

Shoot Like a Pro

by
Melanie Bonds



Hole #6 at San Juan Oaks Golf Club in Hollister, California

Photo: © John R. Johnson - golfphotos.com

Last month I participated in a GCSAA Lunch & Learn event titled “Learn to Photograph your Golf Course” by John Johnson. Once I had determined that I had to turn off the firewall on my computer before I could interface with the group, this was a convenient and informative program. Although my purposes in photographing golf courses differ somewhat from the reasons superintendents would need to use photography, I thought the information presented by instructor John Johnson was worth sharing. (Each year Mr. Johnson presents a four hour photography class at the GCSAA National Convention. The class fills early so register ahead of time to secure your spot.)

Photography can promote a daily fee course, a resort or a private club. When you create an image it makes a lasting impression and the more you know about what you are doing the better. Many of the course shots that Mr. Johnson takes are used in marketing. A good photo promotes the course while educating, selling and or documenting. It will also promote the architect, owner or superintendent.

When photographing a golf course:

- Mother Nature provides light! (Light is the most important element in photography.)

- The course architect provides the pallet, or canvas.
- The superintendent provides the colors.
- The photographer provides the composition through means including the angle and point of view.
- The publication provides the public forum.

Light adjustment

Light meters. Most cameras have meters that can see only 18% gray. What that means is that a camera tries to make all things average out to a middle gray, so know if you meter a very dark or very light colored item close up - your photos may not turn out as well. You can point the light meter at the grass (which is the same as medium gray) and it will give the right reading. The amount of light reflected makes film work. Morning light only lasts a short while, but makes for some of the most successful golf course photography.

These are some additional controls or tools to use in your Photography:

- Lens - are available from wide angle to shallow telephoto
 - Filters - need to be used judiciously. Use a filter to get that WOW effect.
- It is possible to adjust the two controls for light on the camera via the shutter speed (period of time it is open) and the aperture (size of the hole in the camera that the light comes through.) High shutter speed has light entering a short time. This is the setting that can stop motion. When the shutter speed is high, there needs to be a large aperture. To get implied motion (i.e. to photograph a running stream) there should be a longer shutter speed with a very small aperture. The smaller aperture will also give you greater the depth of field – Or more things in focus. F16 or F22 will get the depth of field that is large. F2 or F8 results in a narrow depth of field. The closer you get to the subject the less depth of field that will occur.

Lens

There are three basic camera lens types: wide angle (24-35 mm)- which gives a 75% view; Normal - which duplicates the human eye with a 50% view; and the telephoto lens.

Filters

Filters are useful in achieving affects. A warming filter warms everything. A graduated tobacco filter will just cover up to a certain point to give you a dramatic sunset sky. When there is high humidity and no blue sky, the photographer can bring in a graduated filter and use blue on top. A wise photographer doesn't overuse the colored filters. One exception is a polarizing filter for landscape shots – Johnson feels that ***the photographer should use a polarizing filter on every shot.*** This turns the grass a deeper green and makes the sky bluer to add impact to the photos. If you own an auto focus camera – then you will need to purchase a circular polarizer to make it work with this kind of lens.

Film

Film is available in sizes 50/150 ASA (slow), 100-200 ASA (medium) and 400 which is rarely used. Mr. Johnson prefers Kodak print film to photograph people because it is warmer and works well with almost all processing machines. The Fuji slide film is cooler and he prefers to use that on the course and for publications.

Johnson's tips to Shoot Like a Pro:

- Shoot at an angle to the light (90 degree is best). If the light is at your back you get good light on a subject, but it washes out landscapes. All grass casts shadows. If you are 90 degrees to a subject it will deepen the color in grass. The polarizer filter works better at this angle.
- Shoot **early** and **late**. When the sun is directly overhead you lose shape and contours. Shape and contours create drama. The more shadow the richer the colors.
- Shoot different. Perceptions can be changed by using different angles of view. Sit on the floor or stand on a chair or bag rack. Put a tripod on the cart roof to gain height and open up the greens and traps.
- Use a flash--even outside during the day on all items that are close up.
- Use a tripod and a polarizing filter. It will slow you down, allow you to use fine grain films and you will start making shots instead of taking shots.

Digital Cameras:

When using a digital camera the same general rules apply. These cameras are great for web and power point presentations as well as e-mailing photos. If you plan to use digital photos in a four color printed publication, be careful! It will be necessary to use the highest resolution to enlarge the photos without getting a *grainy or pixel* look. You should not try to use digital photos for larger sized photos or cover shots for magazines.

The applications for photography on the course are numerous:

- marketing and media use
- keeping a log of work -- digital is good in this application
- year end and project board reviews
- creating bi-lingual training manuals
- trade show booths (Don't use digital for these larger images which can be as large as 10 x 8 feet across.
- club, local, national and trade publications
- advancement in career - personal resume: If you want to advance your career, get published.

(Guys, the Alabama Green Journal is a great place to start! We are always looking for a few good articles!)



View of Willow Bend Club House in Chestnut Hill, Massachusetts with cranberry bog in foreground.

Photo: © John R. Johnson - golfphotos.com

about John R. Johnson

John R. Johnson, President and marketing director of Johnson Design Golf Marketing, is an award winning golf course photographer of International reputation. Besides every major golf publication, calendars, posters and various coffee table books, his client and project list is like a who's, who of the golf world. As the marketing director of Johnson Design Golf Marketing, he leads the team of talented professionals who create the collateral and digital marketing materials for a broad cross section of the industry. They also offer marketing tools to be used for the Internet, the computer desktop, broadcast eMail as well as the traditional agency services of photography, video, design, graphic layout, copy writing, printing and public relations for their clients. They make the actual tools by which a property creates their first and lasting impression.

John Johnson has been highly sought out as a speaker for marketing, branding and image issues in the golf industry for the following seminars.

***Crittenden's Golf Expos
National Golf Course Owners
Association
PGA of America Education Seminars
Professional Club Marketing
Association
Golf Course Superintendents
Association
Club Managers Association of America***

For more information you can contact Mr. Johnson at the following:

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Real view of property under development



View of property as it will look after development

The photos above demonstrate a specialty at Johnson Design Golf Marketing which is used to help developers and clubs market early. The second photo is enhanced prior to development to help the audience get a vision of what the project will become. This technique can help sell memberships, real estate, and golf, etc. This sequence took only a couple of days to create in Johnson's studio - don't you guys wish your grow in was only two days?