



Action Photography

Mrs. Bible Digital Photography 2021

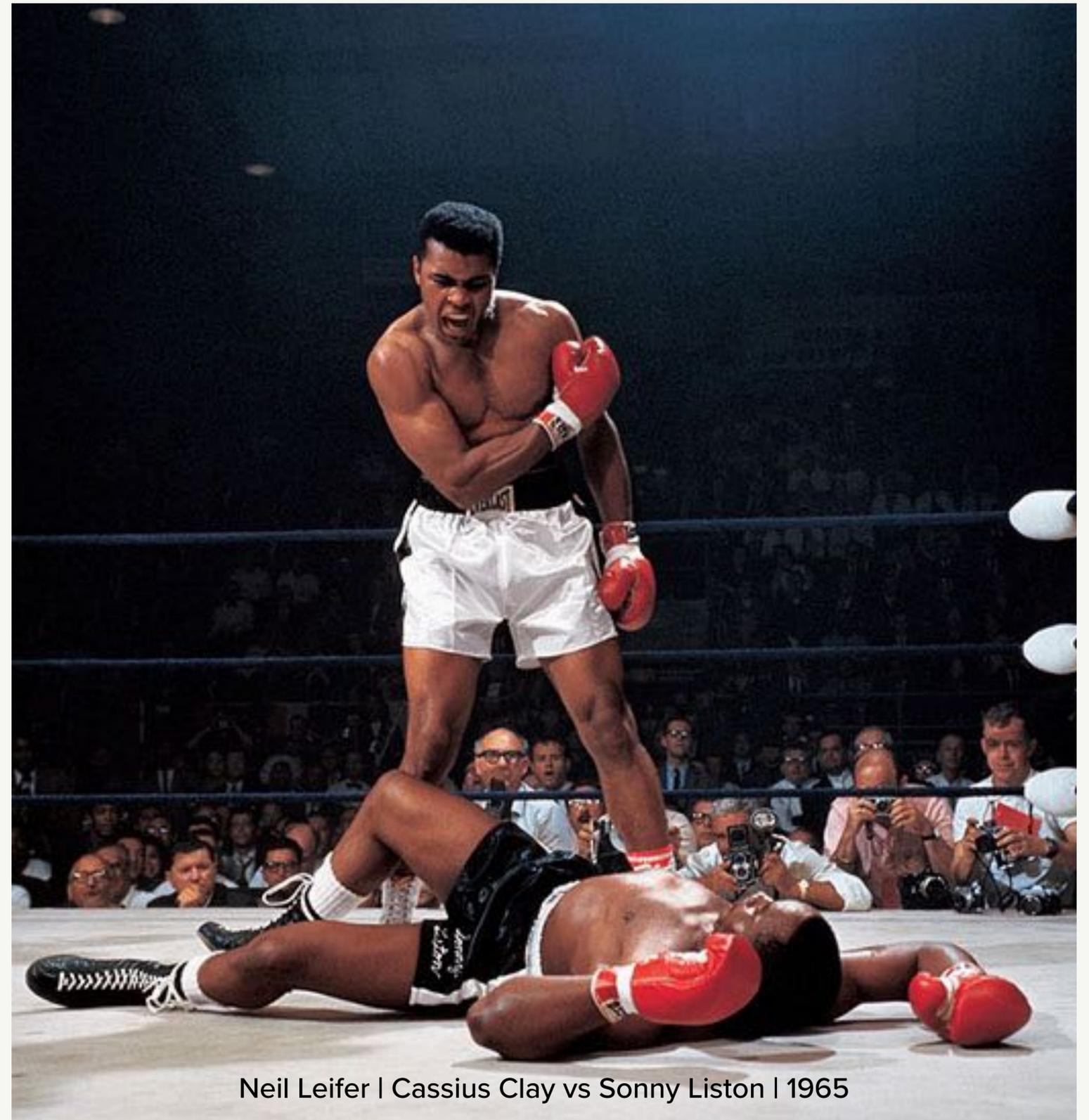
Harold Edgerton | Bullet Piercing an Apple | 1964

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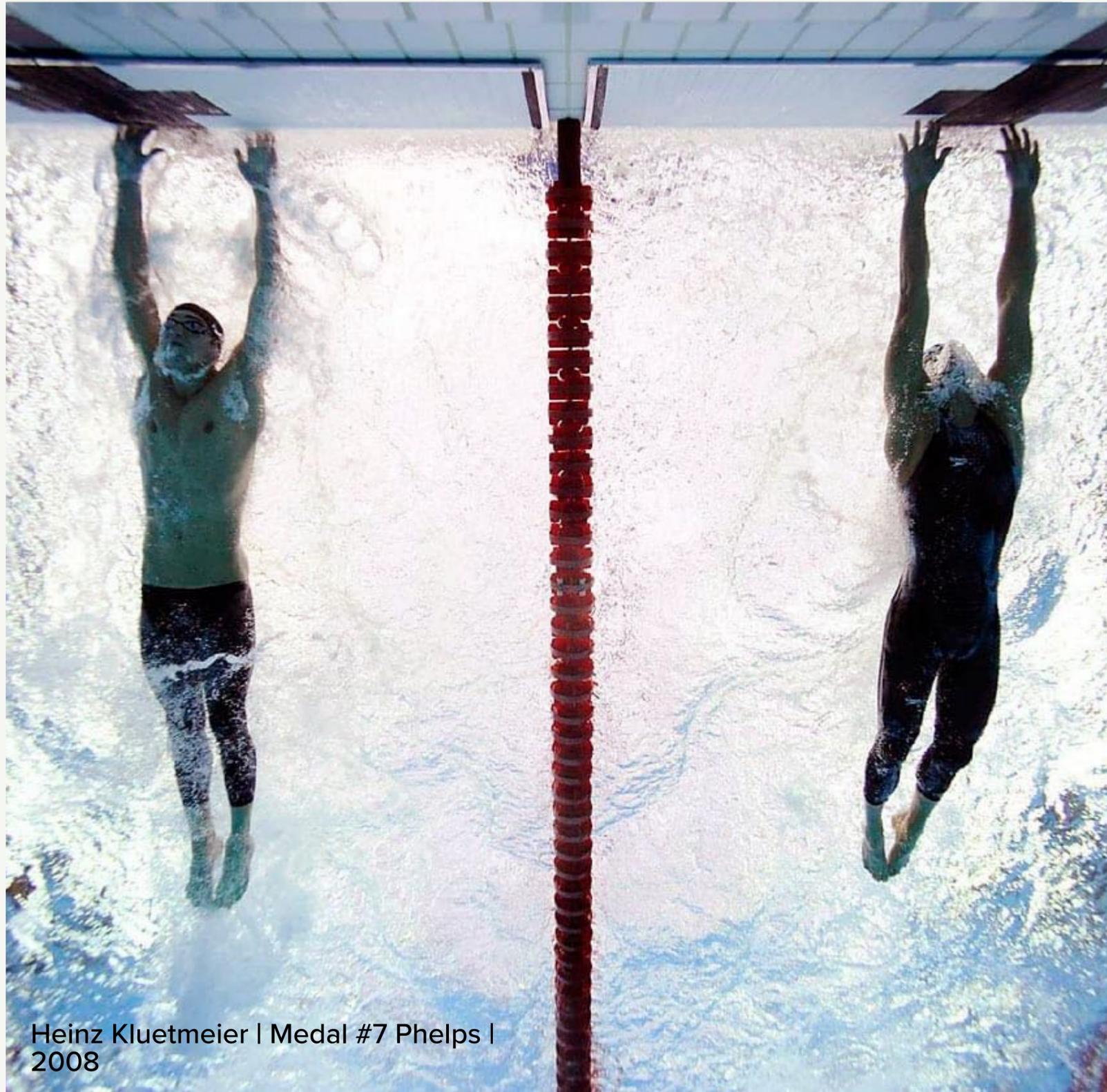
“The moment is everything.” - Carl Imber, sports photographer

Life is movement. Whether it's a horse racing across a field or water cascading over a waterfall, our world is revealed in motion. Movement can be seen in a baby learning to crawl, an NBA athlete reaching for a slam-dunk, or a hummingbird caught in mid-air. Movement is everywhere.

You've already learned that one of the primary building blocks of photography is time. **Action photography** is *movement captured in time*. You can decide to completely freeze the action, or you can decide to record it as streaks of motion. Movement is one of the most important aspects of sports and action photography, and the timing of the shot is all important.



Neil Leifer | Cassius Clay vs Sonny Liston | 1965



Heinz Kluetmeier | Medal #7 Phelps | 2008

Creating Action Photographs

Viewpoint, emphasis, and timing are especially important in action photography.

Carefully pick the location from where you will photograph, a place where you will have the best **viewpoint** (*the position or location from which a photograph is taken*) for the action. Try to get a clear, unobstructed view of the action. Think about the angle of your photograph, do you want to shoot from below to make your subject look larger than life, or will a shot from above tell the story better?

Choosing a plain or visually neutral background will add emphasis to the subject. **Emphasis** (*a principle of design that uses the elements of art to add importance to your subject*) adds importance or dominance to the main subject or idea in your photograph by making it more prominent.

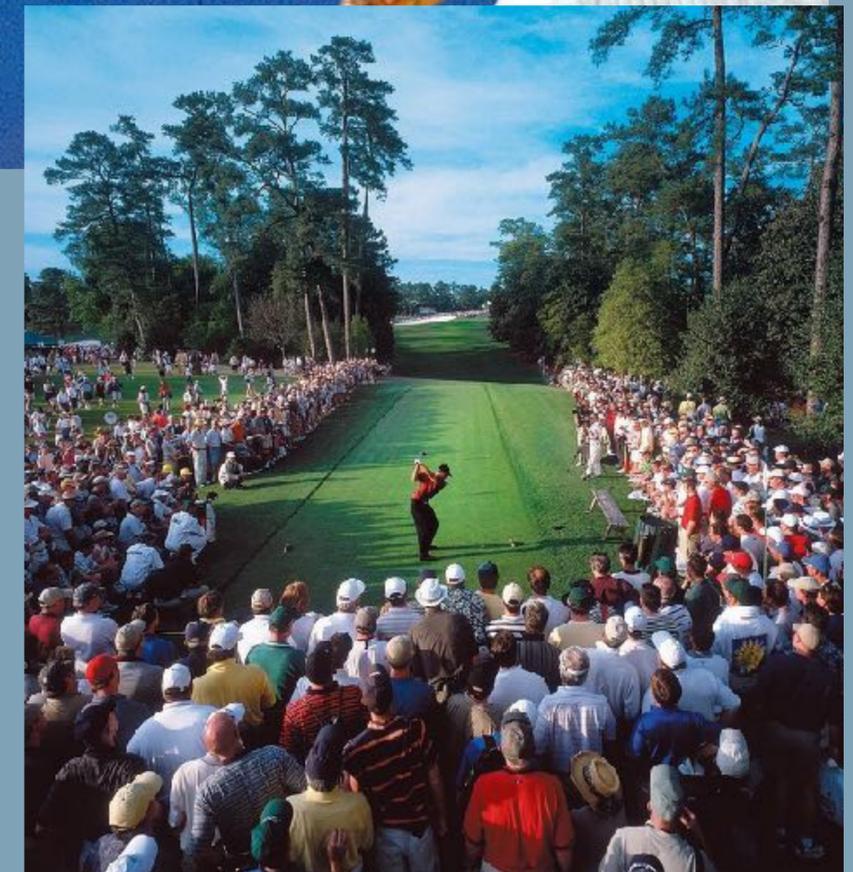
There are two ways to deal with **timing** the critical moment at which your photograph best captures its subject. You can either develop lightening-fast reflexes or you can plan on taking a lot of pictures very quickly. Most professional sports photographers do both.

Because the action happens fast and seldom repeats in exactly the same way, take as many photographs as possible, so you have the best chance of getting a shot you like.

Remember the compositional rule: **the rule of thirds** (A system of composition based on the ancient Greek ideal of the Golden Mean. The frame is divided into thirds both horizontally and vertically, and important objects or subjects are placed either on one line, or at the intersection of two lines.). Try and shoot with the rule of thirds in mind when making action photographs. Using this rule can intensify the sense of action in your photographs. Remember you can always crop your image to make it more dynamic.



Frank Franklin | Derek Jeter | 2004



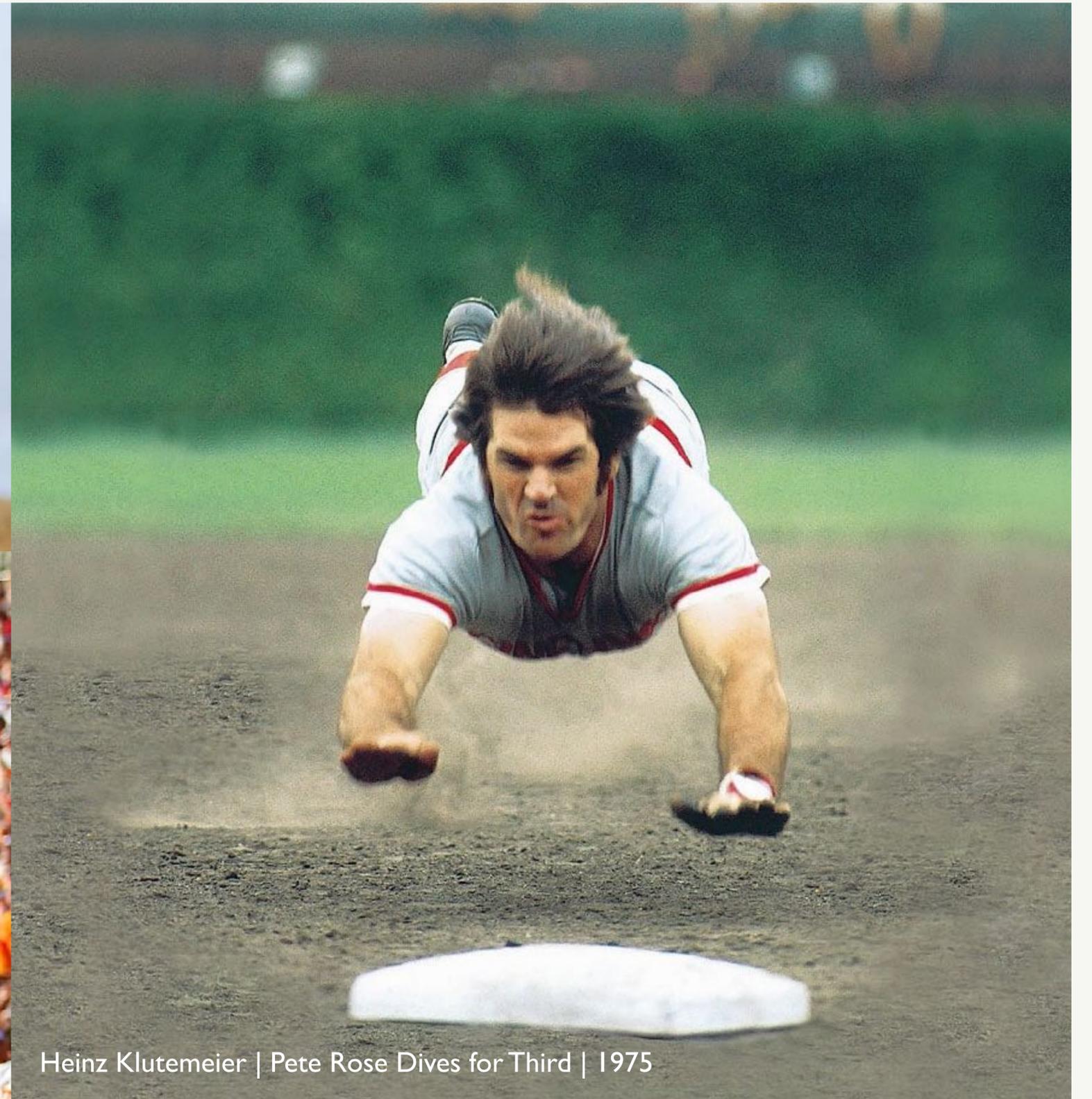
Masters, April 8, 2001 | Tiger Woods tees off in the final round of the Masters, which he won by 2 strokes over David Duval. (Photo: Fred Vuich)



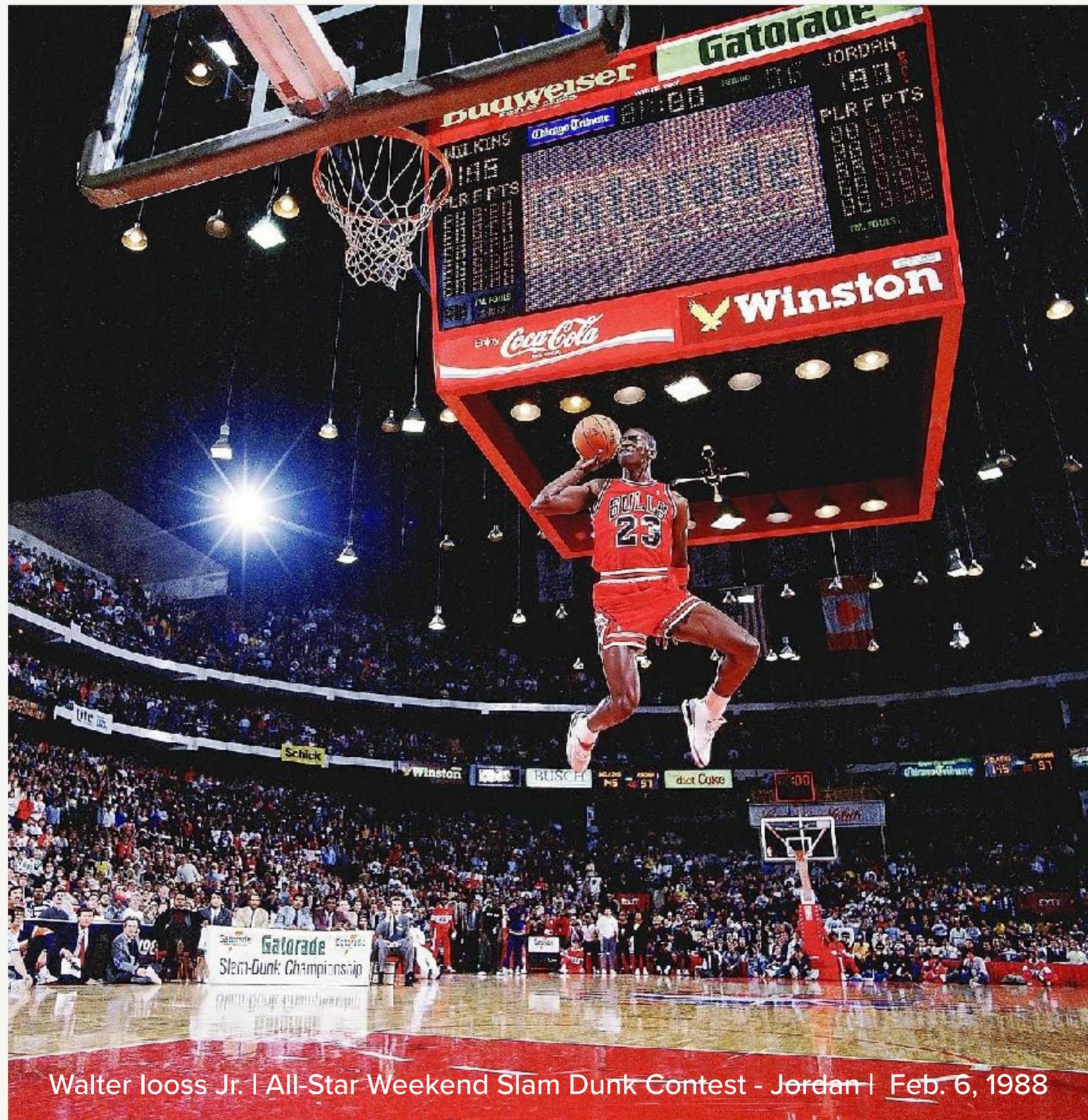
AP | Amputees in Sierra Leone | 2006



Peter Reed Miller | Reggie Bush | 2005



Heinz Klutemeier | Pete Rose Dives for Third | 1975



Camera Settings

The camera's shutter speed is the main concern of action photography. To freeze motion, you'll need to use a fast shutter speed. This means speeds no slower than 1/250 of a second, and often much faster.

Many photographers set their cameras on **Shutter Priority Automatic** when they shoot action. *This setting lets you set the shutter speed and ISO, and the camera determines the optimal f-stop for the situation.*

For action photography, consider using a tripod for the support you'll need so that you don't move the camera during an exposure. Tripods aren't always practical, so a good alternative is a **monopod**, which is like *one tripod leg that mounts under the camera or lens and eliminates the camera's up and down movements.*

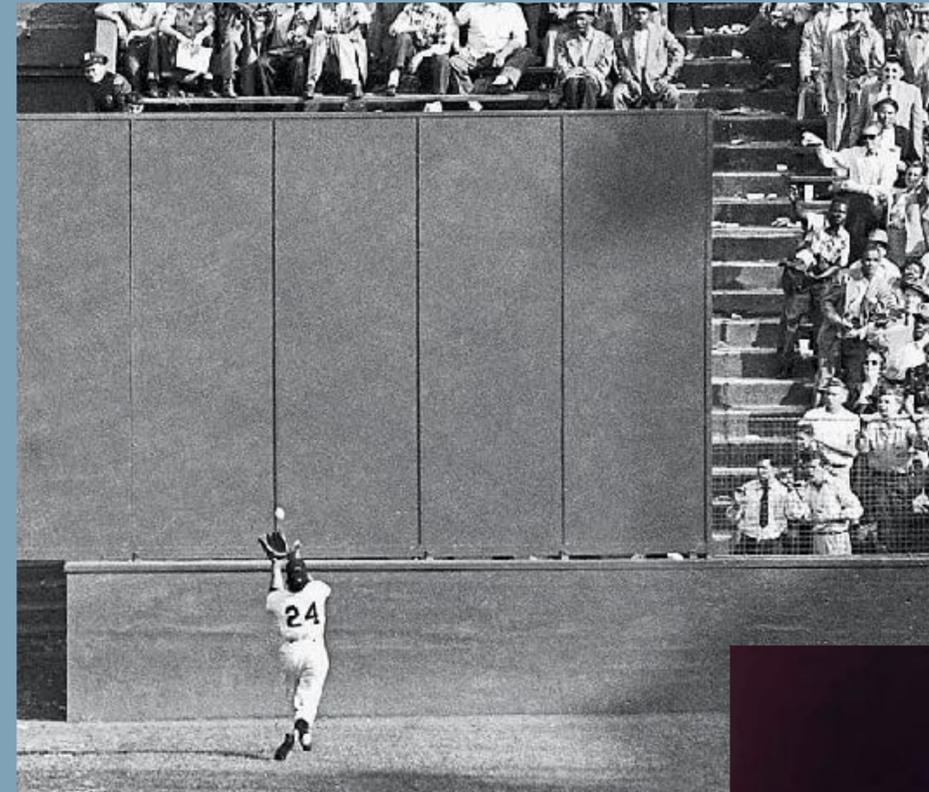
Walter Iooss Jr. | All-Star Weekend Slam Dunk Contest - Jordan | Feb. 6, 1988

Lenses & Flashes

Telephoto lenses (a lens with an angle of coverage less than a normal lens and makes objects look closer than they are) are standard among action photographers, particularly in sports. Zoom lenses of 70-200mm are the “normal” lenses for this kind of photography. Many situations need lenses that go up to 300mm or 500mm. Surfing photographers use lenses up to 1000mm.

Electronic flashes are a good way to stop or freeze action. Most camera mounted flashes offer very brief flash durations. The length of time the flash is on is extremely short, usually 1/10,000 of a second or faster. This allows you to freeze nearly any action.

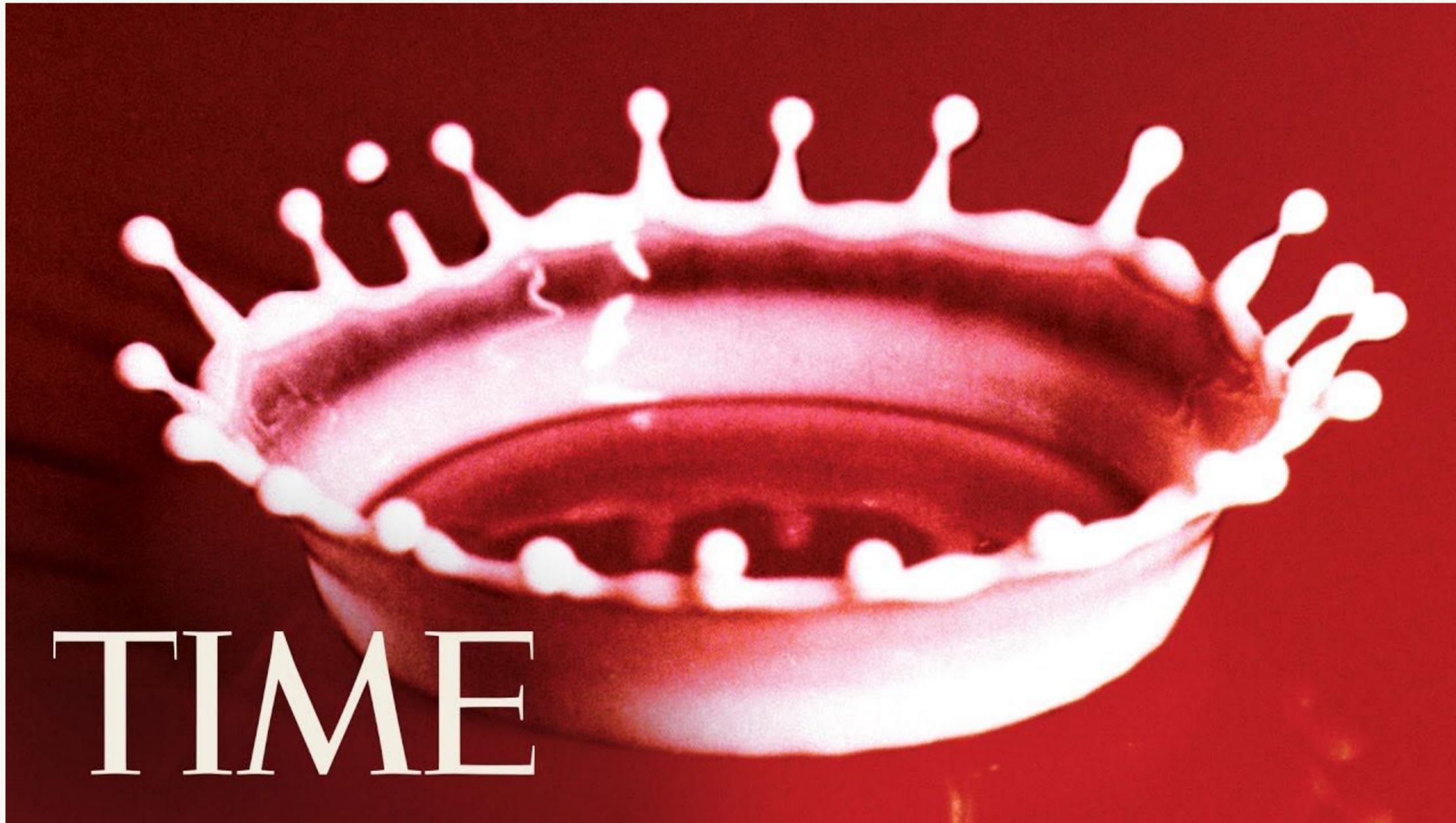
The only drawback in using a flash to stop action is the flash’s range. Built-in flashes are only effective up to 10 feet. Flash accessories mounted to the top of your camera can reach up to 25 feet.



World Series, Sept. 29, 1954 | 12-time Gold Glove winner, Willie Mays makes one of his best defensive plays of all time in Game 1. Mays was the NL MVP that year. (Photo:AP)



Harold Edgerton | Milk Drop
Coronet | 1957



Harold Eugene "Doc" Edgerton, also known as Papa Flash, was a professor of electrical engineering at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. He is largely credited with transforming the stroboscope from an obscure laboratory instrument into a common device. 1903 - 1990



Freezing the Action

To **freeze action** in a photograph is to capture the moving subject as a stationary object with no blurring. This is done by using a fast shutter speed (1/250 - 1/1000). The faster the shutter speed, the sharper the subject will be. Because the shutter is so fast, expect to use a more open f-stop such as f/2.8 - f/5.6 depending on how much light you have on the scene. This will also reduce the depth of field and add emphasis to your subject.

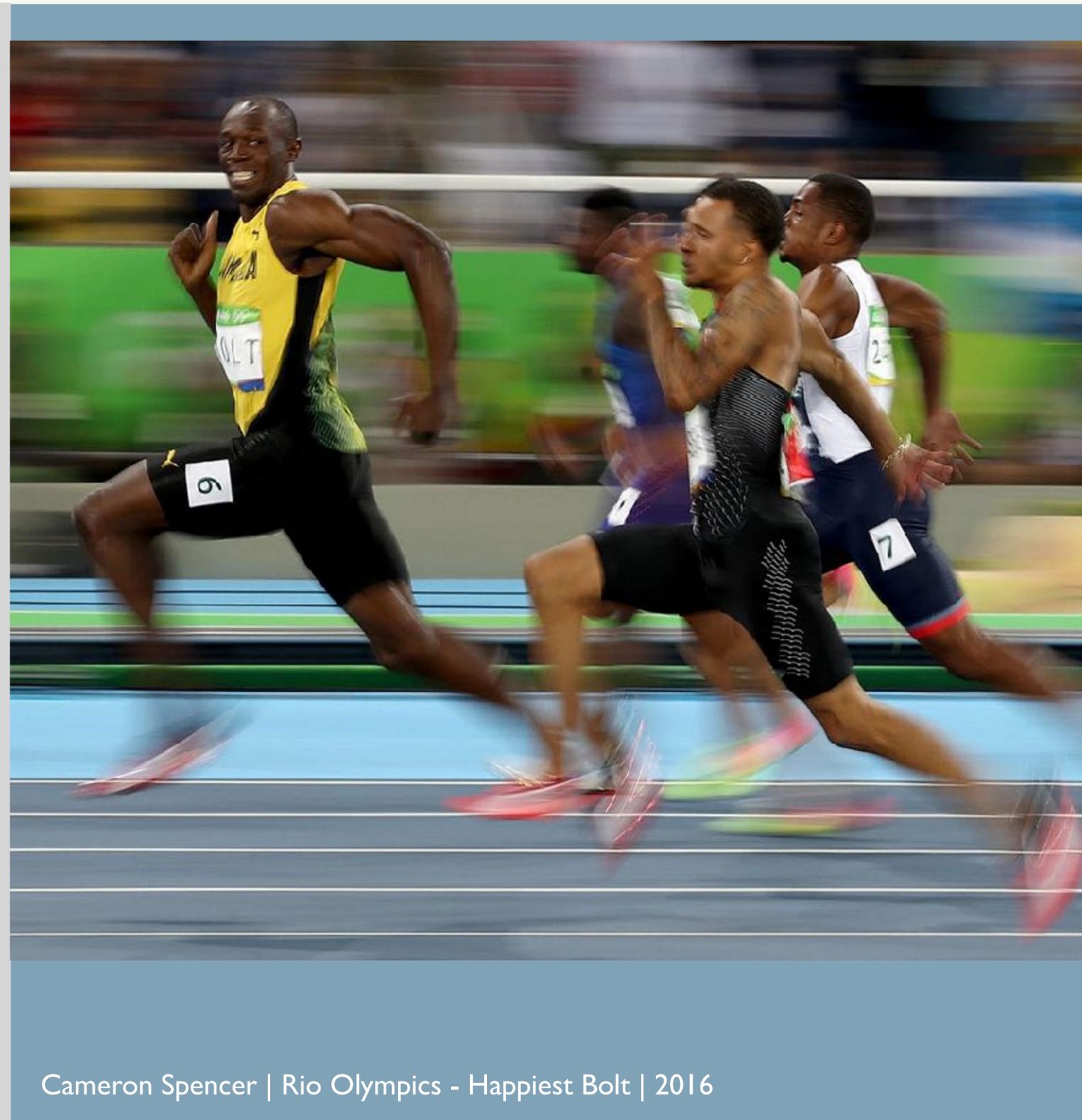


Bildbyran | Brandi Chastain | 1999

Blurring the Action

To capture a sense of movement in a photograph, you can intentionally **blur** (unfocused parts of an image) the subject by using a slow shutter speed without moving the camera. This is also called subject motion blur. In sports and action photography, this will occur when shutter speeds are less than 1/125 of a second.

When you use slower shutter speeds, the subject can become so blurred that it is unrecognizable. Avoid this by **panning** the camera, using a slower shutter speed while moving the camera to follow the subject. Of the three types of action photography, panning gives the softest, most blurred results.



Cameron Spencer | Rio Olympics - Happiest Bolt | 2016



Key Terms

- **Action photography** is movement captured in time.
- **Viewpoint** the position or location from which a photograph is taken.
- **Emphasis** a principle of design that uses the elements of art to add importance to your subject.
- **Timing** the critical moment at which your photograph best captures its subject.
- **The rule of thirds** is a system of composition based on the ancient Greek ideal of the Golden Mean, the frame is divided into thirds both horizontally and vertically, and important objects or subjects are placed either on one line, or at the intersection of two lines.
- **Shutter Priority Automatic** is a setting that lets you set the shutter speed and ISO, and the camera determines the optimal f-stop for the situation.
- **monopod** is like one tripod leg that mounts under the camera or lens and eliminates the camera's up and down movements.
- **Telephoto lenses** a lens with an angle of coverage less than a normal lens and makes objects look closer than they are.
- **Freeze action** in a photograph is to capture the moving subject as a stationary object with no blurring.
- **blur** is the unfocused parts of an image.
- **panning** moving the camera to follow the subject while making an exposure.

To Do:

- Add to your Google Doc of the Key Terms for Class.
- Take Google Quiz.
- **Assignment:** Take 5 action shots and post them to your blog. Tell me one good thing about each image, and one thing you could have done better. Due before next class for discussion.

