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Olympic Photographer Turns to CRU-DataPort for Complete Storage Solution

by **Serge Timacheff**

As the official lead photographer for the International Fencing Federation, a member sports organization of the International Olympic Committee, I have taken over a million high-resolution images of world class fencing in the last decade. While shooting on six continents including three Olympic Games, several dozen world championships and grand prix events, I manage all the photographs as an archived, historical visual documentary - a daunting task. When I'm traveling I need access to thousands of images in the event I am contacted by customers or editors interested in obtaining virtually any photo in my library. This means I must have several terabytes of photos available on short notice. As a part of my overall solution for digital photography workflow, I turned to CRU-DataPort® for reliable and scalable storage.



In the Field

I normally travel to about six countries annually, shooting about three to five thousand photos per day of fencing action, medal ceremonies, VIP portraits and candid, as well as environmental or location shots. This quantity of photography is too voluminous to rely on cloud-based storage and I frequently have limited Internet access depending upon my location. For years, I relied solely on portable hard drives and occasionally DVD-R for storage; however, this was limited in terms of storage capacity (especially DVDs), potentially unreliable (in the event of a hard drive failure) and awkward for backups.

For my work in the field, I began using the ToughTech® Duo, a portable RAID system that accepts 2.5-inch drives and supports several types of connections (FireWire 400/800, eSATA, and USB 2.0). Adopting this change immediately provided two significant advantages over my previous methods. The benefits include the ability to use an unlimited number of mirrored drives to ensure my images are secure and backed-up and, secondly, a single-system method of backup easily accessible from one connection on my laptop. With this system, which is portable enough to fit into my briefcase or camera bag, I can bring multiple mirrored sets of 2.5-inch drives containing archived photographs and enough empty space to fill with new images taken on the trip. Interchanging drives and accessing photos is fast and simple, accelerated by my PC Express-driven eSATA connection to the drive. Generic internal drives are inexpensive so I don't have to spend needlessly on multiple external hard drives, which are always more expensive than internal ones.

A minor, but very useful feature in the ToughTech Duo is that it can be secured with a regular locking laptop cable using a small connection port on the case. Very few hard drives have the Kensington® Lock feature and when I'm traveling in places where I need physical security, I'm very happy to have this capability. Additionally, I use the CRU DriveBoxes to securely store and transport the bare drives that are not physically mounted in the ToughTech Duo. These practical boxes allow me to label the drives as well as assure they are safe, whether on a shelf or in my briefcase.



ToughTech Duo QR



Kensington Locks



ToughTech Duo Tray and Sled



CRU-DataPort DriveBox

Traveling home to Seattle after a shoot, sometimes with as many as 35,000 new images and archived libraries, I often place mirrored drives into two separate checked bags in case of damage, loss or theft. I also provide one of the drives to the International Fencing Federation to take back to their offices in Lausanne, Switzerland, so they can mirror the drive to one of their own ToughTech Duos in their offices. In this way, the images are easily and securely archived in my studio and headquarters.

In the Studio

Once home, I easily transfer images from my ToughTech Duo to my larger RTX™220-QR RAID system for permanent backup. While this system is also portable (about the size of two-thirds of a shoebox) and equipped with a carrying handle, it is larger than the ToughTech Duo and supports larger-capacity, generic 3.5-inch mirrored drives. It also supports the same connection options as the ToughTech Duo (FireWire 400/800, eSATA, USB 2.0), so transfers are reasonably quick. I simply connect the ToughTech Duo to my studio computer, which is already connected to the larger drives and move the files (moving them ensures no file format loss, such as JPEG, images retain their full integrity).

I keep three sets of three-terabyte mirrored drives, containing all of the images I've taken. Mounting the different drives is a simple process and virtually the same as the ToughTech Duo: open the drive door, slide the drive out, and slide the other one in. No screws, connections or wiring to worry about. In this manner, I am able to access virtually any image I have taken in the last ten years (more than one million, as previously stated) in a matter of a few minutes. Of course, part of this has to do with how the images are organized, named, and filed, but I am assured of their secure storage and immediate accessibility.

"These innovative products from CRU-DataPort have made my life as a prolific, globe-trotting photographer tremendously more easy and secure."

~ Serge Timacheff



In the Studio



RTX220-QR

Setup

Establishing this system was relatively simple, comprising unit connection via (in my case) eSATA and inserting the generic drives into the device. This was the same process for both the ToughTech Duo and the RTX220-QR. Beyond that, new drives have to be formatted following the standard drive formatting process available in Windows or Mac—whichever system you are using. What this often means is that when inserting a new, unformatted drive, it will not appear on the computer until it has been formatted. Instructions for formatting disks, however, are contained in the comprehensive online documentation from CRU-DataPort for both devices. Getting the drives running is easy.

It was only a few years ago that RAID systems were bulky, expensive and difficult to install and operate. Storing images and information in the field, getting it safely home and having it easily secure yet accessible in the studio are some of the biggest challenges for international photographers today. These innovative products from CRU-DataPort have made my life as a prolific, globe-trotting photographer tremendously more easy and secure.

About CRU-DataPort

Founded in 1986, CRU-DataPort is a pioneer in data security and data mobility devices. The company's flagship DataPort, along with Data Express and RhinoJR (formerly manufactured by StorCase), brands of removable and external hard drive enclosures are the de facto standard for physical data security and safe data transporting in government, education and business markets. CRU-DataPort products, which now include the WiebeTech brand of data storage and forensics products, are also widely used in media rich data environments including audio/video production, digital cinema, video security capture, and disk-2-disk backup and archiving applications. Backed by the industry's leading warranties and connector ratings, CRU-DataPort products are available through major distributors, PC manufacturers, specialty system builders and resellers throughout the world.

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