

### **“The Jordan Rule”**

By Gene Ho

Some called it unfair and some called it an earned privilege. The man was none other than Michael Jordan. In the pinnacle of his NBA career he developed a phenomenon called “The Jordan Rule.”

In short, his Air-ness could get away with things the rookie basketball players couldn't. If Jordan dropped his shoulder and moved into the lane, was it a charging foul on him or was it a blocking foul on the poor rookie trying to guard him? That's right, Jordan got the benefit of the doubt, after all, he was the superstar so it had to be the rookie's mistake. Thus was born “The Jordan Rule” and he wasn't the only beneficiary of it.

Look at the old tapes of Patrick Ewing of my beloved New York Knicks. Do you think he could take another ten steps as he made his pivot move to the basket; rarely did he ever get called for traveling. Patrick Ewing was a legend and he earned the right to an extra-half step if need be.

Flash forward to today. Enter our wedding photography arena and enter our modern day referee. Meet the Church Lady. We all know the deal and we've seen them all. At the best, they can be as beloved as our grandmother. At the worst, they can be like a third-world dictator. They have the power to allow flash photography; they have the power to relegate you to the upper rafters of the church's balcony. They can let you walk up to the middle of the aisle, or they can ban you to the back or the room with no photos until the minister announces them husband and wife.

I've seen it all. I have been at churches where a church lady has relegated me to a spot 2'x2' in size, I kid you not. I've been at weddings where I was regulated to one “flash pop.” Hell runneth-over if she should see two “flash pops” from me. Could you just imagine? “Please!! Please Church Lady!!! It was one ‘flash pop.’ I was shooting in red-eye reduction mode!!!” I've been doing this a while and from time to time, I still run into this, but over the years, I've developed my own form of “The Jordan Rule.”

There are some churches that I shoot at where I am as beloved as you can be. I've had the Church Lady tell me that they don't allow other photographers to walk up to the front, but for my photographers, and me, that's not a problem. So while the other studios are relegated to the balcony we get free reign, we get to walk wherever we want, we get "The Jordan Rule".

So how does all of this come about? I don't think it's just about longevity, I don't think it's something you earn by just being around for a long time, but I'm sure that helps. Here are my suggestions on what I think earned us "The Jordan Rule".

**Respect:** It all starts with asking permission from the Church Lady what can and can't be done. It never ceases to amaze me that somehow wedding photographers don't feel that this is remotely necessary. I know we are working for the bride and not the church. I know our responsibility is to get the picture, but a little respect goes a long way. Take the time to at least inquire what the rules are, most people are fair. If it's really that bad, if she says, "Absolutely NO photos at all", at least negotiate. "Then can we at least shoot with no flash at the balcony?" More than anything I think it's human nature. Who knows what other photographer this lady has had to deal with. I'm sure some of the other photographers weren't that pleasant either.

So yeah, it's probably a little bit of a power thing. It's her church; she makes the rules, so respect that, and let that carry into the ceremony. Even with no flash, I try to get most of my shots when there is music playing. That way the whole congregation doesn't have to deal with the clicking noise from my camera.

**Know Who is Who:** I'm a friend with a lot of the ministers at the churches where I shoot, not all of them but a lot of them.

Recently, I ran into one of the most prominent ministers in my area at Starbucks. He is a good man. He is beloved in his community. He is authentically a kind man and if I can say, a man of God, and for me on a personal scale, I don't always feel that way.

It's hard for me sometimes because I feel that some ministers just have issues, but I like this guy and so does our community. When the Governor of my State comes into town he asks him to play golf. Who knew we would have a common love of Starbucks Coffee. So we chatted and I had a chance to buy him and his staff coffee and I'm sure you would do the same.

Do you know the names of the church secretary; do you know the name of the church's Director of Music? Get to know them and they love it when you show up on a Saturday.

**Know the Time:** There are some churches I go to where we're not the only show in town. There are some churches that have Saturday Mass and they need the wedding party out 30 minutes after the wedding. There are some churches that have two weddings there that day. Do you know that, not unless you ask.

Before you sit there and do your whole after wedding routine, at least find out how long you have there. If they have another event there, that's fine. Do a few shots from the altar and then suggest to the wedding party to take some pictures outside.

There was a time, when I really didn't care. To be honest I was hired to do a job, and I was going to do it regardless and I do understand that concept, I have a job to do and I have to get these dynamic photos of this wedding. What I learned is that the path of least resistance is to work with who is going to "referee" you. By playing by their rules they will allow you to also bend them.

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