

Diving Video - Best Practices

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Guidelines for Filming and Editing DVD's for All America applications

Here are a few guidelines that may be used when filming a diver and editing the footage. While the impetus and focus of these comments is pointed toward footage used in a DVD application for High School All-American, these ideas can be incorporated for tapes sent by a prospect to a college coach.

Camera Angle

The best angle to use while filming a diver is always going to be as close to the perspective of the judge as possible. While many times parents, coaches, or videographers, are not permitted to film from an ideal location on the pool deck, it is important to understand that any angle other than that seen by the judge tends to put the diver at a disadvantage. Whenever possible, avoid filming from in front of the diving board or from a severe angle (any higher than is necessary). Looking down on the diver decreases their scores.

Lighting

Bad lighting on a video is a killer! Everything from having the entire scene washed out in a white light, to having shadows so bad that the diver appears to be a silhouette, can be a disaster for attaining accurate scores. I strongly recommend getting to the pool early and determine where the best place for filming is, instead of either moving during the competition, or hoping to correct the mistake during the editing process.

Many pools have large windows making it very hard to get a good clear picture. Avoid shooting the camera into these windows, not only can they make the overall lighting too bright, the diver may "disappear" into the light during the dive. Also try to avoid shooting the diver as they move through dark spots. Again, the diver may fade into the shadows or dark area.

If the footage has any of these problems, there are solutions. Many editing programs have tools that allow the user to adjust the brightness and contrast of the footage. Do not hesitate to use these tools, or if you feel uncomfortable, contact a professional for help.

Scope

When I refer to the scope, I want to convey that the diver, the pool, and the diving board need to be in the picture. By including each of these aspects, it will eliminate the common mistake of allowing the diver to move in and out of the picture frame. Judges give scores based on the overall impression of the dive, and that means a broad perspective, taking into account all facets of the dive. By focusing in too tightly on the diver, many elements of the dive may be missed, such as height, distance from the board, etc. Also, it is very hard to follow a diver with a tight shot unless you are an experienced professional, if the diver moves out of the camera shot, it will detract from the score. You can also have the opposite, having too large a focus, where it is difficult to see the diver and their skills. Try to find the happy medium of not too close or too far away. The goal is to show your diver in the best possible situation.

Timing

I don't want to harp on a particular issue, but – scores are based on the overall impression of the dive! The timing of the footage can be a distraction. Starting the filming process a split second before the hurdle, or cutting off the end of the dive before the diver is under the water will generally make it hard to get create a good overall impression of the dive.

Two good practices to use when both filming and editing footage are:

1. Take more footage than you think you need. Film the entire contest if you need to! It is always easier to remove un-needed footage than it is to add it in.
2. In the final product, try to allow 5 -8 seconds between the time one dive hits the water, and the approach and the hurdle begin on the next dive. This allows time, just as in a real meet, for the judges to enter their scores.

Movement

In a nutshell, get rid of it! This includes camera shake, panning with the diver, and zooming.

The best way to avoid camera shake is to use a tripod (best practice), or something (a railing or ledge) to stabilize the camera. Watching a performance by a diver when the camera is shaking or bouncing is extremely difficult!

Referring to the section on Scope, the idea here is to include in the footage: the diver, the diving board, and the pool, specifically the area where the entry will occur. Panning and zooming with the diver is acceptable as long as it adds to the overall impression of the dive. The easiest and best practice, is to keep the camera in one spot, without any movement.

Labeling

Always make sure to label the DVD. Don't be that one diver who has a great performance, but does not label the disc and gets disqualified!

Make sure that the DVD has a physical label on the front, and either use an editing program to add the name, address, competition and date to the DVD, or have the diver hold this written information in front of the camera before the contest.

Although it is not required, many editing programs allow transitions to be added in between dives that will alert the judges to the dive being performed. This is a nice added feature and it definitely adds to the "overall impression" of the DVD. But this too can be overdone.

Length

The entire meet should not be more than five minutes long (preferably 3 ½ minutes) and any transition screens between dives should be about 3 – 5 seconds. The most enjoyable videos are smooth flowing, clear to watch and relatively short.

Finalize your DVD

Once you have created your DVD please remember to "finalize" it so it can be played on other DVD players. This mistake is made way too frequently and it can be devastating to your divers chances of being honored as an All American.

Best of Luck