography, we were able to put photos on our web site and make them easily available to parents. That led us to believe there was a much bigger market in kids' photography than we had thought."

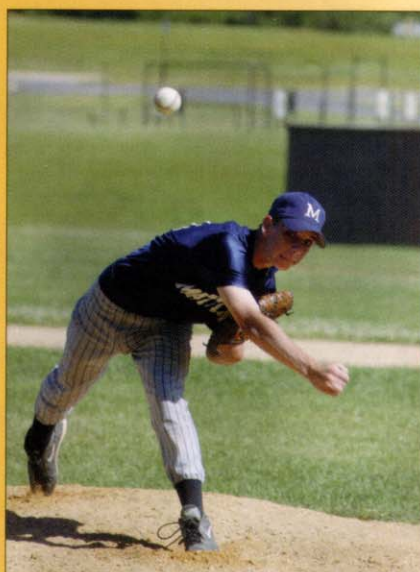
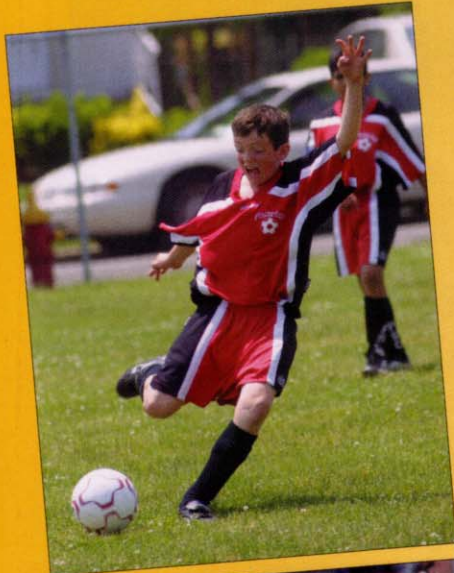
So, when they're not photographing the pros, Bennett and his staff (nine photographers, plus a bevy of contract photographers) head over to local colleges, high schools, elementary schools, and community sporting events. "For the colleges, we photograph games and players, as well as PR activities for sports information directors. For high schools and younger kids' sports, we shoot for the parents," he says.

But whether it's a PR job, a Little League playoff, or a hockey game (Bennett's real bread and butter), the photo shoot should be a no-hassle experience. "These photographers are trained—they go in and get the job done, and sometimes the people don't even know they were there," Bennett says from his Farmingdale, New York, studio.

Savvy Bennett

Bennett and his colleagues are able to remain unintrusive when chasing a future Wayne Gretzky down the ice, thanks to Bennett's three-pronged photo philosophy: experience, anticipation, and instinct. "When we hire young photographers, I tell them if they want to have a good laugh, they can look at what I shot in 1974," Bennett laughs. "People get better with experience."

And his thoughts on anticipation and instinct? "Knowledge of the sport is going to help you tremendously in anticipating the play," he says. "And instinct is that odd thing that separates a





good sports photographer from one who isn't so good," he explains. "It's something you either have or don't have."

Knowing your equipment is crucial. "One of the worst things photographers can do is go into a job and not be familiar with their equipment," Bennett says. "I photographed a New York Cosmos soccer game at the



Meadowlands in the late '70s. I stopped at a camera store, where I bought the Nikon 300mm f/2.8, the dream lens back then. I took it to the Meadowlands, popped it on a monopod, and started shooting. I was ready to kill myself. I was distraught at how bad the photography was."

Setup Strategies

Bennett uses the Tamron 70-300mm lens (see sidebar at right), along with an increasing digital arsenal. "Most of the photographers supply their own camera bodies," he says. The company itself has five bodies, and that's increasing month by month. "We have a little bit of everything: the Canon D30, the Canon D60, and the 1D," he adds. "For kids' sports, the 1D is the best choice: It's got fast focusing, a lot of frames per second."



Composing the Shot

Bennett advocates "keeping the horizon horizontal." "Whether it's a fence, a building, or any other horizontal line, it should be kept horizontal," he stresses. "Otherwise you twist your head as you're looking at the photo and it never looks quite right."

When dealing with small fries on the field or adolescents on

the ice, Bennett always gets his shots from their perspective. "You need to be at their level," he says. "The worst thing you can do is be looking down on them. When we do road races, for example, runners' postures look more correct and people fill the frame better when you're down low. We get down on one knee."

One common mistake with kids' sports photographers: They don't get in tight enough in their shots. "They often don't fill the frame with the image," he says. "There's a lot of distracting detail and data, and you can't blow it up enough to make a decent print because the action is so far away in the frame. We tell them to get in tight, then get in tighter!"

Use the tic-tac-toe board remedy for setting up your shot. "Place your main subject where the lines intersect," he says. "Or just fill the frame. Shoot full length, or waist up. Never cut someone off at the knees or ankles." Finding a focal vantage point is helpful also. "Prefocus in on a spot such as home plate or the goalie," he advises.

Some final advice to photographers: "Don't put the camera down," says Bennett. "You don't want to stand there and schmooze; you want to concentrate on what you're doing."

For more tips and advice from Bruce Bennett, see the continuation of this article on www.tamron.com.

SPEC SHEET

THE TAMRON 70-300MM

- Lens Construction (Groups/Elements): 9-13
- Angle of View: 34°-8°
- Type of Zooming: Rotation
- Diaphragm Blade Number: 9
- Minimum Aperture: f/22
- Minimum Focus: 59.0in. (1.5m)
- Macro Mag. Ratio: 1:2
- Filter Diameter: ø62
- Weight: 15.3oz. (435gm)
- Diameter x Length: ø3.0 x 4.6in. (ø76.6 x 116.5mm)
- Standard Accessory: Lens hood
- Mount: Canon, Minolta, Nikon-D, Pentax



As an alternative to the Tamron 300mm f/2.8, Bennett taps into the power of the Tamron 70-300mm f/4-5.6. "When we use that lens in combination with a digital camera body, it gives us a great focal length for outdoor sports," he explains. "With a 1.4 magnification rate on our digital camera, that turns the lens into a 100 to 420mm zoom, a perfect focal length for a lot of the sports we shoot."

One of the main benefits to using the 70-300 in the midst of a heated soccer game or playoff softball tournament: No matter where the photographer is standing in relation to the field, he or she can get more action in. "If you just use a fixed focal length, there are only certain areas on a field or a rink that are going to be acceptable," says Bennett. "But with a zoom, especially the 70-300, that gives us the option of shooting more of the field, whether it's in close or it's out far away. You can fill the frame with action over more of the field. And the more photography you shoot, the more you can sell."

Bennett recommends Fuji CZ 800 ASA film with the Tamron 70-300mm lens. "For color prints, [Fuji CZ] is great—it's a fast film with low grain and a sharp grain structure," he explains.