

TED LASSO IMAGES COURTESY OF APPLE TV PLUS.



Coach Ted Lasso (Jason Sudeikis) faces an unexpected press conference.

Ted Lasso | Capturing Inner Life

The much-lauded Apple TV Plus comedy series *Ted Lasso* follows a college-level American football coach as he takes the helm of an English Premier League soccer team, despite having no experience in the sport. Based on a character of the same name — played by series executive producer Jason Sudeikis, who first portrayed Ted in a series of promos for NBC Sports' coverage of the Premier League — *Ted Lasso* is a fish-out-of-water story elevated by an eternally wholesome protagonist.

“The remit when I first started *Ted Lasso* was broad, but it was clear they wanted it to move away from the original commercials,” says director of photography David Rom, who cites *Moneyball* and *I, Tonya* as inspirations for “naturalistic” photography that didn’t feel like TV sports coverage. “The intention was for it to have a drama sensibility, which was more my background.”

In the pilot (directed by Tom Marshall), when Ted first arrives in the U.K., jetlagged alongside his right-hand man, Coach Beard (Brendan

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Left: Soccer team owner Rebecca Welton (Hannah Waddingham) introduces her new coach to a skeptical British press corps. Right: Ted cheerfully expresses his unequivocal hatred of tea.



Hunt), he is ambushed with a press conference. This is juxtaposed with a scene of Ted and Coach Beard walking into the team’s locker room for the first time. “The press room shows Ted up against it,” says Rom. “We framed him often trapped through heads or center-framed fish-out-of-water and alone against the terrifying British tabloid media. Handheld was used to reflect Ted’s uneasy state while wider lenses — 18mm and 25mm Tokina [Cinema] Vistas — close to Ted also helped put us inside his mind. In the locker room, however, Ted walks into a space that he knows well, even if the deodorant has a different name. We see him wide in his space [with the aid of 35mm and 50mm Vista lenses], and the camera pushes in low, showing us that this is a place where he is powerful and in control. Steadicam, low-angle shots, and steady framing help show he’s not as clueless as the press scene made him out to be.

“Ted will always be an outsider in some way,” the cinematographer continues. “[Production designer] Paul Cripps’ wonderful design allowed me to photograph Ted in spaces isolated from the rest of the team, such as through doorways and windows between his office and the locker room.”

In Episode 7 (directed by Declan Lowney), one of Rom’s favorites, “We follow Ted going from the highs of winning to the lows of a panic attack

and facing the end of his marriage,” he says of a scene that takes place in a karaoke bar. “These aren’t classic topics for a sports comedy, and they allowed me to use camera and lighting to [accentuate them]. As in the pilot, specific lenses were used to get inside his head to signify the start of his panic attack,” as were “chaotic light and darkness.” Here, again, the cinematographer used the 18mm and 25mm Vista lenses, while “Astera [LED units] were fixed to walls and controlled during takes to change color and intensity as Ted’s panic heightened.”

Rom, who alternated cinematography duties with John Sorapure, photographed the series with Arri’s Alexa LF. “There were many reasons to choose a large-format system, from the sports photography — as large-format wider lenses gave a sense of scale to the arenas and intensity when moving on the field — to the ability to show actors in their spaces even when close. We tested every large-format lens we could find and decided on the Tokina Vista set. I loved how they responded to light and color. They’re fast, had a characterful flare and bokeh, and were light enough for our Steadicam system.”

— S.D.