Photography 101

(2ND OF A 3 PART SERIES)

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How often have you heard someone say "it's so easy to maintain a golf course, because all you have to do is just mow the grass." All too often, the laymen also misconceives the art of photography. "Afterall, the only thing you have to do is just point the camera, push the bottom, and voila - there's the picture." To the contrary! The art of photography is just as technical as agronomy or horticulture, and to be honest, I wonder if there are not times when growing turf is not easier than capturing the classic photograph.

This is the second of a three part series dealing with the principles of good photography. Now that you have bought a good camera, or at least we all realize it requires a relatively good camera to capture a good photograph and anything short would be like fertilizing with just 6-6-6. Let us now indulge upon the specifics of 101 in photography.

The most basic of photographic principles is the science of light rays being perceived on photosensitive film to form an image via a mechanical item, being either a simple box camera or an ultra sophisticated 35mm SLR camera.

Light enters into a camera via two means: the shutter speed (the length of time the hole opens and closes to allow light to penetrate) and the aperature as denoted by f stops (the diameter of hole size) as a low f stop number of 1.8 is a wide open setting and is proportionally twice as large as the next f stop of 2.8. The f stops typically corelates as follows 1.8, 2.8, 3.5, 4.5, 5.6, 8, 11, 16 and 32 respectively. Remember, the lower the number, the larger the hole size and the higher the number, the smaller the hole size. A common question is "what difference does the f stop matter and why not just leave the aperature ring set in the middle?" Generally, this would hold true, but here is the principle. Under low light conditions, a low aperture of 1.8 should be advisable — however, a draw back is the lack of depth of field (the ability of all perspective images to be in focus). Under brightly lit conditions, a high aperature of f 16 would be better as the depth of field would be greatly increased.

The other means of regulating the amount of light to enter is via the shutter. The slower the shutter speed, the greater amount of light while the faster the shutter speed, the less amount of light may enter. There are some general guides to follow. Shutter speeds slower than 1/60 of second may produce a blur while 1/500 of second will capture most all action scenes.

To put all of this into perspective both the f stop and shutter speed must be synchronized to produce the correct light exposure. If one or both items are set wrong,

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your picture will either be too dark (under exposed) or too light (over exposed).

Now that we understand the principles of percieving light on film, let us now evaluate the different types of film. Film is either based as slow, medium or fast recording as noted by the ASA number. A slowed based ASA 25 film would be ideal for non-moving nature scenes because the grain is minimal and the resolution is fine. ASA 64 film is slightly faster and better adapted to action, however, a high speed 1000 film is perfectly suited for low light and fast action but grain is offensive and trueness of color is lacking. This is not necessarily a plug for Kodak but I personally prefer Kodak film over most all manufacturers because of more realistic true to life colors. When one looks at all those film boxes and numbers behind the counter, one can easily become bewildered.

First of all, color slides are less expensive than color prints and since prints can always be produced from slides, you should seriously consider the commitment to slides. A slide projector could actually pay for itself within a few years if you are one to take a lot of pictures.

Now that we have evaluated the best type of camera, operative settings, shutter speeds and the various types of film, let us look through the eye of the camera: the lense. The focal length of a lense is measured in millimeters, with 55mm being a true perspective to the human eye a wide angle 28mm would produce a panoramic view and items will look very far away. A telephoto lense, anything over 100mm, compacts the view and makes items seem closer than they really are. A zoom lense is the best of all worlds, although there are a few drawbacks. A 28mm to 90mm zoom lense encompasses most all focal lengths the average photographer will ever need, but the resolution quality is inferior to a standard lense. If you do not plan to make enlargements in excess of an 11 x 14, a zoom is best suited for you.

The camera can be a valuable tool for recording pertinent occurences on the golf course.

A lense is an investment that you may keep for years, if proper care is taken. Keep the lense cap on (except when in use), never touch or breath on the glass of the lense and use only lense cloth tissue for cleaning. A UV (ultraviolet light) filter should be purchased to screw on the front of the barrel to protect the glass from the elements while this will have no effect on meter settings. Treat your lense as it if were a piece of fine crystal glass - because it is.

After all of this explaining, lets now get to the heart of the subject: the concept of actually taking a picture. To snap a good photograph requires the review of a relatively long mental punch list. First, make sure you have taken off the lense cap (otherwise all will be totally dark through the viewfinder). Keep your fingers (or anything else as a matter of fact) away from the front of the lense. Focus on the subject and refocus again until all is perfectly clear. Try to set a high f stop with a shutter speed preferrable 1/125 or greater. Keep the horizon level (trees do not normally grow at 45 degree angles). Try to locate the subject relatively close to the middle of the frame (do not cut off desirable parts - however feet would be advised rather than a head). Shoot away from the sun and try to hold the camera as steady as possible. Now, your almost ready to push the button. Tell your subject you are ready (so they're awake) and gently depress the shutter button. If properly taken, the camera should remain still. All too often amateurs push the button too hard thereby jolting the camera.

Just as there is a proper way to carry a golf bag over your shoulder, strap your camera over your shoulder not over your neck, as this commonly looks like a hacker. Buy a 2 inch wide camera strap at your local K-Mart for less than 5 bucks. This extra wide strap is stronger and will aid in padding your shoulder. Balance the camera over your shoulder and let the camera hang down to your hand. Cradle the lense and camera body while walking; as you want to minimize the jolting action while walking. When you are ready to go into action, you want to have the camera quickly accessible. An important item is to become very famliar with your camera and feel at ease taking photographs. Film is the least expensive item in this profession, so take extra shots by bracketing an f-stop above and below thereby assuring one of the exposures should be ideal.

Just like all good superintendents - keep good records. Carry a little notebook for recording your valuable infomation of light conditions (low, medium, bright) f-stop, shutter speed, distance of subject, type of film (ASA number) and the time of day. A review later will reveal pertinent information to digest, if a picture does not come out quite the way you invisioned the shot.

Do not become disappointed if your first few rolls turn out poor in the beginning. After all, how long did it take you to score your first par? There are many amateur photo clubs that are anxious to gain new members. Join a club, take lots of pictures and who knows, you just might take a few pictures of the golf course. The last of the three part series will next time, deal with the specifics of advanced photgraphy.■