

Sports Photography

Shortcode	Description
Caption: Excellent	Captions -- at their best -- should answer a viewer's questions about a photo. Your caption has done all of that and more, and your readers will be grateful. All of the basics are here: clear sentence construction, AP style, active verbs, factual information about the situation and important context. Captions are often overlooked, but this caption shows exemplary attention to detail.
Caption: Mediocre	Consider what questions a viewer would have about this photo, this scene and these people. Consider how those questions could be most clearly answered. While the caption might have answered some of the basics of the caption, more attention is needed. Consider this checklist: 1) AP style, 2) active verbs, 3) background facts, 4) creative sentence construction, 5) use of quotations.
Caption: Weak	One of the key functions of a caption is to connect a photo to the story that it will accompany. In order to do that, captions need to provide basic factual information: 1) What are the names of the people in the photo? 2) What are they doing?, 3) Where are they?, 4) When? Of course, all of this needs to be communicated in a concise, active sentence written in AP style. The bonus -- after those questions are answered -- would be to address the "how" and "why" of the situation. Consider how your caption could better live up to these expectations.
Composition: Distracting background	Consider how you could have been more intentional about the objects shown in the background here. Generally speaking, the presence of brightness, color, people or other distinct objects will distract the viewer from the intended primary focus. How can this be fixed? 1) Get closer; 2) Use a more telephoto lens; 3) change your angle up/down or left right; 4) wait for the background elements to move out of the frame. Would one or more of these techniques have helped? (Of course we would NEVER encourage you to "photoshop" out an element in the background because that would deceive the reader.)
Composition: Excellent	The composition of this photo is great: the organization of people and objects in the frame is clean and inventive. The image shows attention to avoiding congested backgrounds and portraying a clean central focus for the image. It all comes together here: camera angle, distance to subject and lens choice. Excellent composition.
Composition: Get closer	One of the most challenging aspects of being a sports photographer is getting close to the action. Photographers should often work to be as close to the action as the sport, officials and venue will allow. For most sports (basketball, football, soccer, lacrosse) getting close to the action means sitting on the endlines, so that the action is coming at you. For other sports, like volleyball, baseball and track & field, it is much more difficult to give a rule of thumb. However, this image could give us a much more intense and engaging view of the sport and its people by getting closer.
Composition: Mediocre	Solid composition is shown here in this image. The intended center of attention is clear and well showcased with good attention to background. However, it would be nice to have a more inventive and adventurous composition. Consider all of the compositional possibilities: rule of thirds, framing, leading lines, foreground vs. background, repetition or an original angle. While not all of those might have helped in this particular situation, the image could use more attention to composition.
Composition: Weak	The composition of this photo needs more attention. Photographers make an infinite number of decisions in each frame: what to include, what to omit, how high to stand, where to stand side to side, etc. With each of those decisions the photographer sends a message about what is important in the scene. This image could have been more deliberate about how to arrange the objects within the frame.
Cropping: Excellent	Smart and focused cropping can elevate an already excellent moment, and that is what this image shows. The photo is free from unnecessary elements, avoids cutting off key storytelling elements and maintains interesting composition. Good attention to this seemingly small detail.
Cropping: Weak	Cropping here needs more attention. As a rule of thumb, try to crop by starting with only the most vital element in the frame within the cropping tool: this might be something as small as a face or even a person's eyes. Next, expand the sides of the cropping tool until only the essential parts of the photo are included. Of course the new crop should avoid cutting off people's body parts in awkward ways as well. Consider how this photo could be better cropped.
Emotion: Gripping	While sports is full of intense moments, you have done all of the right things to frame a particularly emotional composition here. While not everyone plays sports, people can connect to sports through the common emotions of sports: elation and disappointment, frustration and euphoria. In this way, photos like yours can connect the sports fan or the indifferent reader to sports moments. Well done.
Emotion: Poor	To communicate the emotion of a moment, we as photographers need to pay attention to faces, eyes, postures and gestures. And we need to train our finger on the shutter to capture images when those emotional symbols -- like face and eyes -- are most expressive. Or, we need to move to an angle in the sport where we are most likely to capture those faces and eyes when they are being expressive. More could be done to represent emotion in this photo.
Emotion: Solid	The moment here could more intensely capture the emotion present in this sporting moment. Of course, that means that we need to not only have a face, but an expressive face; that we have not only the subject's eyes, but intense eyes; that we not only have the actions of the athlete, but the most strenuous of those actions. Our readers connect to moments of intense emotion whether on a basketball court, a volleyball court, a wrestling mat or a halftime lecture. Consider how the photo might have captured more emotion in this setting.
Storytelling: Strong	This image has a strong storytelling quality: it harnesses the power of photography to freeze a decisive moment. Nice work in working to find a moment that engages the viewer.

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Storytelling: Weak	Photographs have the potential to showcase meaningful moments about everything. Consider how your photo could select a more emotional moment, or perhaps a moment of interaction between people in the situation. Would more patience or more time spent in the situation have yielded a different moment that would have spoken to the viewer with a greater storytelling quality?
Technical: Lack of focus	The focus of this image is soft in a way that is distracting to the viewer. This seems to be the result of the lens not fully being focused on the main subject. Obviously this can be a huge challenge in sports, when action is constant and fast. Sometimes manual focus will cause this because the photographer has simply missed the sharpest focus. And sometimes auto-focus will cause this as the camera's software chooses an object other than the intended center of attention. Regardless, the focus seems soft here in a way that doesn't help the audience's reading of the image.
Technical: Poor motion blur	The blur in this image is distracting to the viewer and appears to be the result of a shutter speed that is too slow for the situation. Consider this as a good rule of thumb for sports, you should strive to have a shutter speed that is 1/500 second or faster. This is often very difficult to do without a wide open aperture and/or an ISO that is very high. While creative and thoughtful use of blur can be very meaningful in sports photos, blur is weakening the effect of the photo here.
Technical: Poor toning	The camera settings are the first opportunity to ensure a photo has proper brightness, contrast and white balance. However, basic digital toning is often needed. This toning should not be used to deceive the reader, but rather to allow the photo to match the original scene and attract the reader's attention. The most common digital tool to make this adjustment is Photoshop. Consider how this photo might improve in appearance with digital toning.
Technical: Strong	The technical aspects of this photo are strong. From the settings on the camera to the digital toning of the photo, the image is solid. Nice work of knowing the correct shutter speed, aperture and ISO for the situation. Also, the levels of brightness, contrast and color balance are well adjusted here.
Technical: Too dark/bright	Be sure to pay attention to camera settings that control exposure. The shutter speed, aperture and ISO govern the appearance of the finished image. If the combination prevents enough light from being captured, the image will be underexposed and dark. (This is a result of a shutter speed that is too fast, an aperture that is too closed or an ISO that is not sensitive enough). On the flip side, slow shutter speeds, sensitive ISOs and open apertures will result in overexposed images. You can Google "photo exposure" for videos and more information.