



80 YEARS

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# PSA Journal





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California

Tennis is a marvelous sport to photograph, offering chances to capture raw emotions, graceful movement, power, stress, action, effort and energy, all rolled into one. The sport offers a tremendous variety of subjects, ranging from five year olds in summer recreation classes, to high school and college competitors, to 90 year olds at United States Tennis Association (USTA) national age group competitions. Tennis also offers the variety of shooting males and females, singles and doubles, amateurs and professionals.

While shooting recreational players is fun because of the vast variety of strokes untrained players have developed, photographers are often most interested in photographing professionals.

Fortunately, there are many opportunities. The men's pro tour currently hosts tournaments in 32 countries on six continents. As for women, professional tennis is easily the number one prize-money-earning sport worldwide. (For men's events, see: <http://m.atpworldtour.com/Tournaments/Event-Calendar.aspx>; and for women: <http://www.wtatennis.com/page/Calendar>)

Whether you are shooting family members or professional players, it helps to understand the sport. While it is not crucial to play tennis yourself, it helps. The more you know the game, the better your ability to anticipate the action.

Strive for variety in your shots. Shots emphasizing the player's grace and balance are

# Tennis: Photographing



*Arching into the serve*

best shot full bodied, as are awkward, stretched out “emergency shots.” Tight shots are best for showing emotion or power. In all shots, try to include the ball in your photo. That’s easier to accomplish when players are hitting their backhands and backhand volleys, as players make contact with the ball closer to their body than when hitting on their forehand side. For good shots of players emoting, focus in tight immediately after a great shot, an important point, or an extra-long point. You may also want to include shots of the crowd wearing face-paint, carrying signs, reacting to shots, or pressing forward for autographs.

What are the most common problems you’ll face in photographing tennis? Number one is getting a tack-sharp focus on moving subjects – player and ball. Number two is handling situations such as distracting backgrounds, harsh midday lighting, and faces shadowed by visors.

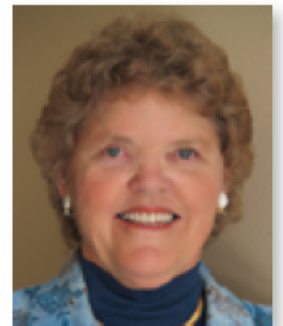
**Tack-sharp focus:** You have choices to make between autofocus or manual, continuous action or single shot, and aperture or shutter priority. Whatever mode you prefer, you need a shutter speed in the range of 1/800-1/2000. Action moving toward you can be shot at slower speeds than action moving side to side in front of you. This



*Perfect backhand volley*

photographer normally uses high speed continuous motion setting, shutter priority of 1/1000 at ISO 200-600 if not concerned about the background. If blurring the background is a priority, aperture priority is selected, at the shallowest setting possible.

Don’t despair if you can only afford the nosebleed section. Shooting from up high actually has benefits, in that your background becomes the court, not the normal advertisements, linesmen, or ball kids. Higher ISO will help find that right balance between stopping movement and blurring backgrounds. Experiment, as some photographers



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# its Grace and Power



*Power by Sharapova*

prefer shots where the ball, and perhaps also the racket/arm are slightly blurred, to heighten the impression of movement.

This photographer often shoots with just a Canon EOS 7D, 70-300mm f4-5.6 telephoto lens, polarizer, and lens hood, (although I prefer using a larger Canon EF 70-300mm f2.8 lens with monopod). However, some venues will not let you bring in what they consider a “professional” setup, apparently for fear you will sell shots that would interfere with their revenue stream. Even my simple Canon 7D with f4-5.6 telephoto lens was not allowed at a recent outdoor Davis Cup tie. (I was able to get through the gate by putting a short lens on the camera around my neck and hiding the telephoto.) The moral is, check into the photo regulations online before heading to an event.

When is it easiest to get good shots? Head to the practice courts. With fewer crowds and freedom to move about, you can usually get close



*Six feet nine inches serving*

to the pros at a good angle for some quality shots. This is also your best opportunity to catch an attractive smile or relaxed facial close-up, perhaps when the player is chatting with his or her coach. During match play, what you are likely to get is a strained face contorted with effort and dripping with sweat. This can make a great shot, but not if what you want is “pretty.”

As for action during matches, this photographer



*French Open winner*



*Leggy American*

loves photographing during the warm-up. There your subject will hit a dozen volleys or overheads in a row, giving you time to plan, rather than one shot in a match that is over before you get focused. During the match, start by prefocusing on the player as he or she serves and returns serve. Leave extra room in your frame because players often jump forward or upward, as they initiate these shots.

Take advantage of overcast days. Evening matches may not provide enough light to avoid

noise in your shots and midday sun brings shadows over the top half of the face of players wearing visors. In that case, you can focus on overheads and serves, when their heads are tilted upward, and use “shadows/ highlights” in post processing to lighten the facial shadows on your other shots.

Just for fun, try some postproduction blurring with radial blur, using “spin” to blur out your background after you have used the magnetic lasso to select the player (or part of his body) that you want to keep in focus. Go to select, hit inverse and you have access to the area you wish to blur.

Remember, just as for the pros, practice makes perfect, so get out to the courts and start shooting. Adding tennis to your list of photography subjects will undoubtedly provide you with interesting challenges and much pleasure. ■

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*With eyes closed*



*Running forehand*