

◀ 2008 MEN'S BASKETBALL

"Kobe Bryant (no 10) of the USA men's senior national team during the men's group B basketball preliminaries at the 2008 Beijing Olympic Games" Shot details: Nikon D3 with a 200-400mm lens at 200mm and f4, 1/800sec, ISO 2000

Framing energy

"Don't just shoot action, but also shoot the reactions"



Ron Wyatt describes himself as a 'corporate and editorial photographer', but he has done his fair share of sports photography too. He's one of the lucky few who have had a chance to go behind the scenes at the world's biggest sporting event, the Olympic Games – twice.

It's the dream job for sports photographers, and Ron found himself in the enviable position thanks to Kodak, who were looking for a photographer to shoot VIPs and sports events at the 2004 Olympic Games in Athens. After a friend told Ron that Kodak were on the hunt for someone to take on the assignment, Ron went straight home to prepare a portfolio. He sent a selection of 90 transparency film shots to a contact of his at Kodak, and needless to say, he landed the job. While it was not an assignment that he had ever crossed his mind, he was overwhelmed with the emotion of the experience: "Right before the opening ceremony, I was shooting some photographs of Katie Couric, NBC announcer, putting on her makeup. [I heard]

on the loudspeaker the announcement that in four minutes the world would be joining us for the opening ceremony of the 2004 Summer Olympic Games, and I pretty much lost it. I was fighting back the tears. I couldn't believe that Ron Wyatt would be in the company of such great sports photographers. One of my favourite photographers, Dave Black (www.daveblackphotography.com) was standing right next to me."

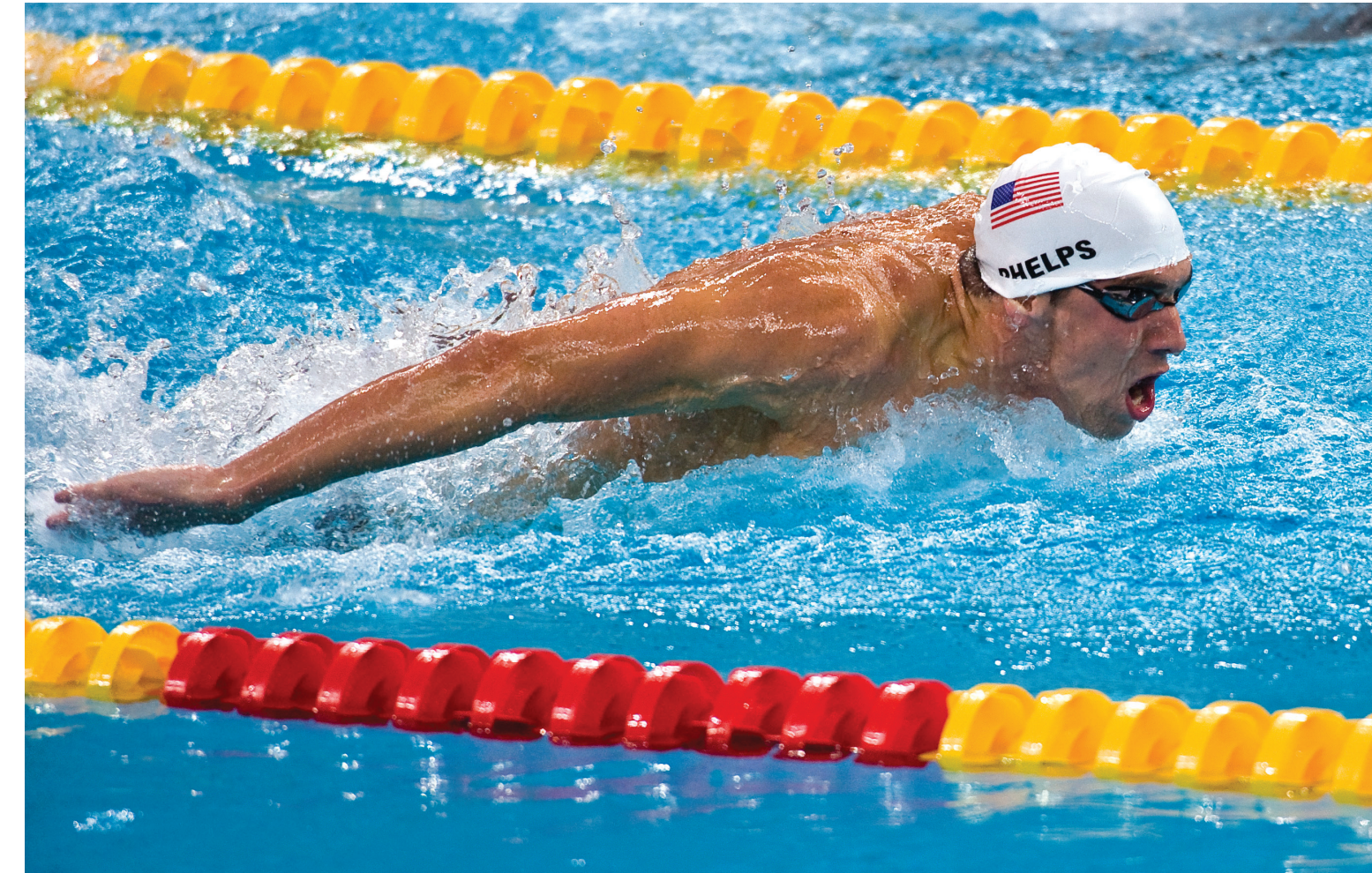
Ron's background in photography started more humbly, however. It was on his honeymoon in Bermuda with an Instamatic camera that he began shooting for the first time, however he was disappointed with the results: "I took lots of pictures, but when we returned I was disappointed by the quality of my photos. All of my pictures were out of focus due to camera shake. I made a decision that I would teach myself how to do photography." Then aged 19, with a job on the assembly line for General Motors in New Jersey, Ron was able to kit himself out with a Canon AE-1 and practise releasing the shutter without shaking the camera. ▶▶

▲ 2008 WOMEN'S FOOTBALL

"Brazil's Renata Costa (no 5) and goalkeeper fall down under Amy Rodriguez of the USA during the women's football gold-medal match between Brazil and the USA on day 13 of the 2008 Beijing Olympic Games" Shot details: Nikon D3 with a 200-400mm lens at 200mm and f4, 1/1,000sec, ISO 2000

“I had four years to look over my 2004 Olympics work and dream about what things I would do differently”

▼ **2008 MEN'S BUTTERFLY**
“Swimmer Michael Phelps of the USA competes in the men's butterfly event, held at the National Aquatics Centre on day nine of the 2008 Beijing Olympic Games”
Shot details: Nikon D3 with a 600mm lens at f4.5, 1/800sec, ISO 1600



Kodak was also set to cover the 2006 Winter Games held in Turin, Italy, but Ron was not picked to cover that event, as he couldn't ski. This left him concerned that Kodak wouldn't hire him again to cover subsequent Olympics, namely the 2008 Beijing Summer Games. He decided to take action in order to secure the commission: “One night, while out to dinner with my wife, I had some chopsticks in my hand. I decided that I would contact Kodak and tell them that I had my gear packed and my chopsticks ready, and all I needed was the assignment. About two weeks after that, I got the call from Kodak inviting me to be the sole photographer for the Beijing Games.”

Ron describes shooting at the 2008 Olympic Games as a “much different experience” from the 2004 event in Athens: “I had four years to look over my 2004 Olympics work and dream about what things I would do differently. One of the goals I set for myself for the Beijing Games was to try to have the Olympic rings or Beijing 2008 logo in the background of all of my photos. I was very happy with my work from the 2008 Summer Olympic Games and noticed a big improvement over 2004.” Another thing that changed for the 2008 Olympics was Ron's choice of kit. Having been a Canon shooter for over 30 years, the week before leaving for Beijing, Ron switched to Nikon thanks to a sponsorship deal. Keen to get used to the camera system before the assignment, he trialled the kit at his son's baseball game, before making good use of the 14-hour flight to China to familiarise himself with the camera manual.

His full kit for the 2008 Olympics included two Nikon D3s, a Nikon D300, a Nikon F6 SLR camera, a selection of lenses (70-200mm, 24-70mm, 14-24mm, 400mm and 300mm, all f2.8, and his 'favourite lens in the world' a 200-400mm f4), 20 SanDisk CF cards, two Western Digital 320 Passport portable hard drives, two MacBook Pros and two Pocket Wizards – certainly ►►

Ron Wyatt



▲ **2008 WOMEN'S VOLLEYBALL**
“The USA's Kerri Walsh and Misty May-Treanor (pictured) go for the gold against China at the 2008 Beijing Olympic Games. They won their match against Brazil's Talia Antunes and Renata Rebeiro in the semi final”
Shot details: Nikon D3 with a 70-200mm lens at 130mm and f5, 1/2,000sec, ISO 400



2008 MEN'S TENNIS

"Spain's Rafael Nadal celebrates a point against Italy's Potito Starace during a men's singles first-round tennis match of the 2008 Beijing Olympic Games. Nadal won 6-2, 3-6, 6-2"
Shot details: Nikon D3 with a 200-400mm lens at 220mm and f7.1, 1/1,250sec, ISO 640

» a recipe for excess baggage requirements. The right kit, however, can make or break for sports photography, as Ron says when asked about the most difficult element of the genre: "I would have to say having the proper lenses, a camera that can shoot good-quality images at high ISOs, having a good shooting position and knowing the sport."

Technique, of course, plays a huge part in being a successful sports photographer and will help you to stand out from the pack in the competitive field. Ron is happy to share the tricks of the trade: "My number-one technique is to use back-button focus instead of focusing from the shutter release. I try to warm up my eye before any sporting event; I think it takes some time for your eyes to get used to looking through the viewfinder. I prefer to photograph without a monopod with my long lenses, especially for football, and practice following the ball." He also advocates getting to know the sport you are shooting, having a shot list in advance of things that you want to capture and "don't just shoot action, but also shoot the reactions".

For budding sports photographers, Ron recommends starting out shooting local events and submitting the photographers to newspapers, websites and blogs. "You will have to climb your

GETTING TO KNOW...



Ron Wyatt

Web: www.ronwyattphotos.com

Number of years as a photographer: 37 years, starting at 19 years old

Photographic genre: I call myself a corporate and editorial photographer. I shoot corporate events, which includes PR, advertising, hospitality, marketing and corporate foundation events and portraiture. I have also photographed sporting fixtures, music concerts and religious events.

Location or studio? All of my work is on location.

Clients: Six Flags, Eastman Kodak, Continental Airlines, Verizon, PepsiCo, *Black Enterprise* magazine, USA Today and MSNBC, to name a few.

Couldn't-live-without kit: It's hard to say just one, so I will name few, not necessarily in any particular order: Lowepro Roller x200, Sigma 120-300 f2.8 lens, BlackRapid camera straps, Hoodman Loupe, iPod, Bose noise-cancelling headphones and my MacBook Pro.

Post-production thoughts: I do very little post-production work on my images. I haven't taken enough time to learn the software, but I'm in the process of learning all about Photoshop now.

Favourite commission: My favourite commission to date has to be being assigned to shoot the 2004 Olympic Games in Athens, Greece.

CLOSING CEREMONY

"A view of the festivities in the Beijing National Stadium during the closing ceremony for the 2008 Beijing Olympic Games on 24 August 2008 in Beijing, China"

Shot details: Nikon D3 with a 14-24mm lens at 16mm and f2.8, 1/160sec, ISO 1000



way up the ladder to get to the professional sports. You never know who you're talking to, so always carry yourself in the best possible light. I can tell you of quite a few stories of me meeting the right person at the right time, and that person was able to open up doors for me. I would be happy to accept emails from readers to explore this further."

While Ron won't be shooting the 2012 Summer Olympics in London (Kodak no longer sponsors the Games and photography will come from Getty Images), he hopes to cover at least one more Games in his career. He describes the experience as "the ultimate photography assignment", and is certainly one that will stay with him forever: "These were two 30-day periods of my life that I will never forget. I enjoyed the freedom to be able to shoot whatever sporting events I wanted to shoot. A few of the sports I have never had the opportunity to shoot before, so I enjoyed the challenge of shooting a new sport and coming away with a good image."

DP

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