PETER READ MILLER

ON SPORTS PHOTOGRAPHY

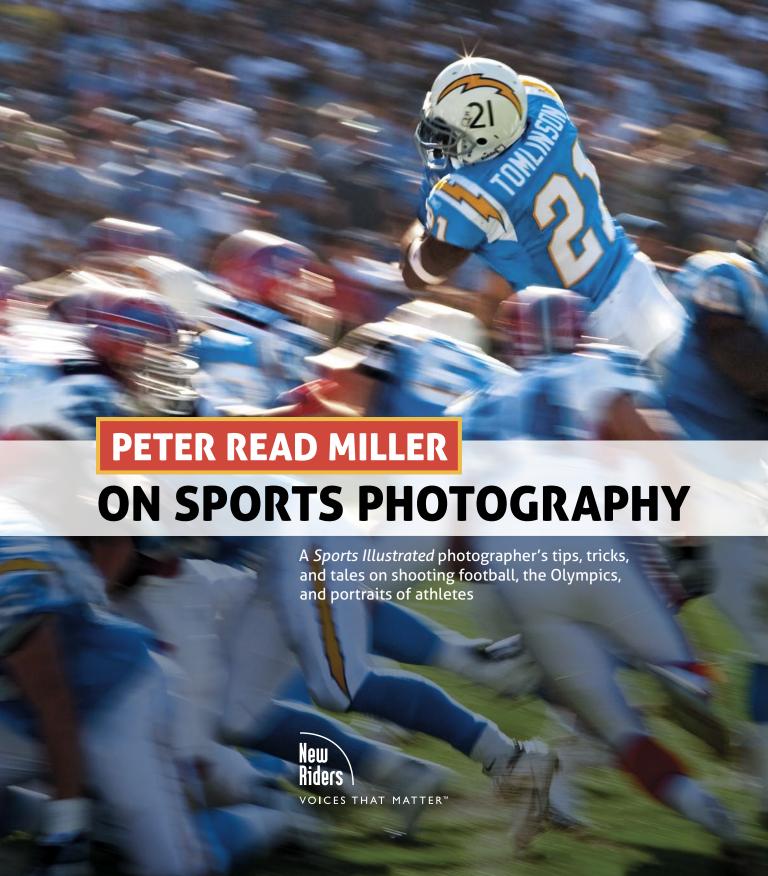A *Sports Illustrated®* photographer's tips, tricks, and tales on shooting football, the Olympics, and portraits of athletes

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ON SPORTS PHOTOGRAPHY

A *Sports Illustrated* photographer's tips, tricks, and tales on shooting football, the Olympics, and portraits of athletes

New Riders

VOICES THAT MATTER™

PETER READ MILLER ON SPORTS PHOTOGRAPHY
A *Sports Illustrated* ® photographer's tips, tricks, and tales on shooting
football, the Olympics, and portraits of athletes
Peter Read Miller

To my maternal Grandmother Josephine Cullen Culliton, who gave me my first camera.
I always said I would dedicate a book to her; I just never thought I'd write one.

And to my dearest Kallie for all her love, patience, and support now and forever.

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

To my parents Donna Miller and Lewis Miller, and my paternal grandmother Marion Miller, who all contributed in their own loving way so that I could have a career I love.

To four of the greats of sports photography—Mark Kauffman, John Dominis, Robert Riger, and John Zimmerman—whose work and friendship encouraged and inspired me.

To John Wiebusch and David Boss of NFL Creative Services, who gave a grad school dropout a chance to shoot the NFL and started my career.

To all the photographers, editors, and photo assistants with whom I have worked, and to my many other friends in this crazy business—you have all made me a better photographer and a better person.

To the students who have attended my workshops and all those who managed to stay awake during my lectures—you have inspired me with your passion and your desire to learn this craft.

To the folks without whom this book would *never* have been written: Ted Waitt, who put me up to this (I forgive you, Ted!) and kept gently pushing me until the project was completed. Thank you, Ted, for your patience, your friendship, and your time.

To my long-suffering Peachpit team at Pearson: Valerie Witte, Anne Marie Walker, Lisa Brazieal, Mimi Heft, and Kim Scott. Thanks for putting up with me and for taking my words and pictures and turning them into a smooth read and a great layout. And don't worry; I promise I won't write another book for at least a couple of years.
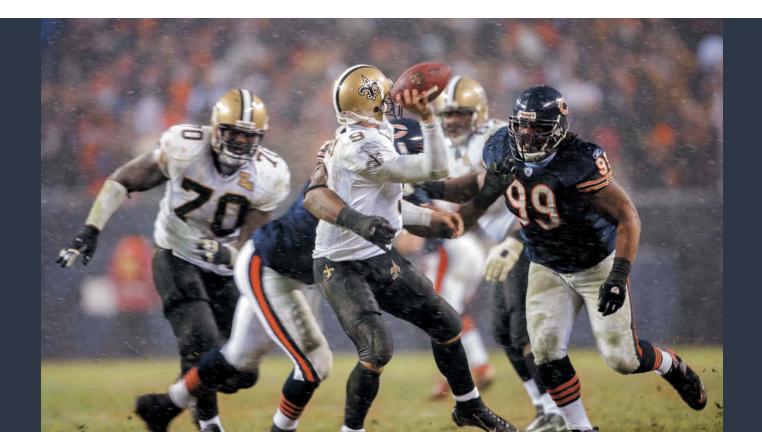
To Linda Clarke and her team at MJI Premedia who took 35 years of negatives, transparencies, and digital files and transformed those hundreds of photographs of wide-ranging origin and quality into solid image files that look fantastic on the printed page. It was an enormous and, at times, daunting project. Thank you.

To my "closers"—Steve Fine and Bob Roe—who came into the game late and got me a win; you both deserve credit for a save on this one.
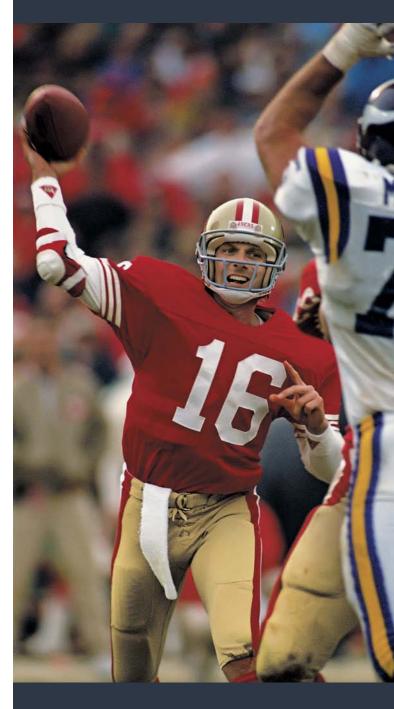
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INTRODUCTION

BARCELONA, SPAIN, JULY 25, 1992

In 1992, the XXV Summer Olympic Games were held in Barcelona. I flew in from Los Angeles on a Wednesday, two days before the Games were scheduled to start. After a long trip, I was tired and hungry, and all I wanted to do was have a quick dinner and a long sleep. But my boss and good friend Steve Fine (then Deputy Picture Editor at SI) had a different idea. He insisted that we attend the dress rehearsal of the Olympic Opening Ceremony.

Opening Ceremonies are when the host country makes a statement to the world about who they are and how these games will reflect the culture of the country. It is always a really big, elaborate show with a good part of the world watching. It's also when all the world's media compete for the best pageantry pictures on a day when there are more than 1,000 photographers in the stadium and no sports are being played. It's the ultimate win-or-die moment for photographers.

So instead of chewing on some paella and then resting on a soft pillow, Steve and I sat through a beautifully surreal rehearsal performance. At the end we learned one important fact: The Olympic torch was to be lit with a flaming arrow.

If the Opening Ceremonies are the host country's statement to the world, the lighting of the torch is the exclamation mark. It is also the official beginning of the Games. In other words, it's a big deal and a visually dramatic one that Steve and I were determined to catch in a way no one else would.

After the rehearsal, Steve and I hiked around the stadium until we found a spot—not, I should add, in an approved photo area—where I could mount a remote camera that would, with a sufficiently long exposure, cover the entire flight of the arrow from the archer's bow all the way to the torch.

On the night of the actual Opening Ceremony, I was in position as the archer drew back his bow and I made a tight shot of him with a 500mm lens. At the same time my remote camera with the wide angle (28mm) lens fired, and I made the overall shot of the arrow's flight. The picture ran as the opening spread of our first week's coverage of the Games, with the shot of the archer on the preceding page.

This photo illustrates a number of the elements that I believe make a great sports photo. There was planning and forethought; that is, we had a concept. I had the technical knowledge to set up and fire the remote camera, and I had a good bit of luck.

The hardest thing to do when you are shooting an Olympics is to make a photo that no one else has made. By dragging me—jet-lagged, hungry, and tired—to the Opening Ceremony rehearsal, Steve enabled me to make that rarest of Olympic images: a unique one—a memorable one.

Paralympic archer Antonio Rebollo draws back a flaming arrow to light the Olympic Torch during the Opening Ceremony of the XXV Olympic Games in Barcelona, Spain, July 1992. This was the first time the Olympic Cauldron was not ignited by a handheld torch.

Analog SLR, 500mm lens.

Long exposure (approximately 3–4 seconds) of the arrow as it passes through the torch.

Analog SLR, 28mm lens.

ABOUT THIS BOOK

When I was approached about writing a book, I was reluctant. What would I write about? I'm a photo guy, not a word guy, so cranking out 250–300 pages of tips about sports photography seemed daunting.

Then Ted Waitt of New Riders saw me speak at a photo trade show, and in an ensuing conversation he suggested I do a book based on that talk, which featured several hundred of my pictures accompanied by my comments, stories, and some technical tips.

So this is what you have here. This is not an ego-driven coffee table book of my greatest hits (unless you drink your coffee on a TV tray), and it's not Sports Photography 101—for that you'll have to take my workshop.
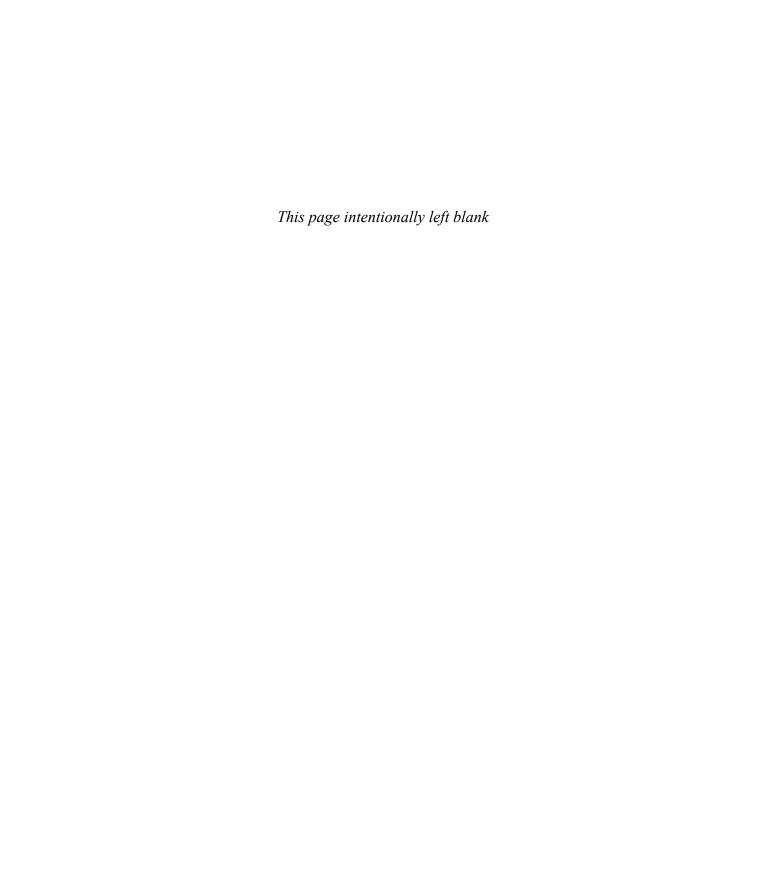
Instead, I've pulled together photos from my 30-plus years as a photographer for *Sports Illustrated*, the NFL, and my various advertising clients.

My goal is to show some of my best photos and tell the stories behind them, but I also talk about and include some pictures that were not what I'd hoped they'd be. In other words, I hope you can learn from my mistakes. I even show some shots on occasions when I just got lucky.
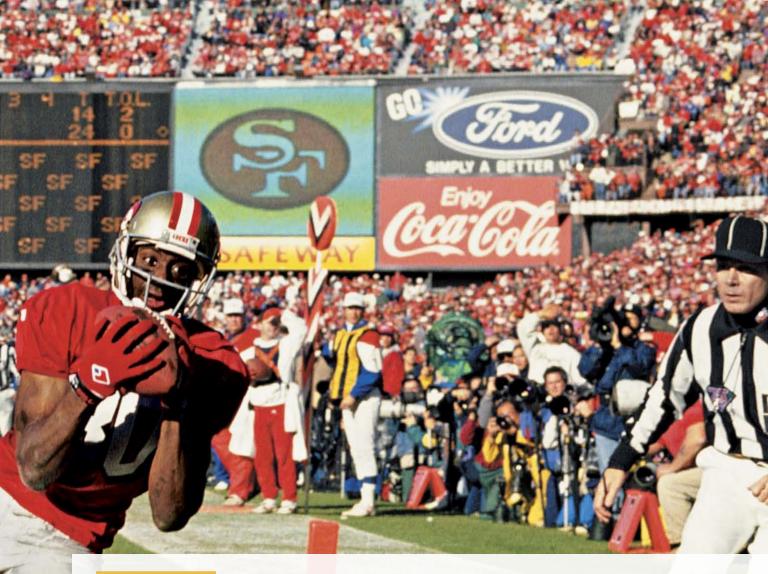
Throughout my life people have given me one great piece of advice: Whether you are photographing, speaking, or writing, be sure to shoot, speak, or write about something you love. Explore your true passions. Otherwise, you're wasting your time and not achieving your true potential.

To that end, I have focused this book on the three areas of my career that have been the most satisfying to me: shooting the Olympics, photographing football, and making portraits of athletes. These are the areas of photography that have defined my career and given me the most satisfaction.

Throughout my long career I've given a lot of thought to what makes a great sports photograph. Many factors come to mind, but the simple answer is this: A great photo makes you stop turning the pages of the book or magazine you are reading. Like all authors, I hope you find this book to be a page-turner, but I also hope you find within these pages images that make you pause and enjoy them for a moment.
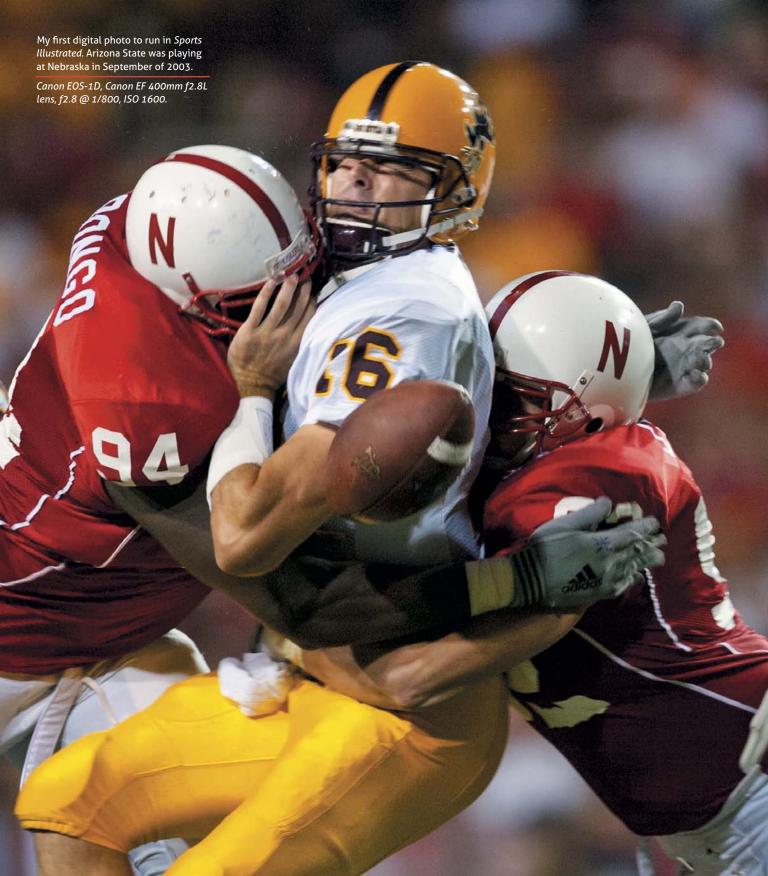
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4 FOOTBALL: SHOOTING FOR *SPORTS ILLUSTRATED*

San Francisco 49ers Hall of Fame receiver Jerry Rice grabs a deep ball for a touchdown in the Niners' 1995 NFC Championship Game win over the Dallas Cowboys. This is a great example of a scene-setting photo that captures not only the action, but a sense of the game. The inset image shows how the shot ran in *SI*. One of the magazine's trademarks is the ability to blend a great photo with a clever headline; another reason why art directors like wide shots, such as this one, is that there is plenty of room for copy.

Analog SLR, 50mm lens.

My first digital photo to run in *Sports Illustrated*. Arizona State was playing at Nebraska in September of 2003.

Canon EOS-1D, Canon EF 400mm f2.8L lens, f2.8 @ 1/800, ISO 1600.

I n the previous three chapters, I covered shooting football. In this chapter, I'll discuss some of the aspects of shooting football (and sports in general) that are specific to *Sports Illustrated*: how *SI* has adapted to changes in technology, what makes a picture work (or not work) for the magazine, and how *SI* covers the big games.

SPORTS ILLUSTRATED GOES DIGITAL

Sports Illustrated came late to the digital party. We didn't feel the need to go digital as soon as the first pro DSLRs were available. Being a weekly publication, we had an extremely refined system for moving film to our offices in the Time-Life Building in New York City, processing and editing the film, and publishing the images in the magazine. When shooting a Sunday game on the West Coast, all we had to do was get the film to an airline counter-to-counter office an hour before the 10:00 P.M. red-eye flight, and it would be in New York by 6:30 A.M. Monday morning. Then it would be picked up at the airport, driven to the *SI* office, processed by the Time Inc. lab (conveniently located in the Time-Life Building), and be ready for editing by 9 A.M. when the editors came into the office Monday morning.

What if we couldn't make it an hour before the flight? Well, we'd jump on the plane with it! Then we'd have lunch in New York City and fly home Monday night—those were the days! For an even tighter deadline, we'd charter a Learjet—those really were the days!

We started using digital mainly because the shots looked better at night. As television drove the scheduling of major sporting events deeper into the late afternoon and evening hours, we at *Sports Illustrated* struggled to find ways to shoot sharp, well-exposed photos under ever-worsening conditions.

When I started at *SI*, we shot on Kodak High Speed Ektachrome film. It had an ISO of 160, but our lab pushed the film to ISO 400. ("Pushing film" means developing it for a longer time or at a higher temperature to increase its sensitivity to light.) The only lens longer than 180mm with an aperture of f2.8 was the 300mm f2.8 lens made by Topcon. Technicians like Marty Forscher in New York or Rudy Ling in Los Angeles would cut down the mount to adapt it to our cameras. The Topcor was a great lens; at f2.8 it had a beautiful bokeh (the way the lens renders the out-of-focus areas in an image) and surprisingly pleasing vignetting (a slight darkening of the corners of the

image). The problem was that the focusing mount turned backward relative to any other lens we used, and those were the days of totally manual focus.

We started using digital mainly because it looked better at night. As television drove the scheduling of major sporting events deeper into the late afternoon and evening hours, we at Sports Illustrated *struggled to find ways to shoot sharp, well-exposed photos under ever-worsening conditions.*

Our film choices evolved from Fuji 400 (pushed to 800) to Kodachrome 200 (pushed to 640 but with great quality) and then to color negative films from Kodak and Fuji, ending up at around ISO 2000–3200. Prints or contact sheets were never made from the color negatives because there was no time. Instead, our editors edited directly from the negatives; of course, all the colors were reversed, and the negatives had an overall orange cast so nothing looked right.

Finding a great shot or even getting the right team while editing a game shot on color negative film was truly an amazing feat of editing. When I pull out an old take of mine on color negative film, I marvel that anyone was able to make any sense of it at all—not to mention pulling out the key plays and action under extreme time pressure. This is yet another tip of the cap to all the picture editors who plowed through my takes over the years.

SI's current workflow has come a long way from those days of color negative film and Learjets (I miss the latter, but not the former). Now each *SI* photographer is issued a laptop computer equipped with proprietary software developed at Time Inc. called Opus. To use Opus to transmit an assignment, the photographer first creates a small XMP file containing the basic caption for the assignment. This includes the photographer's name, the assignment, the date, the location, and a number (referred to as an "X" number because the first character is X) that is the unique identifier for each assignment.

The photographer then sets up the computer to ingest image files. Opus can ingest directly from memory cards through card readers, which is the most common and straightforward way to use the system. It can also ingest files from an external drive or from a folder on the laptop. As Opus ingests the RAW image files (see the next section, "Why We Shoot RAW at *SI*"), it creates a small JPEG file from each image and adds the caption data from the XMP file. It also renames the RAW file to match its JPEG counterpart.

By this point, the photographer hopefully has his computer connected to the internet with a reasonably fast connection. Media room wi-fi, hotel room internet, 4G cards, airplane wi-fi, and Starbucks—*SI* shooters have used them all with varying degrees of success and failure. At the end of the day, wherever you are, you need to get those JPEGs uploaded to the *SI* servers as quickly as possible.

Once the JPEGs are on the server, *SI* picture editors make their selections. Opus will then retrieve the RAW files of the selects from the photographer's laptop. Smartly, this avoids moving the tons of data that make up a complete take of RAW files, which for a football game shot with a pro camera like a Canon EOS-1D X can be upward of 50 GB.

WHY WE SHOOT RAW AT *SI*

Since I began shooting digital for SI in 2002, almost everything I've shot has been in the RAW format. This has been the policy of the magazine, and although it has proven frustrating from time to time, all in all it is a good strategy.

When you shoot a RAW file (a "CR2" file on a Canon camera), you can use all the image information that has been recorded by the camera's sensor. This gives you the most possible information from which to produce your final photo. When you shoot a JPEG file, at the very least it will be compressed. In addition, your camera will add a white balance (either one you select or an auto white balance), and it may sharpen the image, adjust the contrast, or apply noise reduction. Although these adjustments are convenient and they make producing a decent-looking image quicker and easier, they all reduce your ability to control the final image.

This image from a 2003 Steelers/Broncos game in Denver illustrates the power of RAW processing in recovering improperly exposed images. This was my first season shooting digital, and I had not yet learned to trust my camera's auto-exposure; so when this play headed into the shadowed area of the field, my exposure was a little dark. However, with a RAW file, bringing up the exposure in post-processing later was no problem.

Canon EOS-1D, EF Canon 500mm f/4L lens, f4 @ 1/2000, ISO 200.

This shot of the Giants' defense smothering Dallas RB Marion Barber in a 2008 playoff game is an example of *SI* editors spotting a potential "Leading Off" shot and *SI*'s imaging department making it happen.

EOS-1D Mk III, Canon EF 600mm f/4L lens, f4 @ 1/1000, ISO 2000.

The trick to shooting RAW is in knowing when to shoot and when to save your bullets—and that comes from experience, practice, and knowing the game and its players.

Skilled imaging technicians (like those at *SI*) can produce amazing images from a RAW file. Not only does working directly from a RAW file allow correction for underexposure and overexposure through a five-stop range (two-and-a-half stops in either direction), but *SI*'s techs also do a terrific job with noise reduction and cropping. Many of the two-page spreads and "Leading Off" images in *SI* are cropped from less than one third the area of an image—often an image shot at high ISO.

Although *SI*'s imaging folks tend to be a bit tight-lipped when a mere mortal asks them about their technique, there are lots of powerful software tools available to correct exposure, reduce noise, sharpen, and generally enhance images. The most important thing to remember about using any image enhancement software is *not to overuse it!* Oversharpening, too much noise reduction, and other "enhancements" (no HDR—please!) almost never benefit a sports photograph.

There are, however, several downsides to shooting RAW. The files are big—more than 50 MB in the Canon 1D X. As a consequence, they will fill your memory card quickly. In addition, the larger RAW files require more storage space (usually in the form of external hard drives) and powerful post-processing software—usually Photoshop, Lightroom, or Aperture—that is capable of opening and processing RAW files, and is compatible with your current camera.

If you're not shooting RAW, most modern DSLR cameras these days will pretty much shoot the whole memory card on continuous "burst" mode without stopping, even if you're shooting large JPEGs at the highest setting. Having those extra frames can make a big difference when you're shooting a play that involves a long run that ends in a fumble, followed by a fumble return for a touchdown, followed by jubilation, and so on. So if your main concern is getting every bit of the action, shooting JPEGs rather than RAW files is probably the way to go. However, if you're striving for the highest possible quality and the ability to control your final image, shooting RAW files is for you. The trick to shooting RAW is in knowing when to shoot and when to save your bullets—and that comes from experience, practice, and knowing the game and its players.

COVERING THE SUPER BOWL (AND OTHER BIG GAMES) FOR *SI*

When I showed Dave Boss, the Creative Director at NFL Creative Services, the photos from my first Super Bowl—Super Bowl IX between Pittsburgh and Minnesota at Tulane Stadium in New Orleans (who knew New Orleans could be so cold and rainy?)—I told him how disappointed I was. (It was Dave Boss, along with John Wiebusch, who gave me my start shooting the NFL. I shot for them at NFL Properties, which was then the publishing arm of the League.) It's not that the shots were particularly flawed in any way; they were fine action shots. It was just that the Super Bowl was the biggest game of the season, and I should have had the best photos, right? Dave, who started shooting Super Bowls at Super Bowl I and continued through Super Bowl XXV, reassured me that was not necessarily so. As important as the Super Bowl is to the players, the league, and millions of fans, to a photographer it's just another game—or it should be.

However, it's more crowded, has annoying security, and places more pressure on you to perform because you're shooting with the best sports photographers. Although some Super Bowls have been exciting games with thrilling finishes (Super Bowls XIII, XXII, and XLII), many have not (Super Bowls XX, XXIV, and XXXV). But to a photographer, the task remains the same—shoot key players and big plays. With every game since Super Bowl XXII played indoors or almost entirely at night, finding the good light is no longer a factor.

SHOOTING WITH THE *SI* FLEX SYSTEM

Super Bowl XII (in 1978) was the first Super Bowl I shot for *SI*. The game was between Denver and Dallas, and it took place in the Superdome in New Orleans. (Who knew Hurricanes had alcohol in them? They tasted so good!) At that time, John Dominis was the Director of Photography at *SI*. John was, I believe, the originator of the coverage game plan that came to be called the *SI* Flex.

Jerry Rice in Super Bowl XXIII. This was my first Super Bowl cover. Rice had just caught a pass over the middle from Joe Montana late in the fourth quarter. This play set up Montana's game-winning pass to John Taylor in the end zone.

Analog SLR, 300mm lens.

Ed "Too Tall" Jones puts a hurt on Broncos QB Craig Morton in Super Bowl XI. This was the first Super Bowl that I worked for *Sports Illustrated*.

Analog SLR, 400mm lens.

Tampa Bay's Mike Alston rolls over the Raiders in Super Bowl XXVII.

Canon EOS-1D, Canon EF 600mm f/4L lens, f4 @ 1/1000, ISO 1000.

Aaron Rodgers' "Super Bowl hop." Green Bay's QB takes to the air to avoid a sack in Super Bowl XLV.

Canon EOS-1D Mk IV, Canon 70–200mm f2.8L lens at 70mm, f2.8 @ 1/2000, ISO 2000.

Super Bowl spike. Ricky Waters of the 49ers leaps up to spike the ball after a touchdown in the Niners' Super Bowl XXIX rout of the San Diego Chargers.

Analog SLR, 24–70mm lens.

The modern evolution of the SI Flex system for covering the Super Bowl as it has been implemented by Steve Fine, SI's Director of Photography for 17 years, requires 11 photographers.

One shooter roams on each sideline (see "Sideline Rant: The Pitfalls of Shooting from the Sidelines" in Chapter 2), four shooters head to the end zones (one on each side of each end zone), and four more are in seats as close as possible to each corner of each end zone. At some time in the early fall, Fine attends a "walk-through" at the host stadium to select the seats. It's a tricky business because equipment like boom cameras—and entire stages—that were never mentioned in any NFL game plan tend to appear at game time.

This is the surprise onside kick that the Saints used to start the second half of Super Bowl XLIV—and yes, it is a bit overexposed. Why, you might ask? Well, because at halftime I decided to shoot the on-field performance by The Who (or at least some elderly gentlemen pretending to be The Who), and to do so I raised my ISO to 6400. Of course, I forgot to change it back for the first play of the second half, proving once again that we all make mistakes.

Canon EOS-1D Mk IV, Canon EF 400mm f2.8L lens, f2.8 @ 1/2000, ISO 6400.

The eleventh photographer spot—filled for years by the incomparable Bill Frakes—is the "eye in the sky" overhead spot. This position is usually at or near mid-field and is seemingly higher every year. It requires someone with a triathlete's lung capacity to retrieve memory cards, and it's not glamorous. But once in a while something happens in the game that no one at field level has a clear shot at. That's when Bill would save the day. Bill also filled this role at hundreds of big college and non-Super Bowl NFL games. All of SI's Super Bowl shooters slept better at night knowing Bill was up there. In 2013, Dave Klutho took over Bill's spot, continuing the tradition.

Depending on the stadium, we may use a few situational add-on photographers. If it's physically possible (and security allows it) for someone to actually be over the field in an indoor stadium that has catwalks (Phoenix or New Orleans, for example), we'll position a photographer up on these walkways. If there are catwalks but we cannot have a live shooter on them, we will set up some remote cameras up there.

I felt pretty good about my take from the first half of Super Bowl XLIV in Miami in 2010. I had good coverage on both the Colts and the Saints, including the Colts' Clint Session stopping the Saints' Pierre Thomas at the goal line.

Canon EOS-1D Mk IV, Canon EF 70–200mm f2.8L II lens at 125mm, f2.8 @ 1/1600, ISO 2000.

Another recent addition to the game plan is the Gigapan camera. This camera, which is on a computer-controlled mount, takes numerous shots of the game and the crowd. The shots are digitally stitched together to create a monstrous file of over 1000 megapixels. *SI* then puts the file on the internet, and everyone can zoom in to find themselves in high resolution. I'm usually the one picking my nose in the photo.

So everyone has a designated spot from which to shoot. Mine is almost always in the end zone on the side of the QB's throwing arm. With the Flex system, the Super Bowl becomes a game of what comes your way or what doesn't. You're covering the game, sure, but from one particular spot. What are the rules? There are only two of them: Don't miss anything that comes your way, and don't leave your spot. Well, we all know that rules are made to be broken. I broke them once in Super Bowl XXX and my photo made the cover, and then I broke them again in Super Bowl XXVI and missed one of the biggest plays of the game, Ty Law's interception of a Kurt Warner pass returned for a Patriots TD.

As it turned out, Super Bowl XLIV was all about one play—and it happened to come my way. Here are five shots from that play's sequence (the entire play, shot on high-speed continuous mode, comprised roughly 60 shots).

What are the rules? There are only two of them: Don't miss anything that comes your way, and don't leave your spot.

1. Tracy Porter picks off Peyton Manning in the third quarter and returns the ball 74 yards for a touchdown.

2. Porter cuts across the field and directs his teammates.

3. Now Porter has some blocking.

Canon EOS-1D Mk IV, Canon EF 400mm f2.8L lens, f2.8 @ 1/2000, ISO 2000.

4. Porter is starting to fill my frame, so it's a good time to stop shooting with my 400mm and switch to the 24–70mm lens.

Canon EOS-1D Mk IV, Canon EF 400mm f2.8L lens, f2.8 @ 1/2000, ISO 2000.

5. As Porter heads for the goal line, he points to the crowd of Saints fans seated above the end zone. The 24–70mm lens gives me a great scene-setter and a nice opener to the story.

Canon EOS-1D Mk IV, Canon EF 24–70mm f2.8L lens at 64mm, f2.8 @ 1/2000, ISO 2000.

A TALE OF TWO COVERS

"Sports," as my former boss Steve Fine has often said, "is messy." To this I will add, "Shooting for *Sports Illustrated* can be messy, too." The following stories describe two games I covered for *SI* in recent years. Neither one came out as expected—on the field or in the magazine.

THINKING COVER ALL THE WAY: THE OREGON/ AUBURN 2010 BCS CHAMPIONSHIP GAME

In January 2010, the University of Oregon Ducks brought their "Quack Attack" to Arizona to face the Auburn Tigers in the BCS Championship Game. Auburn led for most of the game, but with less than three minutes left in the game Oregon's LaMichael James came right at me, scoring and then jumping in the air in jubilation. Oregon scored the two-point conversion to tie the game, and I was thinking "cover" all the way. However, the Ducks forgot their basic tackling skills and allowed Auburn to run the ball almost to Oregon's goal line. After a slam-dunk field goal, the game was Auburn's and my LaMichael James shot never made it beyond my photo editor's light-box.

A photo like this only means something to SI *if the team pictured wins.*

NOT THINKING COVER AT ALL: TIM TEBOW IN THE 2011 BEARS/BRONCOS GAME

One weekend in the fall of 2011, I had requested to shoot the Giants at Cowboys game. I'd just watched the Giants' last-second loss to the Green Bay Packers, and I thought that their traditional rivalry with Dallas would make for an especially good game. Plus, I really liked shooting in Cowboy Stadium, and I'd have a chance to see some of my Texas friends. However, the word from our office in New York was, "Go to Denver for the Bears at Broncos," for a "possible" cover-shoot of Tim Tebow and his amazing run of last-second wins.

The other game being covered by *SI* that week was Oakland at Green Bay for a story on The Pack's unbeaten season. Either way, the cover was to be a gatefold, meaning the inside flap folded out to accommodate a double-page advertisement on the inside of the cover. Because of that, all the photographers shooting these games had strict instructions to shoot only horizontals, with the main action on the left side of the frame facing left to right to draw the reader's eye into the magazine. Oh, and we also needed to cover the entire football game.

BOWL PREVIEW
PLUS: PREDICTIONS
P. 46

Sports Illustrated

SI.COM

DECEMBER 19, 2011

TEBOW!

Amazing,
Incredible, Phenomenal,
Mind-Blowing,
Incomprehensible,
Unbelievable…

BY JIM TROTTER
P. 40

Tim Tebow's touchdown pass to Demaryius Thomas with 2:08 left set up another comeback victory to lift the Broncos into first place in the AFC West

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"I don't really know what to compare it to. I've never seen anything like it."

—CHAMP BAILEY
BRONCOS CORNERBACK

Anyone who watched the Bears/Broncos game will surely agree with me that for 59 minutes and about 30 seconds it was one of the most boring NFL contests ever played, and the Broncos were losing to boot. Meanwhile, I was watching the score of the Green Bay game skyrocket; the Packers were killing the Raiders. At that point, all thoughts of a cover left my head.

Then, of course, the Bears' running back ran out of bounds, giving the Broncos just enough time for Tebow to drive them into field goal range. Denver tied up the game at the end of regulation and went on to win in overtime, aided by a miraculous fumble by the same Bears player who had given the Broncos time to tie the game in regulation. Was this divine intervention? Who knows, but it sure was exciting.

Nevertheless, when I left the game to head for the airport, I had no thought that the game was worthy of the cover. In a "can't see the forest for the trees" moment, I totally underestimated how Tim Tebow and the Broncos had captured the country's imagination. Fortunately, the folks at *SI* did see it.

Unfortunately, because Tebow is left-handed, he usually rolls out right to left; this was not what we needed for the gatefold. But I *was* in the right spot in the back of the end zone to shoot him for throwing for the one and only touchdown scored in the game, and I was able to zoom wide enough with my 70–200mm f2.8 to nail the receiver making the catch in the next frame.

So the front cover shows Tebow throwing the touchdown pass and the receiver catching the same pass on the fold-out flap. It wasn't exactly what we set out to get, but all in all it worked and, in the end, it looked pretty darn good.   ∎

An ingenious solution for a gatefold cover of a left-handed QB—thanks to Director of Photography Steve Fine.

Canon EOS-1D Mk IV, Canon EF 70–200mm f2.8L II lens at 200mm (left), 70mm (right), f2.8 @ 1/1250, ISO 2000.

FROM THE ARCHIVE:
DORSEY HIGH SCHOOL

In 1992, *SI* wanted to do a story about Los Angeles's Dorsey High School. It was in a neighborhood considered so dangerous that opposing teams refused to play games there.

Before the season started I began shooting the team, and then I covered most of Dorsey's games and many of its practices throughout the fall. The players, coaches, and students I photographed were as warm and friendly as any subjects I had ever worked with.

I shot the photo shown here during a fall practice. It reminds me of playing football on a sunny fall afternoon in Evanston, Illinois, where I grew up. We'd have played forever if it hadn't gotten dark.

This photo reminds me of the many autumn afternoons I spent playing football in the parks and alleys of my hometown in Evanston, Illinois.

Analog SLR, 60mm lens.

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