

# Warm, fuzzy... and squishy wet

In the newspaper photography world, there are good assignments, boring assignments and sometimes tragic or dangerous assignments.

And on occasion, there are 'wet' assignments.

Last Friday was a wet assignment day.

Over the years, we photographers learn that it's prudent to carry an alternative wardrobe in our vehicles to cover those unexpected wet assignments, 'cuz we can't do the job any other way but by 'being there', rain or no rain.

One of Friday's wet assignments was the annual Halton plowing match.

I always enjoy attending the plowing match as it brings back memories of my dad and I attending the local matches when I was a kid.

We'd watch the plowmen, take time to talk to every neighbour in the county, and in the early days, we enjoyed looking at the display of farm implements local farm equipment dealers would bring to showcase their products.

So Friday morning, as I pulled into the field of the plowing match on 15 Sideroad with the windshield wipers slapping back and forth in the rain, all those warm fuzzy farm memories flooded through my mind— until I stepped out of my SUV onto the soggy ground.

I thought how I'd better get my boots out of the back, so I didn't get my feet wet— part of that 'news photographer preparedness' thing.

But in the time it took to walk to the back of the vehicle, it suddenly dawned on me that those boots weren't in the back of the SUV.

Instead, they were sitting in the hallway leading into my kitchen, in the exact same place I'd left them, conspicuously placed so I'd find it impossible to walk past them and forget them.

So much for best-laid plans...

The ground was soft, sticky, wet soil, with a high enough percentage of clay to make it cling to my shoes, giving a sensation similar to stepping in the aftermath of a dog lover's walk, who had failed to 'stoop and scoop.'

And about 10 steps later, the wetness had penetrated my shoes, as my toes squished in my socks

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with every step. Those warm, fuzzy, fond farm memories of plowing matches of the past were fading fast with every squishy step...

Undaunted, I wasn't about to be hindered by a little rain and wet feet.

I started shooting the event.

The plowmen were dressed for the day, in their rain gear and rubber boots, and all appeared to be happy as a pig in...er, ahem,... at a plowing match, as they transformed the verdant green stubble field to a rich dark brown canvas, with all the 'finishes' straight enough to rival plowing done by a Global Positioning Satellite-assisted tractor.

When I finally returned to my SUV, and shook the last of the stubborn mud from the soles of my walking shoes, I noticed something that had escaped my attention before.

My khakis were also splattered with mud, half way to my knees. For the balance of the day, I carried around that reminder of the plowing match, not to mention the annoying sensation of water squishing in my socks with every step.

When I got home that night, I finally had the satisfaction of kicking off my sodden shoes, peeling off those wet socks and mud-stained khakis, replacing them with dry socks and clean jeans.


Another plowing match had come and gone, old memories had been revisited and appreciated, then placed back in the recesses of my mind.

And one more item has been seen to.

My boots are now in the back of my SUV.

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