

Lessons Learned from Event Photography

Written by Fred Rushworth, September 2016

Images Alberta Camera Club seems to be receiving more requests from local groups to provide photographic services for their events. Some requests come through member friends and associations, while others are a result of people seeing our photographers at one of our outings.

How can you prepare if you are asked to coordinate photographers for an event? I am sharing my 'lessons learned' from the various events that I have covered.

- Work with people who have good judgment. Despite all the planning and dry runs, the event will take on a life of its own. When teams are shooting people in different places, photographers need to make decisions on coverage and follow through.
- Develop a good shot list. Are there particular individuals, groups or sponsors that need to be recognized? What venues require coverage? Once you have this information, you can develop a master shot list with the event coordinator to set expectations on both sides. Now, break these into a shot list for the photographers based on location, timing and availability. Also, consider the look, including angles, overview shots and closeups. Remember that you want to shoot a mix of vertical and horizontals to accommodate different uses. For example, a vertical shot may be used for the cover of a newsletter or background for a poster, and a landscape shot may be a better fit for a slide show. During a physical event, recognize that much of this is impromptu photography, but you can still make use of downtimes to pose some subjects and set-up shots.
- Exchange cell numbers and e-mails. You need to be able to stay in contact if changes happen. For example, at one event we had to call lost photographers, relay detour information and reschedule a photographer when the organizer wanted a group shot at one of the locations.
- Sync camera time stamps, shoot signs and programs, and update camera IPTC metadata. This point actually covers three items related to library management. When there are multiple photographers, it is harder to sort where the image was taken and to identify the subject of the photograph. With consistent camera time stamps, the event program and bookmark photographs of venue signs or programs, it is easier to find a photograph or identify a subject. This information can also be used when you create keywords to identify your finished photographs. For example, one event wants our photographs broken into categories, such as single riders, sponsors, groups and volunteers to help them catalog the images for future needs. Camera IPTC metadata is information that can be programmed into a camera that identifies the photographer, copyright and user rights. This may be required for some publications.
- Be clear on deliverables. You need to understand your workload, and photographers have to be clear on how to prepare files and delivery requirements. Does the client require RAW or JPG images? Does the client need some 'same day' images for presentations or media releases? Ask photographers to pick favourites from each event or venue if a quick turnaround is required. Establish a timeline to deliver a more extensive set of images sorted by keywords. These will be the photographs that you have selected to finish after you have culled the rest.
- Look after your photographers and look after your gear. At all the events I have been involved with, photographers received meals and refreshments. Make sure the photographers are briefed on where these can be found. Weather is always a factor with outdoor events, so sunscreen is a necessity, as is rain gear. We have used rain sleeves and umbrellas to keep our cameras dry, while sporting scorching sunburns!

Event photography is a very rewarding opportunity that challenges you, as a photographer, to be organized and to think quickly. Competitors and performers may stop and pose for you, but often this is a 'see it or miss it' photographic opportunity. With proper planning, you can enjoy interacting with the people, get great photographs and make a professional impression!