

LIVE EVENT CAMERA OPERATION

A BASIC GUIDE TO CAMERA OPERATION

Camera Basics

A camera operator needs to be very familiar with his or her equipment to properly operate it during a game. These principles should serve as a starting point for operators:

- **White Balance:** This setting tells the camera what white should look like.
 - Before every game, and as the lighting changes (for example: sunset at an afternoon game) the operator must shoot a solid white area on the field and hit the Auto White Balance button.
 - It's usually found on the front left portion of the camera and may be labeled AWB.
- **Iris:** This setting adjusts how much light the camera lets in through the lens.
 - The operator must constantly adjust this during the game to ensure the shots are not too dark or too bright.
 - The adjustment can be found right behind the focus ring or on remote controls (if you have them).
 - Before the game, have operators find a good iris setting on the field and in the stands. The lighting often varies greatly between these two areas.
 - Practice going between these two settings will help your operators move between shots more efficiently.
- **Focus:** Many cameras have an AUTO FOCUS feature, you may elect to use this, but it can be unreliable. *For best results, your camera operator should manually focus the camera.*
 - The focus control can be found on the front of the lens or on the operator hand controls (if you have them).
 - Operators will need to adjust focus as the play moves toward or away from their camera location.
 - **Critical Focus:** This is when the camera operator zooms all the way in to the object he would like to shoot (while not live) and adjust the focus until it is completely sharp. Then the operator zooms out to a normal shot to show the object.
 - For example: if you are going to show a tight shot of the quarterback, the operator should zoom all the way in, then focus, then zoom back out.

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Shot Selection

Framing:

- **The Rule of Thirds** – states that an image should be divided in 9 equally spaced sections and aligning the compositional elements of an image with the intersections
 - Important compositional elements should be placed along these lines or their intersections.
 - Look for creative ways to align objects, players, etc. in a camera shot that is not just “*in the center*”.
- General Terms:
 - **Wide Shot:** A shot that shows multiple players and includes the scene around them.
 - **Medium Shot:** A shot that includes the player from head to toe.
 - **Tight Shot / Close Up:** A shot that includes the player from the waist up.
- **Lead Players:** As action moves across the field of play, try to keep the open field in front of the player.
 - For example, if a player is running an 80 yard dash from left to right, you would want the player in the left third of the shot with the open field and any opposing players in front of the player on the right 2/3's of the shot.

Heroes and Villains:

- The **Hero** is the player who has made the most recent good play.
 - For example, the heroes on a touchdown pass would be the receiver in the end zone and the quarterback who made the throw.
- The **Villain** is generally the player who allowed the good play to happen or someone who made an error.
 - For example, the villain would be the safety or cornerback who missed the coverage.
- Generally, in video board production, you will want to focus on the home players and avoid being negative. This means limiting villain shots and focusing mostly on the heroes of the last play.
- The best time to show a Hero or Villain is immediate after the play happens.
 - This can be as simple as the live camera slowly zooming in to the player or cutting to another camera with a tight shot of the hero/villain.
 - These shots make great transitions right before or after replays.

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Always Live

Instruct all camera operators to “Always shoot as if you are live”. A camera operator should always have a shot ready regardless of whether they are on the board or not.

- This is important for replays. You will want to have as many different looks at a play as possible.
- This protects against mistakes. If you end up on the wrong camera by accident, you don't have a wild shot on the board.

Pregame Preparation

- Before every event conduct a “Camera Meeting” with your camera operators and grips.
- This meeting can be used to go over game shot assignments and review the script.
- Go over the key players you may want to focus on during the game. The best way to describe players is by number and jersey color. For example “12 – White” or “2 – Blue”. Having the camera operators familiar with key players will help them transition to hero and villain shots more quickly.
- Identify coaches of home and away teams with pictures for unfamiliar operators.
- Setup cameras with enough time for the operator to have some practice time on the camera. Let the operator film pregame warm ups, practice focusing, Iris adjustment, etc. while a live show is not going on.