How to Finish First

Sportstalk with

Peter Read Miller

PLUS

SEPCon Speaker Preview

Gregg Martin

Beating the Shoot & Burn Phenomenon

Stephanie Weber

Marathon
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Over the past few years I have learned some tips and shortcuts that make working with Adobe Photoshop faster and easier. For some, these may be basic. For others, they might provide the missing link you’ve been looking for to streamline your Photoshop workflow. So check out the list and see if you can learn something useful for your business.

MAKE YOUR IMAGE FIT THE SCREEN. Hold down the space bar and right click on the image; click “fit to screen.” Or hold down the H key and click on the image. The image will remain larger as long as you hold the mouse button down.

CYCLE THROUGH OPEN IMAGES. Use Control + Tab to cycle to the next open image.

CREATE A CLONING LAYER. Before using the Clone Stamp Tool, create a new layer by clicking on the “New Layer” icon in the Layers Palette. In the Clone Stamp Toolbar at the top of the screen check “Aligned Sample” and set it to “All Layers.” The Clone Stamp can now be used, and all work will be done on a separate layer. Once the work is complete, the image can be flattened and saved.

INCREASING THE SIZE OF AN IMAGE. Go to Image>Image Size. In the Image Size window click on the down arrow in the box that says “pixels.” Change this from “pixels” to “percent” and change it from 100 to 109. This will increase the size of the image by nine percent, which will do the least damage to the image. Repeat this step until the image is at the desired size. It works best if you create a simple action to automate the process.

Hopefully, this information will help your work in Photoshop. If you have good tips or tricks for Photoshop that you’d like to share with your fellow pros, e-mail them to art@artsolononphoto.com to be included in future issues of Action News.

By Art Solomon

TechTalk

Photoshop Quick Tips

Work Smarter and Quicker

KEYBOARD SHORTCUTS: (Mac & PC)

V - MOVE TOOL

M - MARQUEE TOOLS

L - LASSO TOOLS

W - MAGIC WAND TOOL / QUICK SELECT TOOL

C - CROP TOOL / SLICE TOOLS

I - EYEDROPPER TOOL / COLOR SAMPLER TOOL/ RULER / NOTE AND COUNT TOOLS

J - HEALING BRUSH TOOLS / PATCH TOOL / RED EYE TOOL

B - BRUSH TOOL / PENCIL TOOL / COLOR REPLACEMENT TOOL

S - CLONE TOOLS

Y - HISTORY BRUSH TOOLS

E - ERASER TOOLS

G - GRADIENT TOOL / PAINT BUCKET

O - DODGE / BURN / SPONGE TOOLS

P - PEN TOOLS

T - TYPE TOOLS

A - PATH AND DIRECTION SELECTION

U - RECTANGLE / ELLIPSE / POLYGON / LINE AND CUSTOM SHAPE TOOLS

QUICK TIP: TRY KEEPING A NOTE CARD WITH THE KEYBOARD SHORTCUTS BY YOUR COMPUTER. THIS CAN SAVE YOU TIME (AND, THUS, MONEY.)
As many established photographers can attest, the sports and event field has grown increasingly aggressive due to the “shoot-and-burn” approach. Many part-time shooters are undercutting the market by offering their services well below market rates, then simply handing their clients a disc of images and giving them the ownership rights to those images.

These shoot-and-burn photographers are often competing for the same opportunities as full-time professionals, who are finding it difficult to price products in a way that makes them competitive.

However, by driving incremental sales and building more brand awareness, established pros can overcome some of the added pressure from the shoot-and-burn set. Also, conveying the difference in image output to clients is a critical step in remaining competitive without losing your shirt.

Fortunately, the photography industry today is extremely dynamic, and not just for photographers. Labs, technology companies and camera manufacturers are always looking ahead to ensure that they will still be in the game. With tens of millions of events taking place across the country each year, there is still plenty of demand for the full-service photographer. However, the value side of any proposition must be well-crafted to successfully compete with the rogue shooter eager to make a quick buck.

**IN ORDER TO UNDERSTAND WHY THIS IS AN ISSUE, WE HAVE TO COMPREHEND THE FORCES AT WORK:**

**Technological and educational advancement.**
With technology advancement, today’s customer can do more on her own without the direct involvement of a photographer. More services are coming online, and customers are growing increasingly tech-savvy.

**Part-timers.**
There are more part-time photographers than full-time photographers in the market today. Some part-timers are willing to take lower pay since this is only a supplement to their income. This undercuts the full-time pros and drags down overall pricing in the marketplace.

**Misguided clients.**
Misinformation and an overload of marketing hyperbole can confuse customers. To the average consumer, it’s often difficult to understand why one option costs more than another.

**ONCE-IN-A-LIFETIME QUALITY**
When working with customers, take the time to explain the difference between your product offerings and what they can buy online through a consumer-grade website. For example, there is a marked difference in quality between a 4×6 print from a pro lab versus a 4×6 from a drugstore. While the choice may seem obvious to a seasoned photographer, many clients...
aren’t aware of the advantages offered by laboratory-quality prints. In the end, your customers are shopping for the best balance. They are looking to maximize their dollar, but they also want their images to last a lifetime. The desire for longevity provides an opportunity for photographers to present themselves as premium service providers for those priceless memories. “It’s really more than just pictures to my clients,” says Sara Shunk, owner of Digital Creative Group near Detroit, Michigan. “We are interpreting their once-in-a-lifetime events to tell their stories visually.”

Pro photographers should also remember to avoid consumer-based products so they don’t lose their competitive advantage, and to keep physical samples of products on hand. Describing your work isn’t good enough; clients want to touch and feel products. They are spending a good amount of money on those items, so educating them about their purchases will put their minds at ease.

“We are interpreting their once-in-a-lifetime events to tell their stories visually.”

This is something the shoot-and-burn photographer won’t do. Gaining clients’ trust by demonstrating expertise with high-end, archival-quality products will help professionals stand apart from the part-timers.

One photographer who’s managed to separate himself from the crowd is Jeff Cable. Having shot everything from Formula 1 racing to the Olympic Games, Cable offers high-end services and products, such as online proofing and fully customizable coffee table books. After implementing these items, he earned, on average, an additional $500 per event. He credits the extra sales to the ease with which his customers can order photos online, and to the impeccable construction of the products.

“After one of our events, a woman ordered more than $1,000 in photo prints of her grandson. She was a prime example of someone who wouldn’t have ordered if she didn’t have access to an online gallery,” said Cable.
STAYING AGILE

Meanwhile, reducing inefficiencies can make the difference between being ready for the next job opportunity and missing out. Although it’s easy to shoot 1,000 images per event, it’s a bit more of a challenge to go through every image, then edit, store, and manage them. Professionals can identify ways to save time daily, such as investing in a smart phone to manage their e-mails on the road or enlisting the help of an intern to manage administrative work. There is also impressive technology offered by some of today’s online printing and order fulfillment services that integrates directly with photographers’ digital workflow. Using these ever-evolving applications, photographers can streamline their workflow while improving sales. Some applications offer fully customizable Web galleries and easy-to-use upload tools that save time when processing images and sharing proofs with clients. In a few cases, photographers can auto-populate pre-designed templates to have final products ready in minutes.

Ben Chrisman and Erin Reed are examples of photographers who have maximized their efficiency through a workflow application offered by their online order fulfillment company. Chrisman and Reed usually work on location far from their studio, making their time precious once they return home to process results. Having an effective workflow helps them mitigate potential delays. Chrisman uses DigiLabs Pro (digilabspro.com) to simplify the workflow, create Web galleries for online proofing, and deliver results to clients. “It takes about 10 minutes to upload a complete shoot, which typically contains upwards of 1,000 images,” says Chrisman. “Plus, since we can create custom galleries based on what was captured in the photo, clients don’t have to scroll through hundreds of photos that they’re not interested in.”

For sport and event photographers, success often means less time on the assembly line and more time spent in the field. However, unlike “shoot-and-burn” photographers, true pros still have to provide their clients with quality end products that represent their businesses well. Efficiency of process is key, not only for fattening the bottom line, but also for pursuing your passion. And that passion is a critical driving force in a field that has become more and more competitive.
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SPORTS TALK WITH
PETER READ MILLER

With a career that spans more than 30 years, *Sports Illustrated* photographer Peter Read Miller is universally recognized as one of America’s premier photographers of the sporting life. His images have appeared on more than 100 *Sports Illustrated* covers, and his work can be seen in ad campaigns by Addidas, Visa, Coca-Cola, Footlocker, Eastman Kodak, ABC, Panasonic, the NFL and Canon, not to mention in editorial spreads for *Time, Life, People, Money, Playboy, Runner’s World, Newsweek, USA Weekend* and *The New York Times.*
A dedicated educator who conducts workshops throughout the year, Miller will be one of the headline presenters at SEPCON 2011 this January in San Antonio, Texas. *Action News* sat down with Miller to discuss the world of sports photography—where it’s going, how it’s evolving and where the opportunities are—and to get a sneak preview of his highly anticipated program at the upcoming SEPCON.

**ACTION NEWS:** What’s your advice to aspiring sports photographers?

**PRM:** It’s very difficult, but there are always going to be jobs shooting sports. You have to find any way you can to get started, anything you can do to shoot as much as you can and get as much exposure as you can.

I talk to a lot of people who, like me, started out as school photographers. That’s a great avenue because you get to shoot a little bit of everything and get good exposure. Also, there are services out there that will give you exposure, but no pay. And there are still small newspapers that hire photographers, not to mention websites that need original content. So the market is still there, and someone who has the desire can make it. The key thing is the desire.

**AN:** Why is the sports photography market tougher today than in years past? Do you think that the competition is growing or the opportunities shrinking or both?

**PRM:** Both. Magazines are cutting back these days, and the editorial publishing opportunities are more limited. At the same time, technology has allowed a broader group of people to shoot high-quality sports action pictures. When you think back before days of sophisticated autofocus, you had a limited number of people who could create top-notch sports pictures. Technology somewhat leveled the playing field. Now, with a camera like a Canon Rebel T2i, a lot of people can go out and take a pretty good sports picture. It’s not that expensive to buy the gear, and there are a lot of people who want to do it. However, the person with a really good eye and a good knack for capturing sports will still have an advantage.

**AN:** So what does a true pro do to separate himself or herself from the masses?

**PRM:** You have to get work out there any way you can. People have to see it. Especially when you’re starting out, you have to jump at those opportunities to get experience and get your work seen.
AN: Speaking of getting your work seen, are there particular secrets for establishing connections with magazine editors?

PRM: As much as you can put images online and send millions of e-mails, you need to find a way to connect to people. Technology hasn’t changed that about this business. A recommendation from an established photographer or editor makes a lot more headway than hundreds of e-mails. Magazine photographers and editors are at workshops throughout the year, in different places around the country. You can go to workshops, meet these people, and ask them to look at your work. Also, at SI, we have “Leading Off,” an opening image to start the issue. If you have a really, really, really good picture, you can send it in and you might get it published in that very high-profile format.

AN: What do you see as the future of editorial sports photography?

PRM: At SI, we’ve started publishing on the iPad. We’re really excited about that because the pictures look better than they do on regular websites, and you have this media to present lots of images and tell stories really well. We can also use many more images per story because we are not limited by page counts—so you can produce these enhanced features. In my view, that’s one of the most positive developments to come along for a while.

As tablet publishing develops, I think we will see some wonderful new opportunities develop. There’s a definite difference in the quality of images; because of the higher resolution and the screen format, it’s a much more visually appealing way to publish than traditional Internet publishing. Tablets could be the next evolution of traditional magazine print publishing. So the opportunities are there, and there is a great future in sports photography. You just need to find those opportunities.

AN: Will you be talking about these topics in your presentation at SEPCON 2011?

PRM: Yes. I tell some stories. I show some pictures. I talk about techniques. I divide my presentation into three main parts, sharing tips and insights along the way.

The first part is all about the Olympics. I discuss how I preview the sports and the ceremonies so that I know what to anticipate, and I share stories about working with the different athletes.

The second part is about football, which is my favorite sport to photograph. I talk about my techniques for shooting football, including my super-low-angle shots, short-lens photographs and the other methods I have for capturing the sport.

The third part covers features and portraits. I go through various sequences that show my setups, how I put together the shoots, and then the final image. I also talk about techniques for collaborating with people and working in the studio.

To see more from Peter Read Miller, check out peterreadmiller.com.
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One thing is certain: Just about everyone in the sports and event field wants to build a stronger business for 2011 and beyond. To aid in that process, we picked the brains of four SEPCON 2011 presenters—Jeff Gump, Dave Stock, Don Smith and Ron Vesely—for their best advice on finding success in this topsy-turvy market. These photographers’ businesses cut across the market from team and individual portraits to commercial sports photography, but their advice rings true no matter what specialty you’re in.

**JEFF GUMP**

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What is your best business advice?
Don’t promise something you can’t deliver.

What advice would you give to someone who is just starting out in team and individual photography?
Start out slowly. Taking on too much too soon can put you behind before you ever get your momentum going. Also, find a mentor. He or she could save you years of trial and error.

Do you have a particular tip, trick or technique that has helped you grow your business? Honesty! Customers appreciate it. And thank-you cards. I send out at least one a day.
**What is your secret to running a successful team and individual sports photo business?**

Hiring the correct staff. Let your staff take ownership in your company. Reward them for even the little things they do right. And be frugal with your business finances.

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*What is your best business advice?*

Be obsessive about providing value by controlling costs while focusing on quality. Parents will seriously consider taking their own photos unless we can produce clearly superior images, a stress-free experience and great customer service. Also, hire great people—real photographers, not minimum wage camera operators with little training. Then pay them well, challenge them to take pride in their roles, and encourage them to work as a team.

*What advice would you give to someone who is just starting out in team and individual photography?* Study your potential customers and the competition. What do people like about the other photographers? What don’t they like? Make sure you match the competition’s strengths and master those areas where they are weak. There are no easy shortcuts to success in this market. You need to work harder, work smarter, and conduct your business with the highest levels of ethics and professionalism.

*Do you have a particular tip, trick or technique that has helped you grow your business?* We’ve worked very hard to build professional portrait lighting on location. The quality of the resulting images, combined with a highly-refined model for shooting large numbers of kids in a very short time, has been an integral part of our success. People recognize quality and professionalism and don’t mind paying for it. They are quick to recommend us to others, and the word-of-mouth referrals lead to new customers while greatly reducing our marketing expenses.

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competitors by offering work that goes over and above what others are doing. This means taking the time to train your associate photographers in all aspects of the sports you are photographing.

**What advice would you give to someone who is just starting out in sport and event photography?**

Specialize in one aspect of the business and do it well. Don’t try to be everything to everyone. Learn to say no to jobs that you are not qualified to do. It takes years to build a good reputation, but takes only a few bad shoots to destroy one.

**How do you promote yourself to your target market?** I believe in one-on-one presentations to potential clients. Respect their time and keep your presentation concise and to the point. There are many good photographers out there, so convince your potential client that you are not only good, but that you will deliver what you promise and deal with any customer complaints when they arrive.

**What is your secret to running a successful sport and event photo business?** There are no shortcuts for hard work. I might add that one needs to have a passion for what one is photographing. If you are doing this strictly for the money, it will show in your work.

**What is your best business advice?**

You get what you negotiate, so don’t sell yourself short. It is much harder to raise your fees once you set them low, than it is to set them correctly in the first place. Keep in mind that this is a business as well as a passion, and that the objective is to make a profit while doing something you enjoy.

**What advice would you give to someone who is just starting out in commercial or editorial sports photography?** Shoot what you love, and you’ll love what you shoot!

**Do you have a particular tip, trick or technique that has helped you grow your business?** Quality, reliability and dependability are traits to strive for, and they help separate you from the competition.

**How do you promote yourself to your target market?** I promote myself and my business via a creative and properly implemented dynamic Internet presence, which includes an SEO-optimized website, blog and archive, as well as social media tools like Facebook and Twitter.

**What is your secret to running a successful business as a commercial and editorial sports photographer?** Look inside before looking outside. I always look to cater to my existing clients before looking to develop new clients. While developing new clients is important, it is much easier both from a time and cost standpoint to expand opportunities with your current client base. Those clients are already familiar with who you are and what you offer, so they tend to be more open-minded when listening to ideas that are mutually beneficial.
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SEPCON SPEAKER PREVIEW

GREGG MARTIN

By Jeff Kent

Back in 1989, Gregg Martin was just finishing his second year of college, and he answered an ad for a summer job assisting a sports photographer in Columbia, S.C. When he showed up to interview, the photographer offered him the job, but told him that he wouldn’t have the money to pay him until the end of the summer when his league contracts paid out and school portraits started up. “I decided to take him on his word, and that started a whole new career in photography,” says Martin.

The photographer did pay up at the end of the summer and, impressed with Martin’s work, hired him on as his first associate photographer. Over the next five years, Martin helped grow the business as it snapped up league contracts and jobs shooting college and pro sports. Today, that fledging operation that offered Martin a summer job assisting a sports photographer in Columbia, S.C. When he showed up to interview, the photographer offered him the job, but told him that he wouldn’t have the money to pay him until the end of the summer when his league contracts paid out and school portraits started up. “I decided to take him on his word, and that started a whole new career in photography,” says Martin.

The photographer did pay up at the end of the summer and, impressed with Martin’s work, hired him on as his first associate photographer. Over the next five years, Martin helped grow the business as it snapped up league contracts and jobs shooting college and pro sports. Today, that fledging operation that offered Martin a summer job in 1989 is a photography juggernaut that pulls in seven-figure revenues every year.

In the mid-1990s, after learning the business from the inside, Martin decided to branch out on his own. Using connections from his previous job, he landed some contracts with University of South Carolina sports, NASCAR, the PGA and the LPGA, which he added to a regular diet of wedding and event work. Over the years, Martin has continued to build the Columbia-based Gregg Martin Photographic Design into a regional force. He maintains a contract position as the athletic department photographer for the University of South Carolina, which gives him carte blanche to photograph all of their sports. He also shoots for the NFL’s Carolina Panthers, as well as some NBA games, and he continues his work with the LPGA and NASCAR. All of this is in addition to regular youth sports league action and T&I photography, as well as some corporate work, including annual reports, awards banquets and various other corporate events.

A relatively new and completely booming part of Martin’s business is photographing father-daughter dances at area elementary schools. These dances are like proms for dads and their daughters, and they take place from kindergarten through the fourth grade. The schools host the dances, sell tickets, and often add in a silent auction for extra fundraising.

“These events are a win-win for all involved,” says Martin. “The school raises funds, the fathers get more involved with the PTO, the girls have a fancy event to attend, and the photographer makes money.”

Martin sets up a mobile studio in the dance area and creates on-the-spot portraits of the father-daughter couples. The events usually require about four hours of shooting plus post-production time. Martin’s print packages range from $20 to $70, and are structured similar to school photo packages.

“These are very simple jobs, and very profitable” says Martin. “They usually take place on a Thursday or Friday night, so you could still shoot leagues or weddings on Saturday and portraits during the day.”
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I understand that mentality. No one is in your situation here and now, with your clients, constraints and “to-do” lists. Certainly, no one has your unique set of experiences. At Action News, we understand that you are one of a kind and that your business is just as exceptional. So we aim to work with you to help make you stronger professionally. We are not here to preach about the world of sport and event photography; we are here to provide a set of resources that you may choose to use (or not) to improve your business from a marketing, an organizational and a technical standpoint.

Within these pages we have gathered information to help make your job easier. Stephanie Weber discusses how to beat the “shoot-and-burn” phenomenon. Art Solomon gives us some Photoshop tips and shortcuts in this month’s Tech Talk column. We also chat with Peter Read Miller about the past, present and future of editorial sports photography. In addition, we throw some business tips at you from several noted sport and event shooters (and upcoming SEPCON speakers), and we sneak in a speaker profile and presentation preview for SEPCON presenter Gregg Martin.

In addition to all this great content, we are excited to announce our SEPCON 2011 lineup. We feel, and I’m sure you’ll agree, that it boasts the best in the business, including the aforementioned Miller and Martin, Dave Stock, Ron Vesely and Jeff Gump, just to name a few. There’s a little bit of info for every sport and event photographer out there, and then some. We hope to see everyone this January in San Antonio!

Lastly, SEP is thrilled to announce a new member benefit—the expanded SEP Action News media credential. Yes, that’s right, members can now request personalized authorization from SEP, opening the doors to more hard-to-access events. Photographers who shoot with the Action News media credential may also have their images published in a future issue of this magazine.

As always, feel free to share your thoughts and suggestions with me anytime at cwhite@sepsociety.com or by calling me at 404-522-8600, x254.

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