

Decisive moment.

This series of photo was taken during an amateur boxing fight at Ali Nestor Academy last week-end. I was hired by the home team (in red) to focus mainly on their fighters. Settings meant to freeze fast-paced action, under low-light condition. Based on previous fights I came to conclusion that zoom lenses are not the best options, in the sense that they are not sharp enough after heavy noise reduction processes, besides I never really have the time to zoom in and out during fights. All photos were taken with ISO 5000, F2, 1/800 sec, focusing mode is AI Servo. I used only one camera body and I had to switch lenses during breaks. Usually, I use a 50mm during the first round to get most of the environment (full body shots) and higher keeper rate so that I will have at least few pictures for the client in case a K.O. occurs during that round, then I switch to a 85mm (usually during the second round) to get close-up and capture decisive moments. Finally, I use a 135mm when I want to accentuate the wounds on the fighter's face. The longer the lenses, the lower the keeper rate of the photo shoots.

Photo #1

ISO 5000, F2, 1/800 sec.

The purpose of this type of shoot is to show the faces of both fighters in focus at the same time. This is the most difficult to achieve photo, especially when they are tired, and I want to show their emotions. This is due to the depth of field. At F2, with close distance from the players, they need to be perfectly parallel to the plan of the camera. It is very hard to achieve this goal when any of the players is punching. Usually, that player is blurry. I put the focusing point on one side of the view finder and I focus on the player on that side to get both of them uncut (their backs) in the frame.

Photo #2

ISO 5000, F2, 1/800 sec.

Shot #2 is what everybody is after, however I was a bit too early. This is the moment when the punch hits the face of the player that I am following. I was shooting at 6 fps and the next photo was taken when the punch was way beyond the scene. Note that I don't worry about the cropping during the shoot; I focus mainly on the moments.

Photo # 3

ISO 5000, F2, 1/800 sec.

Photo #3 is the opposite of #2. This is when I focus on the moment when my fighter hits the opponent. This is challenging and I have rarely a keeper. In the first scenario, my focusing point and the fighter are on the same side of the viewfinder and I see the back of fighter's head. The opponent being hit is out of focus. I don't see either face, I see just the story. In the second scenario, I see the face of the fighter but I don't see the face of the opponent being hit. This is the scenario on the photo. I only see his reaction succeeding and ready to send another punch. The last scenario is when the focusing point is on the

same side as the opponent. The opponent's face is clear but the fighter is not. I usually create a triptych in order to show the full story. This usually is the best photo of the evening.

Photo # 4

ISO 5000, F2, 1/800 sec.

Photo #4 is about protection. This is the easiest photo to take, especially when the fighter is in the corner taking the punch from the opponent and protecting his face, counter-attacking from time to time. I usually take one or two photos and switch to the coach who screams "get out of there".

Amateur boxing is challenging in terms of decisive moment compared to professional boxing. This is due to the protective helms that they are wearing. Half of the photos don't show the faces, only the helms and gloves are in focus. Besides, the light is coming from the ceiling and it is hard to see the eyes of the fighters most of the time. During amateur boxing, I rarely use a 135mm lens, which becomes my main lens during professional boxing. It allows me to see clearly the expressions and wounds on their faces.