

17 **SELF DEFENSE** PISTOL TRAINING HACKS

**FROM TOP MILITARY,
LAW ENFORCEMENT,
AND COMPETITIVE
SHOOTING INSTRUCTORS**

**ANDREW CURTISS
KEN JAVES
GREG LAPIN
ERIC LEID
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JAMES WASHINGTON**

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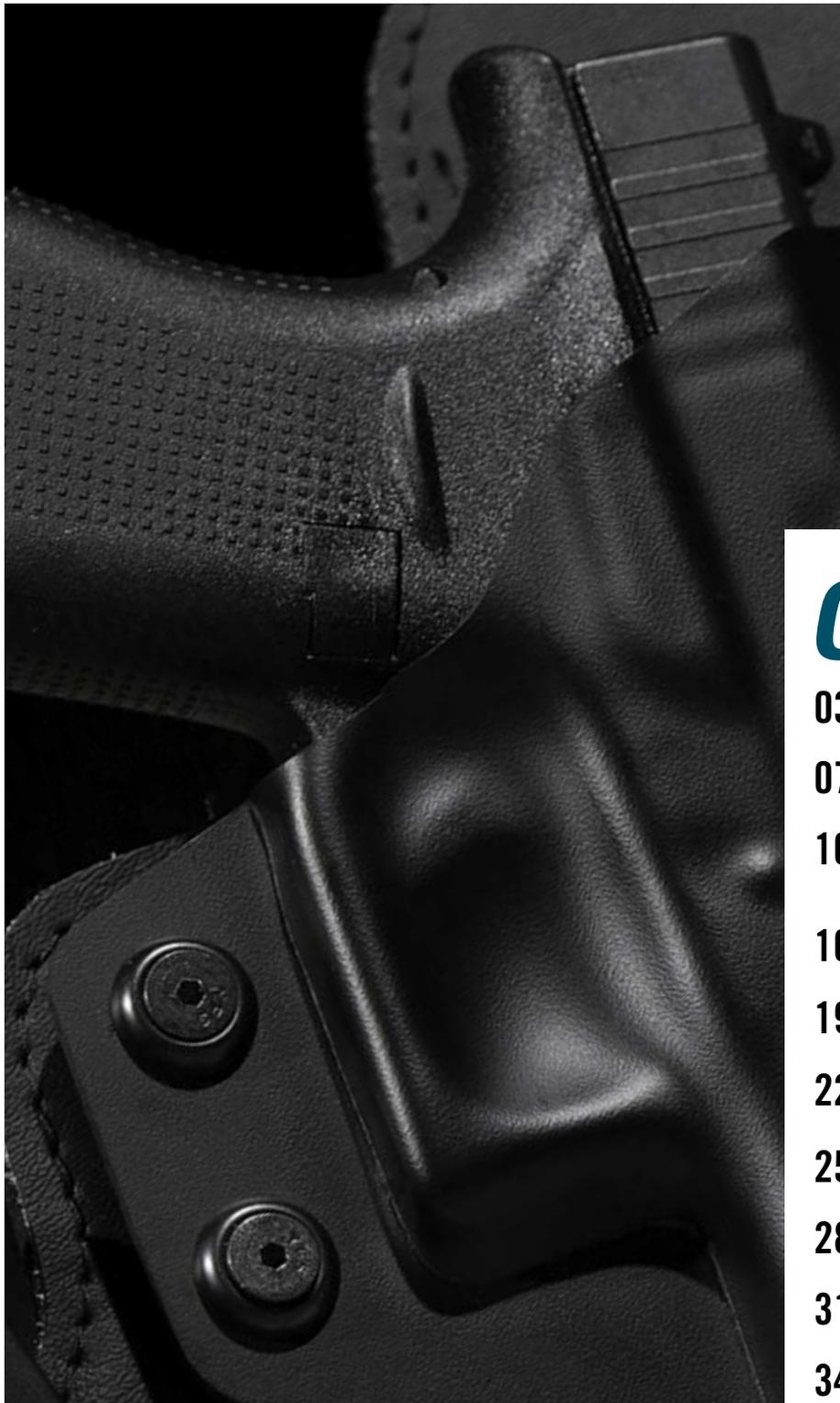


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The term “Marksmanship Fundamentals” should be familiar to anyone with formal firearms training and is well documented in many books and videos on the topic of marksmanship.

The actual number of fundamentals varies based on what firearms religion you subscribe to (anywhere from four to eight that I’ve seen) and what does and what does not constitute a “fundamental” has been the topic of many a lively discussion amongst my peer group. I consider any process that cannot be broken down into sub-processes or components and is necessary for the accurate delivery of a projectile or multiple projectiles to a target, to be a marksmanship fundamental. My goal for this article is to present a brief review of each

fundamental for familiarity’s sake; but more importantly, I want to discuss when we can take shortcuts with the fundamentals, determine when each one is necessary or not, and improve the overall efficiency of the firing process to reduce the time required to engage or increase the number of projectiles delivered to the target in the same time period.

DEFINITION OF FUNDAMENTALS

Sight Alignment: This is the relationship between the front sight post, rear sight ap-

erture / notch (for iron sights) or the optic’s reticle and the aiming eye. This relationship is critical to aiming and must remain consistent from shot to shot. Improper sight alignment when using an optic is commonly referred to as “scope shadow” and occurs when the shooting eye is looking through the tube at an angle. For dot optics the dot must be in the center of the tube or window. Errors in sight alignment result in angular dispersion, which means the distance from the point of aim to the impact will increase as the range to the target increases. If

MARKSMANSHIP FUNDAMENTALS FOR RIFLE AND PISTOL

BY: KEN JAVES

PHOTOS COURTESY KEN JAVES
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sight alignment is performed correctly only parallel dispersion will occur, which relates only to the distance the weapon physically moves or to errors in sight picture. This will typically be much smaller than an angular error.

Sight Picture:

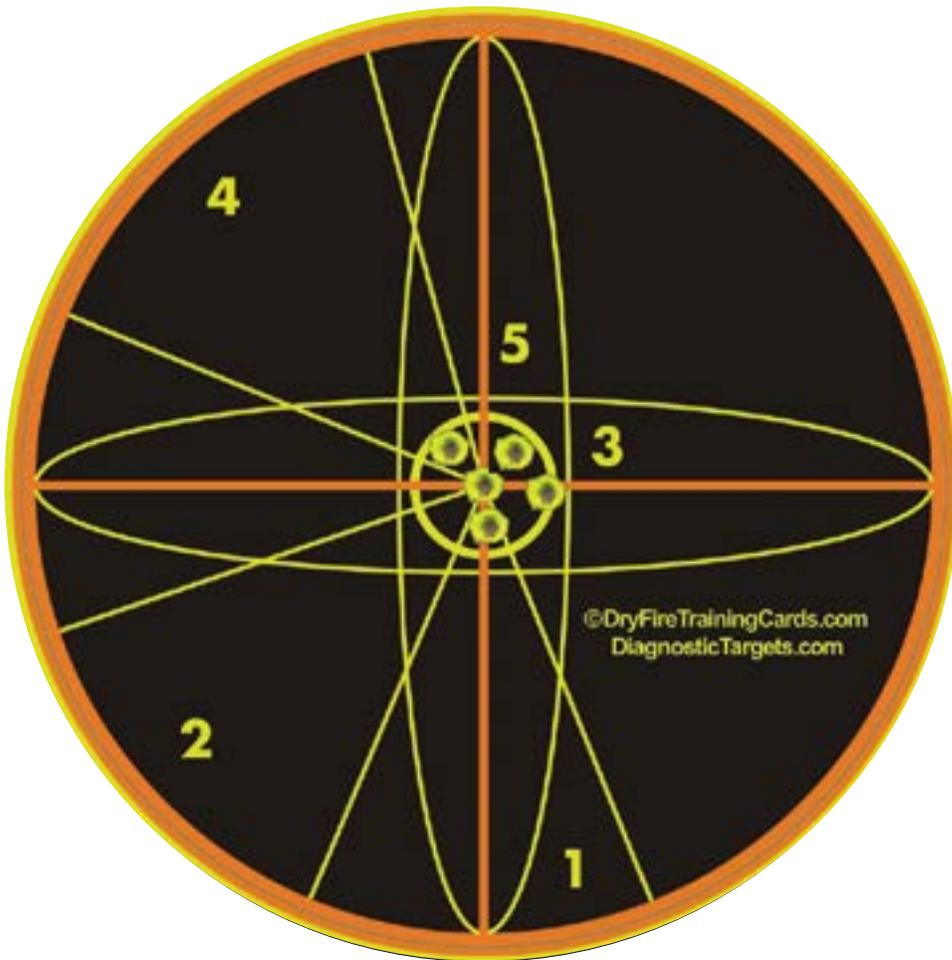
The placement of the tip of the front sight post (or reticle) in relation to the target while maintaining sight alignment. Sight Picture is usually applied in relation to the target or threat and when referring to Center of Mass. It is the center of the largest portion of the target that is available to the shooter to give the highest probability of a hit.

Trigger Control:

The goal of proper trigger control is to smoothly manipulate the trigger to the rear until the shot breaks, without disturbing sight alignment or the sight picture. The press should be biomechanically aligned with the forearm and not place any side-to-side pressure on the trigger or weapon. Pressure should be continuously applied through the breaking of the shot as “flinging” the finger off the trigger can have the same detrimental effects as jerking it to the rear.

Stance:

There are many different shooting stances and variations thereof, however, the most commonly referenced are: Standing, Kneeling and Prone. A separate article could be written about each stance, its proper application, performance and variations. I will just cover a few basic concepts and considerations that are common to all. The stance must provide a stable shooting platform to minimize the amount of perceived movement in the firearm, aid in recoil control and allow the shooter to perform the other marksmanship fundamentals to ensure an accurate shot. I like to describe various stances using a ground-up approach. I look at where the feet are positioned, knees, hips and shoulders in relation to the rest of the stance and the target, elbows and hands (and anything else that may be contacting the weapon: face, shoulder pocket, barricade, etc). For combat, tactical or action competition shooting a balance must be struck between the stability a stance provides and the mobility and field of view the shooter needs for survivability or efficiency of putting rounds on target.



HANDGUN ACCURACY ISSUE CHART, FOR A RIGHT HANDED SHOOTER

(A LEFT HANDED SHOOTER CAN USE A FLIPPED IMAGE OF THIS CHART TO DIAGNOSE ACCURACY ISSUES.) THIS CHART IS A GENERAL REFERENCE AND DOES NOT INCLUDE SHOOTER'S OTHER ISSUES SUCH AS VISION

THE GOAL OF PROPER TRIGGER CONTROL IS TO SMOOTHLY MANIPULATE THE TRIGGER TO THE REAR UNTIL THE SHOT BREAKS, WITHOUT DISTURBING SIGHT ALIGNMENT OR THE SIGHT PICTURE.

Grip:

How the hands are placed on the firearm. This may be the only interface between the shooter and weapon (pistols in particular). The right grip should support the weapon, aid in sight alignment, place the firing hand in a position to naturally manipulate the trigger straight to the rear, effectively manipulate safety mechanisms, activate lights and lasers, assist in recoil management and support the chosen stance. The hands provide an enormous amount of tactile feedback to the shooter and their proper placement and application of the grip can have a huge impact on speed and accuracy.

Breathing:

The movement of the chest cavity can have an adverse effect on stability depending on which stance is being used. Typically, when firing a rifle from the prone or kneeling positions, the shot is fired during the “natural respiratory pause,” a point at the bottom of the breathing cycle where almost all of the air in the shooter’s lungs is exhaled. This provides an easy reference point for shot to shot consistency and reduces the movement of the shoulder. However, the eyes are the most sensitive organ in the body to oxygen levels in the bloodstream. If the exhale is held too long vision will suffer and the



THE BEST, MOST ACCURATE RESULTS WILL BE ACHIEVED WHEN ALL OF THE FUNDAMENTALS ARE APPLIED AS CORRECTLY AS POSSIBLE.

refresh rate of the chemical transmitters in the eyes can slow to the point that the sights can move without the shooter noticing. The shooter has about 6-8 seconds before vision starts to degrade, depending on the individual. This time can be extended by using the natural respiratory pause at the top of the breathing cycle. This may not be ideal for the prone position, due to the instability it causes in the position. However, it works well when standing. Inflating the chest cavity can also aid in supporting the weight of the arms and weapon. Unfortunately, there is rarely the luxury of stopping, setting a perfect breathing pattern and performing a breath hold in a combat situation. The best a shooter may be able to do is be aware of their breathing and they may actually have to force themselves to breathe between shots or during movement. Being able to control breathing in this type of situation can go a long way to controlling the shooter's mental state as well, by reducing heart rate and giving the psyche a feeling of control over the situation.

Follow Through:

Follow through is generally described as

the continued application of all marksmanship fundamentals during and after the shot. Maintaining sight alignment as the weapon settles back to the original sight picture also allows for more rapid follow-up shots. No matter how instantaneous it may seem, there is still a period of time during which the bullet is travelling down the length of the barrel after ignition. Any disturbance in the sights or position of the weapon can result in thrown shots. Although most thrown shots are due to disturbing the weapon just prior to the break of the trigger (anticipation) it is still possible to change the point of impact due to improper follow through during the firing process.

“Cheating” the Fundamentals:

Ideally, we want to apply all of the above marksmanship fundamentals perfectly every single shot in order to guarantee the most accurate bullet placement. However, given time or situational constraints we may not have the ability or opportunity to achieve that level of perfection and may have to settle for the option that gives acceptable effects in the appropriate amount of time. Now let's look at how we can cheat

the system and determine when we can sacrifice certain fundamentals and which ones are essential given the circumstances.

Proximity to the Target/Threat:

The saying, “proximity negates skill” (where a monkey with a crowbar in an elevator could best even the most highly trained individual), applies here as well. The closer the threat is the fewer fundamentals have to be applied to get effective hits (8 inch circle for the purposes of this exercise). Inside of 10 yards sight alignment becomes far more forgiving. With most pistols the front sight can be run to the extremes of the rear sight notch and still hold an 8 inch group at that distance. Sight picture can also be sacrificed to an extent, as long as the front sight is somewhere within the circle, effective hits can be achieved. Trigger control becomes less critical as the distance to the threat is reduced as well. Watch any slow motion video of a professional shooter engaging close targets rapidly and the trigger manipulation hardly resembles the slow, steady, press to the rear discussed above and yet they still manage to obtain a high level of accuracy. Breath control has an insignificant effect as

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well, unless you've stopped breathing completely for some reason. Grip (for pistol) and Stance (for rifle) become the fundamental techniques that counter errors in Sight Alignment, Sight Picture, and Trigger Control. A good grip on the pistol will naturally index and align the sights to allow sufficient accuracy and proper biomechanical tension will aid in recoil control, allow the trigger to be manipulated quickly without throwing shots outside of the 8 inch target zone, and provide for automatic Follow-Through as the weapon will naturally settle to point of aim between shots. Stance and natural body alignment/natural point of aim assist with establishing sufficient Sight Picture at close distances as well as aiding recoil control and index. Most of the control for the weapon is coming from the upper body at this point, so positioning of the shoulders, arms, head, and hands to support the weapon becomes the more important component of stance. I routinely demonstrate this by standing on one foot and engaging targets, sacrificing the stability of my lower half is balanced by ensuring I have good control over my weapon through proper use of the upper body.

As distance to the threat increases or target size decreases, the number of fundamentals that have to be applied to achieve effective hits increases to ensure we have sufficient stability and control of the weapon. Time is almost always directly linked to distance as well, so as distance increases the time allotted to apply the fundamentals also increases. This would allow the opportunity to find a suitable piece of ground or cover, apply the appropriate stance, align the sights on the target, check grip, control breathing and apply proper trigger control and follow-through.

Fundamental Balance:

As you can see from the above proximity example, depending on the situation, some fundamentals will override others in importance during the firing process. The key is to determine which fundamental will have the most effect given the circumstances. Generally speaking the below guidelines apply (keep in mind there are differences in application between rifle and pistol shooting):

1. Grip, Stance and Breathing can be sacrificed as long as the shooter applies good Sight Alignment, Sight Picture and Trigger Control. Realize that follow-up shots will be slower and recoil control will be

poor when sacrificing Grip and Stance.

2. Sight Alignment can be sacrificed at close distances or on large targets and visual verification of sight alignment can be sacrificed if a proper index is established through Grip and Stance. An index is established over time and repetition and is unique to each shooter/weapon combination.

3. Trigger Control can be sacrificed if proper Grip and Stance are applied. In my opinion, far too much emphasis is placed on trigger control for most combative-type carbine and pistol work. Except in the most extreme examples it is unlikely that the force generated by the trigger finger is sufficient to move a 4.5lb pistol or 10lb carbine appreciably as long as proper Grip and Stance are utilized. Anticipation of the shot and resulting recoil causes muscular contractions in the hand and upper body resulting in errors that are commonly misdiagnosed as poor trigger control; but that is a topic for another day.

CONCLUSION

There are a number of factors, known as the Marksmanship Fundamentals, which the shooter can influence no matter what weapon platform is in use. The best, most accurate results will be achieved when all of the fundamentals are applied as correctly as possible. However, due to time constraints, proximity of the threat or other environmental conditions that prevent perfect application of the fundamentals it is essential to understand what can be given up, yet still provide acceptable results given the situation. Hopefully this article helped shed some light on the topic and dispel some common misconceptions concerning the application of techniques fundamental to hitting the target or eliminating the threat.

✓

BIO

Ken Javes (www.sbibumitactical.com) has over 19 years of military and security contracting experience to include multiple combat and contract deployments to South West Asia. He has served with Marine Infantry and Force Reconnaissance units. He possesses instructor certifications from multiple agencies and organizations, and has trained with some of the top military and competitive shooters in the country.

I've been carrying a gun for a living now for just under 15 years both conducting operations and providing training.

Whether you call it lucky or unlucky, I've experienced my share of gun-fights and, whether due to the skill of myself and my teammates or good luck, I am still here. One topic that comes up with a lot of the shooters I train is shooting from the support side, weak side, non-dominant side, non-preferred side or whatever you want to call it. Ask yourself this: If people can argue this much about what you call it, what do you think they have to say about the actual utilization of the various possible techniques?

When I started out, a couple of my trainers preached switching hands with your pistol based on which side of cover you were shooting around. At the time, I didn't really know any better. Hell, these guys were in-

structors. Surely they knew what they were talking about. But when it came time to demo and have the students shoot the drill, shortcomings were apparent. Let's just say this turned out to be unnecessarily slow at best. There are military personnel and tactical law enforcement teams that say they reverse their grips on their rifles to make better use of cover, depending on which side of an obstacle they are coming around. Making the best use of cover is a great thing, but I have noticed many more shooters say they do this than actually do it. Even with no more pressure than two way simulation fire added, few people I have seen actually transition to the other side of the body in this way. Years later, I learned from experience that the best way to have



TRAIN to clear malfunctions and conduct reloads with your support side.

WHY YOU NEED **AMBIDEXTROUS** SHOOTING SKILLS

BY: GREG LAPIN PHOTOS COURTESY GREG LAPIN www.vatatrainningcenter.com



EVERY TIME you go out and train, you should practice one-hand only from both sides (pistol and rifle).



the bad guy stop shooting at you is to shoot them. Notice I didn't say shoot *at* them. So, good use of cover is important, but precision and speed also remain important.

Does transitioning to your support side have a place in the modern gunfighter's toolbox? I say yes; it's all a matter of time, place and purpose. Let's examine pistol skills first.

Having the ability to operate your pistol both strong and support hand as well as being proficient with one-handed reloads, one-handed malfunction drills and general one-handed manipulation (with either hand) is important. I have heard people make the argument that if you get injured so badly in one arm that it is unusable, you will not have the will to fight. I believe that if that is your line of thought, then you will *not* have the will to fight. But for me, *I am* going home to kiss my wife and kids at the end of the day. I have never been shot, but in addition to the scores of recorded cases, I have a few friends who have received these types of injuries and prevailed. A couple of them were catastrophically injured and could not continue to fight, but others were able to continue defending themselves and won their fights.

I have one friend who is most likely alive

The ability to operate your pistol with both strong and support hand, as well as proficiency in one-handed reloads, one-handed malfunction drills and general one-handed manipulation (with either hand) can

SAVE YOUR LIFE.

today specifically because of the skills we are talking about. As a police officer he responded to a domestic disturbance call. While he was confronting the husband and preparing to take him into custody, the wife shot him. He drew his primary pistol and was shot again, in his arm. He fell and dropped his pistol. The husband retreated and returned seconds later with a pistol. Shot once in the lower back and once in his strong-side arm, my friend drew his ankle gun with his support hand and was able to successfully engage both people, saving himself and winning the fight.

There are few guarantees how the human body will react to being shot. I believe that luck and caliber play their part, but that does not mean that you shouldn't train to prevail in the worst possible scenarios. Learning how to run your pistol, rifle or both, while wounded, is a very important skill that no one who carries a gun for defensive purposes should go without.

Transitioning to your support side has another benefit as well, although this one is almost exclusive to the rifle. As I mentioned above, while using a rifle, if you are utilizing cover or concealment on your firing side you will have to expose more of your body. This is also where transitioning sides can be beneficial. Now, let's think back to my initial examples from some of my first trainers. Who reading this article can shoot as fast and accurately with their support side as they can with their strong side? Who feels that they can shoot fast enough and accurately enough to make the transition of sides a tactical benefit and not something that may endanger you or your team? I believe that even some of the best shooters and operators do not do this well and with enough effectiveness in a dynamic environment to deliberately choose to shoot from their support side. Everyone is different, and there are some true freaks of nature out there who can do this well with little training, but everybody can develop these skills with enough good training.

Here is something else to consider. What happens when you run dry or the gun goes click instead of bang? Every time you go out and train, you should practice one-hand only from both sides (pistol and rifle). Some folks are already training their support side shooting skills, but how much do they train to clear malfunctions and conduct reloads with their support side? Like so many other shooting skills, this can be perfected and refreshed dry



THE "SHOULDER BUMP" TECHNIQUE

maintains positive control over the rifle with the strong side hand while shifting the rifle to the support side shoulder. This allows the shooter to use the maximum amount of protection for the body behind support side cover.

and confirmed live. I have also noticed that training experienced shooters to shoot with their support side dominant sometimes helps break plateaus and improve their standard skills.

Let's look at another way to maximize our tactical and training advantages.

Years ago, I was introduced to a technique called the "shoulder bump" by a guy with a lot of successful operational experience. Maintain positive control of your rifle with your strong side hand (some people will have to extend their sling) but now simply drive the rifle forward out of your shoulder pocket and shift it over to your support side shoulder. The exact position will vary somewhat. It is shooter, rifle and body armor specific, but you will have to play with it to see what works best for you. If you had to loosen your sling and you want this technique to be available to you, you will need to leave it loosened.

I have pulled security on corners and hallways while waiting for my teammates using this technique and believe it is comfortable and easy to maintain for long periods of time. Yes, you will be shooting with your non-dom-

inant eye (unless you are cross dominant), but your manipulations, trigger control and whether or not you have to reload or clear a malfunction is carried out as if firing a rifle normally. The ability to do this helps minimize the amount of your body that you must expose from cover if coming around cover on your support side. The other added benefit of using the shoulder bump is that your hands never leave the gun. If you are moving through a structure, you can quickly shift shoulders to the preferred side. If an enemy presents themselves, you cannot be caught while trying to switch your hands around on your rifle. It can be a superior method of maximizing cover and utilizing your support side shoulder.

New tactics and techniques are important. The world and the threats we face are ever evolving, so our skills need to adapt as well. This does not mean that every new tactic and technique is valid and worthwhile. Regardless of what badass unit your instructor comes from, practice what he recommends precisely, give it a fair chance and an hon-

est critique. Training on your support side is good. Doing it because you believe that when shooting a pistol around a left corner you should automatically use your left hand is not good. Be critical of the information you receive. Analyze it, test it and see if it makes sense. If it makes sense, does it fit your specific needs? Everything we do should fit into two categories. Is it safe and is it tactically sound? You are responsible for determining that your firearms training and employment is safe, legal and practical. Stay deadly, my friends. ✓

BIO

Greg Lapin was a detective in the New Orleans Police Department's Criminal Investigative Bureau. He served on US Government protective security details in high-threat regions and conducted classified operations in non-permissive environments. He is a principal of VATA Training Center in Slidell, LA (www.vatatrainingcenter.com).



GUNFIGHTING WITHOUT BULLETS

MUZZLE STRIKES,
BUTT STROKES
AND "THE HATCHET"

BY: ANDREW CURTISS PHOTOS COURTESY ANDY CURTISS www.knife-and-h2h-combat.com

There are occasions in Close Quarters Combat when use of deadly force may not be the most appropriate option for the mission.

In addition, even the best maintained weapons may occasionally have a stoppage and Murphy's law being what it is, usually at the most inconvenient time such as in the middle of battle. We should not expect our weapons to function flawlessly all the time. A stoppage to our primary or secondary weapon will happen at the most inconvenient time. Disengaging is not an option. Neither is relying on team mates who are already heavily engaged. You must fight to stay alive. Without a functioning weapon, one option that may keep you in the fight is to fall back on your training in armed combatives.

When it comes to worst case scenarios and emergency situations, finding yourself engaged in close quarters armed combat and having a primary or secondary weapon go down is at the top of the list. This means your tool has either malfunctioned catastrophically or you are out of ammunition. In either case, you are still engaged in close quarters combat and must continue to push the fight in order

to survive. In addition, operators who routinely engage in Close Quarters Battle (CQB) or Room Clearing occasionally face conflict suddenly or at such extreme close ranges that action must be taken to inhibit the opponent while buying time to determine if firing (delivering deadly force) is appropriate. The problem is that although many people are trained and proficient in basic firearms handling and marksmanship, many are untrained when it comes to armed combatives.

Combatives are not the traditional form of martial arts that people

often expect. There are generally no ranks, no pajamas, no bowing and no weird theories about cultivating a mysterious internal energy and throwing it at an enemy. Combatives are generally simple and effective proven techniques that are often derived from the

HANDGUN GRIPS



THE PISTOL GRIP



THE HAMMER GRIP



ATTACKS MAY THRUST STRAIGHT OUT USING AN INVERTED FIST-TYPE STRIKE OR ONE MAY SUPINATE OR TWIST THEIR WEAPON HAND SNAPPING IT AT THE POINT OF IMPACT.

classical martial arts. Combatives, however, are designed with one purpose in mind—to survive. It doesn't take years of training and conditioning to be able to execute successful combative techniques. Although training and conditioning will increase the effectiveness of combative techniques, they are designed for simplicity.

PISTOL COMBATIVES

What happens when an attacker pounces on you from concealment and fouls your reload? What if you were unable to immediately determine if he is armed or if deadly force is appropriate?

Stance

The basic stance is feet spread shoulder width or slightly wider. The non-dominant leg is forward, thus keeping the power side in the rear. Toes are directed toward the threat, as are the hips. The guard is up to protect the

vital areas of the body and also to be poised for attack. The chin is slightly tucked and the body positioned hunched slightly forward. One school of thought says that the weight is proportioned on the balls of the feet distributed at 60 percent on the front and 40 percent on the rear. Another school of thought has the weight distributed on the balls of the feet and at a 50/50 percentage. Either stance provides good balance and mobility. The key to a good stance is the ability to remain well-balanced, sure-footed and mobile in a 360 degree radius,

all at once. The stance should allow the ability to attack, retreat, angle and evade as well as to defend against a direct impact or charge.

Footwork

The footwork is similar to boxing in that one steps first in the direction of attack or defense and then slides the other foot in trail while maintaining a good stance. Angles are executed by the use of pivoting on the balls of the feet. Movement is synchronized with the attack or defense itself.

Grip

Using the pistol as an impact weapon generally uses one of two variations. The "pistol grip" is the most readily applied as it is the natural firing grip. This grip can best apply thrusting attacks using the muzzle of the weapon. Attacks may thrust straight out using an inverted fist-type strike or one may supinate or twist their weapon hand snapping it at the point of impact. These strikes can either be done as a hard thrusting method or a sharp snapping method where one retracts the weapon almost as quickly as it was thrust out. The latter is comparable to a boxer's jab. These strikes can be delivered two-handed or one-handed to free a non-firing hand for other needs. Keep your trigger finger off the trigger and outside of the trigger guard when using a firearm as an impact weapon.

The Hammer Grip

This grip provides the person wielding the weapon with maximum destructive power and takes advantage of the weight distribution of the pistol to increase striking leverage. The technique is extremely easy and requires only gross motor function. Much like that of a rifle, these attacks can be applied using the



Using the Hammer Grip, Hatchet Strikes are used by snapping the elbow in a chopping manner.



1

USING THE HAMMER GRIP FOR GRAPPLING

1. STRIKE TO BLOCK THE WEAPON ARM.
2. HOOK THE NECK.
3. PULL ATTACKER DOWN AND USE KNEE STRIKES.



2



3

motions X, T, C or 8. Hatchet Strikes are used by snapping the elbow in a chopping manner.

Hooking, Trapping and Locking

Because of the unique shape of the pistol used in a Hammer grip it can be applied in a variety of ways for grappling. Here are three basic examples. By striking and then hooking the neck you can pull your adversary in for a barrage of knee strikes and finish with an elbow. A defender can trap the hand and wrist with a lock and drag his opponent.

There are many, many options, methods and techniques that can be applied to pistol combatives. The key to remember is that the pistol is simply an extension of the empty hand. The more one practices and rehearses,

the more fluid and proficient they can become with any technique. Training and repetition are the two things that will make these techniques efficient.

Pistol strikes can be focused on targets on the head or body. Caution must be applied. These techniques can cause death or severe injury. A pistol is a limited weapon. Marine Colonel Jeff Cooper used to say that, "The value of a pistol is as a tool to use to fight your way to a rifle." So let's discuss some rifle work.

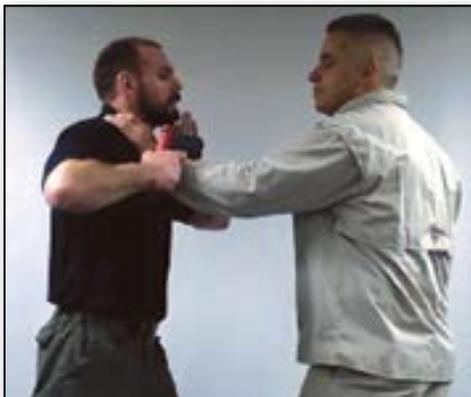
RIFLE COMBATIVES

The rifle is a preferred tool in a use of force or deadly force scenario. Rifle Combatives are the techniques that one would use to neutralize an enemy without the integrated act

of firing being involved. Rifles generally fall under two basic designs. You either have a standard stock rifle (e.g. an M1 or an M14) or a pistol grip (e.g. an AR or an AK). The design is important because it will determine how one would grip the weapon. There are generally two basic and fundamental grips when handling a rifle as a combative, bludgeoning weapon. The pistol grip style rifle provides a unique advantage in that it allows the flexibility to be handled in both ways. The standard stock design does not allow for the same variation of grips.

Grips

The first grip applies to both types of weapons and is known to many as the "Pugil Grip."



TRAP THE HAND AND WRIST WITH A LOCK AND DRAG THE OPPONENT DOWN.



1

The "Pugil Grip" requires the wielder to grasp the rifle by the thinnest part of the buttstock with the strong side hand, and the support hand in a "Coke Can" or "Saber Grip."

RIFLE GRIPS



2

This method is for rifle with pistol grips. The dominant hand maintains hold of the pistol grip and the other hand is in the "Coke Can" or "Saber Grip."



This is named after the popular Pugil Stick. The U.S. Military uses Pugil Sticks to train combatants in Rifle Combatives in Basic Combat Training. This grip requires that the wielder grasp the rifle by the thinnest portion of the butt stock with the strong side hand in a "Coke Can" or "Saber Grip." The support side hand is spaced forward of the strong side hand approximately shoulder width apart; generally grasping the rifle forend with the "Coke Can" style or "Saber Grip." The variation of this is to simply invert either the strong side or support side hand in a reverse Coke Can Grip or Saber Grip.

The next fundamental grip applies to the pistol grip rifles only. This grip entails the person wielding the weapon to maintain control over it with their strong side (dominant) hand on the pistol grip. The support side or weak side hand may grasp the rifle on the forend in a Coke Can Grip or Saber Grip. This hand may also be reversed.

Stance

Stance is very important and can be likened to the adage of a pyramid and its base. In order for the pyramid to be structurally stable it needs a strong foundation. For rifle combatives the basic stance is feet spread shoulder width or slightly wider. The non dominant leg is forward; thus keeping the power side in the rear. Toes are directed toward the threat as are the hips. The guard is up to protect the



THE KEY TO A GOOD STANCE IS THE ABILITY TO REMAIN WELL BALANCED, SURE FOOTED AND MOBILE IN A 360 DEGREE RADIUS.



1



2

The rifle can easily be utilized to defend against an attacker's grab, as seen in this sequence.



3



4

DEFEND



THE "X" MOTION



THE "T" MOTION

SLASH ATTACKS

vital areas of the body and also to be poised for attack. The chin is slightly tucked and the body positioned hunched slightly forward. As mentioned previously for the pistol stance, one school of thought says that the weight is proportioned on the balls of the feet distributed at 60 percent on the front and 40 percent on the rear. Another school of thought has the weight distributed on the balls of the feet and at a 50/50 percentage. Either stance provides good balance and mobility. The key to a good stance is the ability to remain well balanced, sure footed and mobile in a 360 degree radius. The stance should allow the ability to attack, retreat, angle and evade as well as to defend against a direct impact or charge.

Footwork

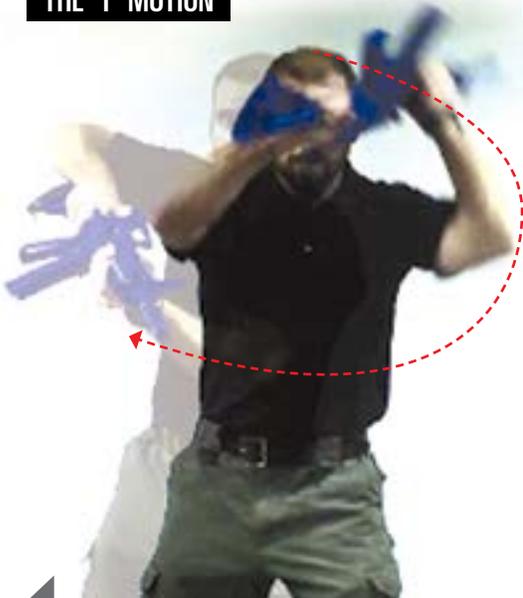
The footwork is similar to boxing in that one steps first in the direction of attack or defense and then slides the other foot in trail while maintaining a good stance. Angles are executed by the use of pivoting on the balls of the feet. Movement is synchronized with the attack or defense itself.

Basic attacks

Attacks can generally be broken down into two categories; slashes and thrusts. This can easily be explained with the analogy of the X, T, C and figure 8 motions.

Thrusting attacks

These are linear attacks and are broken down by either muzzle strikes or butt strokes. These are either executed with an overhand or underhand attack from either the strong or sup-



THE "C" MOTION



THE "FIGURE 8" MOTION

THINK OF A STANDARD FIREARM AS A WEAPON—EVEN IN THE EVENT THAT IT NO LONGER FUNCTIONS AS INTENDED—WHEN URGENTLY NEEDED AS AN IMPACT DEVICE.



MUZZLE LUNGE

THRUST ATTACKS

port sides. These are further broken down into areas of attack being high, low or center. The Muzzle Lunge is executed by thrusting the muzzle into the selected target area. The Butt Stroke utilizes the butt of the weapon in an uppercut, horizontal hook motion or smash.

For further information one may reference the U.S. Army FM 21-150 published in 1992, FM 3-25.150 or MCRP 3-02B. Rex Applegate's Kill or Get Killed and Marine Corps FMFRP 12-80 are also excellent references for this subject matter. My goal is to stimulate your mind to think of a standard firearm as a weapon—even in the event that it no longer functions as intended—when urgently needed as an impact device. If your rifle has a stoppage, you may transition to a pistol. If armed with a pistol, use it as a tool to make your way to a functioning rifle. Never forget that either tool can deliver lethal force with or without bullets. Drills make skills. Go out and drill these techniques. Use only inert weapons for combative training. ✓

BIO

*Andrew Curtiss is a former member of the U.S. Army 3rd Special Forces Group (Airborne). He deployed around the world and is a professional Mixed Martial Arts athlete. He was the 1995 amateur runner-up for NAKAs World Championship Kickboxing and National Karate Champion for various divisions (AIKA). Andrew holds blackbelts in Karate, Taekwondo and Brazilian Jiu-Jitsu. He is a Defensive Tactics Instructor for the United States State Department and author of *Combat Application Techniques*, and *1984 Redux: Say Hello to Big Brother and Economic Collapse*. Instagram: ACurtiss78. Andy is available for training and consulting.*



BUTT STROKE



REVERSE BUTT STROKE



BLOCKS

1. high block
2. outside block
3. low block
4. inside block



vs. KNIFE ATTACK

USING BASIC SLASH ATTACKS, YOU CAN DEFEND YOURSELF QUITE EFFICIENTLY. HERE THE AUTHOR PARRIES A KNIFE-WIELDING ATTACKER.



TRAINING PISTOL GRIP

BY: SHANNON SMITH

**FOR MORE
SPEED AND
ACCURACY**

I think grip is the least understood aspect of practical shooting.

I don't call it a fundamental, as I don't consider it a fundamental. But fundamentals vary from instructor to instructor. They aren't typically right or wrong, often just in how we define things. I look at our goal first; our goal is to hit a target with a bullet fired from our pistol (or rifle, or bazooka or whatever.) With proper *sight picture* and *trigger control* I can hit a target holding the pistol upside down, laying on a picnic table with one hand while holding my breath. So, by my definition, sight picture and trigger control are the only fundamentals. Nothing else really matters if your goal is to hit the target.

Grip is part of what I call the Foundation. Foundation is: Grip, Stance and Draw. Of the foundation, grip is the most important by far and the grip is vitally important for many reasons. You either have a proper grip or you don't. There is no in between. It takes a while to learn, feel and develop a proper grip with a given firearm. I shoot primarily 2011s and

Glocks. [Ed.: No, it isn't a misprint. 2011 is the name manufacturer STI gave to its custom line of 21st century 1911 competition pistols.] I know without a doubt what a proper grip on those guns feels like and can instantly tell during the draw stroke if it is proper or not.

With my competition gear and 2011, I can draw from hands relaxed to a 10-yard target in the sixes. In competition jargon that means six tenths of a second, technically high sixes for me. With a G17 out of kydex or even level two, I can do eights or nines. Getting into legit carry options, G42 from appendix or four o'clock, I'm more like 1.5 seconds.

The two things that make a fast draw fast are reaction to the stimulus and firing at extension. The stimulus in the competition or training world is the buzzer. In the real world it would be whatever action caused you to fear for your life and decide to engage. We'll deal with the firing at extension portion of

this for now. That means when I reach my final firing position the gun ignites instantly. There is no verification of sight picture. There is no conversation with yourself about how great of a sight picture you have. I am working the trigger during extension with the goal of the gun firing at the exact moment I reach full extension. Because my foundation (grip, stance and draw) is flawless, it frees me up mentally to work that trigger and fire at extension. I'm firing because I know I'm that good and I know where the gun is going to be and when it is going to be there because I'm that good. You have to instill that level of confidence in yourself (based on what you consistently demonstrate in training performance.)

The *can't be a little bit pregnant* concept enters here. Your grip has to be perfect for this to work. If my grip is off by 1/8th of an inch, that will result in a miss at ten yards on a man-sized target when firing at extension.

I've actually measured it. In fact, it should probably be measured in millimeters, not inches, but that's all I had at hand. The point is, it isn't very much.

PERFECT GRIP

The key points for a "perfect grip" are: a very high purchase with the strong hand. Strong thumb over weak thumb. High grip with the weak hand as well. Weak hand gripping the strong hand fingers and weak wrist forward and locked. Most of your grip pressure coming from the weak hand, leaving the strong hand and trigger finger relaxed for better manipulation.

I did a little video with a friend in the gun industry while working with another company six years ago. That video has over 800,000 views and I have no idea why, but it is my grip instruction, and my perspective on this hasn't changed much over the years. It can be viewed on YouTube here: <https://youtu.be/KJrA7wMXuuQ> I find it pretty difficult to describe a "perfect grip" for a pistol with words on paper only, but the video will give you more detail.

A model I call the *Shooters Triangle* is the relationship of your extended gun, shoulders, and head. I find this spatial relationship to be pretty repeatable. When we have a decent stance, then draw and present the gun to target we should expect the gun to be aimed at the target with acceptable combat accuracy. Why should we expect that? Because we have a perfect grip and we are that damned good once we have put in the training.

NPA DRILL

Your Natural Point of Aim is where your body naturally wants to aim. This is where our Shooters Triangle comes into play. For this dryfire drill we will be standing facing the target in our normal stance with unloaded pistol holstered. A big key to success on this drill is picking a spot on the target. Aim small, miss small. Pre-draw stroke, I am shooting lasers out my eyeballs focusing on a spot in the high center of the chest of the target. Then I'm going to close my eyes, draw the gun, present to target and freeze! Then open my eyes and see what I've got. There are two things I'm looking for here: First is Sight Alignment. That is the relationship of your front sight and your rear sight. If, when you open your eyes, your front post is not in your rear notch you have a grip problem. Hence the importance of the grip. The second thing we are looking for is

Sight Picture which is your sight alignment in relation to the target.

CORRECTING WITH NPA DRILL

If you do not have proper sight alignment upon opening your eyes, we need to fix the grip. I like to work on correcting this by working it in reverse. We start with a perfect grip on the gun in our freestyle stance aimed at the target. From there, bring the gun back to your high ready position while you maintain your focus on the spot on the target and not changing your grip pressure or hand position. Then present the gun back to target and see if the alignment holds, and you present to an acceptable spot on the target. Do a few reps of that. We are looking for consistent success here before we move on.

Next, from our final firing position, we are going to reverse back through the high ready and place the gun in the holster, but never change or release your strong-hand grip on the gun. Then bring the gun back out of the holster, present to target and see if the alignment and sight picture remain acceptable.

grip and immediately re-grip. Then continue backing it up until you reach your desired start position. Hands relaxed, interview position, rifle ready, whatever position(s) you work from. The goal is getting that perfect grip on a consistent basis. 50 or even 100 dryfire draws per day doesn't really take that long and will pay huge benefits in your shooting.

NPA DRILL LIVE

This should be done in a controlled environment with a qualified instructor and you will get best results after following the dry regimen first. I am hesitant to suggest you shoot live fire with your eyes closed, but it can easily be done safely with a qualified training partner positioned for safety. I do it with my students in every class I teach. It's a little weird at first, but students quickly figure out it really is not that big of a deal.

The drill is the same live fire as it is dry fire. I recommend a 3-10 yard target. Identifying the spot on the target is vitally important. Then gently close your eyes, draw, fire one



IT TAKES A WHILE TO LEARN, FEEL AND DEVELOP A PROPER GRIP WITH A GIVEN FIREARM.

Again, looking for consistency I'd like to get 8-10 of these successful in a row before moving on.

If all this is consistently working for you then your presentation is pretty solid, and your grip is staying consistent. Our next challenge is attaining that grip on the draw stroke. Again working in reverse I'll just let go of the

round when you reach your final firing position and leave the gun on target! Then open your eyes and see what we have. Leaving the gun on target is important, so we know where to make corrections.

I have students do the drill dryfire on the range on the actual targets we'll be shooting, then immediately go into a live fire drill.

I have never had a student not get rounds on target consistently using my instruction techniques. It doesn't have to be a long drawn out drill. You should be able to get on target in just a couple rounds, then be able to get 8-10 consistent shots. That's enough to prove the point.

What's the point you ask? The NPA drill emphasizes the importance of a perfect grip to the student. With the increasing prevalence of cameras in the world, we are seeing more and more gunfights on camera than ever before and interviews of shooters afterward often reveals they were target focused, not sight focused. That is reality in many scenarios, and at the distances we have described, this can achieve combat accuracy results.

As we advance through the training and I push students to shoot a faster first shot, I often find them "aiming" way too much and slowing them down. This is where I remind them they just hit the target with their eyes closed. They don't need traditional aiming (with time consuming and redundant eye movements) to hit a target of that size at that distance. I call it a kinesthetic level of aiming.

Sure, I'm not aiming in the NRA "equal height, equal light" sense, but I am aiming. I'm aiming via my NPA, Shooters Triangle, Grip, Stance, and Presentation, and with *either* technique, *you* are responsible for all your shots do or fail to do.

Without a proper grip, this will not work. YOU have to believe that YOU are good enough to make this work. Good Dryfire and live fire training make that happen. If you have a proper grip, the gun will be aligned on target. Handling the gun until it becomes an extension of you is the goal. Wherever you look and present, that is where the gun goes with sights aligned when it gets there. This confidence frees you up to get on that trigger sooner than ever, igniting the gun at the instant it lands in the acceptable zone of the target.

Of course, you are going to miss your grip from time to time. It happens to all of us. At this point you have two options. Fix it during your presentation or you'll have to use a more traditional sight picture, as your index will be off. I'm to the point that when I miss my grip I can instantly tell which direction

I'm going to be off and I'll index the gun off target to more quickly get *on target*. If I'm clocked a bit too far counter clockwise on the grip for example, That will result in the gun pointing to far right as I present to target, so I will purposefully present the gun to the left of the target area knowing the gun is pointed a bit right thereby speeding up my time to target and ability to work the trigger.

Never forget that you are responsible for the safe and legal handling and storage of your weapons and mastering grip is one of the biggest steps to elevating your skill. ✓

BIO

Shannon Smith is a National Champion across multiple handgun disciplines, member of the US National Team, and a full time instructor/part owner of Universal Shooting Academy (www.UniversalShootingAcademy.com) in central Florida. He is also a veteran of the US Army's 2nd Ranger Battalion. You may reach him through ShannonSmithShooting on the web, FB, YouTube and IG.

PHOTO BY OLEG VOLK WWW.A-HUMAN-RIGHT.COM



HANDLING THE GUN UNTIL IT BECOMES AN EXTENSION OF YOU IS THE GOAL.



ONE HANDED PISTOL

HOW
AND
WHY

BY: JAMES WASHINGTON PHOTOS BY OLEG VOLK www.a-human-right.com

Many people look at one hand shooting as something exclusive to law enforcement officers and military personnel, but with this being the golden age for citizens with Concealed Carry Weapons (CCW) permits (in the USA) many law abiding citizens are in a position to fight back and protect themselves.

Moreover, statistics have shown violent crimes have slightly increased on average, with 15,696 murders, 90,185 rapes, 327,374 robberies and approximately \$390 million in losses during 2015. Violence on the streets of America is a source of consternation and as responsible citizens, and especially par-

ents, we owe it to those in our charge to prepare ourselves for those unfortunate moments in our lives.

The 1986 FBI Miami shootout, where federal agent Edmundo Mireles was forced to operate and fire his Remington 870 shotgun after sustaining injuries to his forearm is a modern reminder why one hand skills

are necessary. Agent Mireles eventually ended the fight with his service revolver one handed. Furthermore, two other agents, Gordon McNeill and John Hanlon also sustained disabling hits to their strong hands in the same engagement.

Another important point to remember is that one hand shooting is not just done for incidents when one arm is injured. If we are with our spouse, children and other family members or friends who may not be trained for and experienced with violent encounters, our support hand will come into place to locate, guide or control them. At the onset of the event they may move right onto the line of force, putting themselves in jeopardy and preventing you from engaging and neutralizing, thus allowing the violence to extend longer than it needs to.

In law enforcement we are given the test, then train for the test and wait for the test to be given again. When this test does not present itself in the following 6-18 months, one handed shooting is usually the first casualty in any firearms training program. In the security field, this is so rarely taught that I am tempted to say it is never taught. I can only recall a single block of instruction being given in this area in the two years of working private security prior to serving twenty years in law enforcement and eight years as a private security contractor. In the law enforcement community injured officer training is not much more than an afterthought or a short block of instruction mandated by the state. This usually amounts to an hour of training once a year and a stage of fire in the qualification test that requires the use of the officer's support hand.

We need to find the techniques that best work for us when we take into account body style, build and prior injuries. One hand shooting is not an exception to this, and we will look at the two most common holds for shooting with a single hand. Our focus here is armed citizens or off-duty armed professionals on the streets of America, dropping our kids off at school or social events, the daily drive to work and gym or running to the grocery store to pick up last minute items for dinner. We will not address body armor and ballistic plates where we might feel the need to square up to a threat to get the most lifesaving value from the protection worn. When you are by yourself, and not holding a position in a tactical formation, a different technique may be better.

By blading your shooting side forward

and locking your shoulder into the bottom of your jawline, with a slight lean and flex in your torso you can establish a secure shooting platform. You also want to roll to the balls of your feet to incorporate agility for moving off the line of force and to cover an escape route. This position allows you the stability you need to aggressively control recoil and drive the gun back onto the target for follow up shots. Even good two-hand shooters have a tendency to tighten their grip while pressing the trigger to the rear on occasion. This is even more common when shooting with one hand. Without the support hand, "milking" the grip is common and more missed shots are registered. Maintain steady grip pressure and operate the trigger finger completely independently of other fingers and independently of the hand. [Ed. Like milking a cow, the shooter squeezes the lower part of the grip, which moves the front sight away from the intended point of impact on the target]

This leads us to the next issue in one hand shooting. To cant or not to cant, by keep-

done in a few simple steps with the use of a shot-timer and a firing range.

I prefer not to cant my pistol when shooting with one hand. When extending to full presentation from the two to the three position, keeping the gun vertical allows for a similar press-out to the threat. Once at full extension, my sights are level and aligned in the same way they have been for the tens of thousands of times they have been during dry practice and live fire over the decades of training. During those times you have discovered exactly how much movement your front sight can have in your rear notch so that you can make hits at different distances and times. This time and space relationship, developed on the range, will give you something to fall back on during violent encounters, even though you might feel that you are going Mach 2 with your hair on fire or downshifted into super slow motion, depending on how your body chemical dump affects you. Furthermore, with your sights vertical, the recoil from your pistol and the sight recovery will



One handed pistolcraft may be necessary with an injured hand or arm or if you must simultaneously perform another task with your other hand.

ing the weapon vertical. The answer to this question is simple and usually comes down to which one you prefer. However, as mentioned before, we need to quantify which position is best for the individual. This can be

be similar to your normal two hand recoil, with a slightly higher climb of the muzzle.

I have found that if I cant my pistol, the placement of the sights on the target will change at different distances. Similar to an AR

rifle with a 50 yard zero, when a right handed shooter cants the sights to the middle line the rounds will hit high left. When I practice one hand shooting at 25 yards I am forced to change my hold to get center hits on 12 inch static steel plates. This is something I don't have to do with a vertical hold. The recoil from the canted hold has a tendency to pull across my face and on recovery when I drive the front sight back onto the target the front sight is buried below the slide of the pistol forcing me to take more time to realign the sight for follow up shots.

That said, I know some solid shooters who use the canted hold (usually less than 45 degrees) for one hand shooting and they do

well within the five yard shooting stage of a state mandated qualification course. We want to always train for the extreme cases so that the fight is easy. Rather than just training to averages, we have to *prove* which technique will work best for you by running common drills and reviewing the par-times and splits.

As mentioned before, when you are shooting one handed, most people only train at distances of five yards or so. At close distances, discovering what technique is best can be difficult to determine. Once distances are extended to 12, 15 and 25 yards the differences will begin to reveal which works best for each shooter. As an instructor, I have my way of driving guns that work best for me, but I

understand the differences a shooter's build, flexibility and strength will have on certain techniques. The ability to adjust and make a system work for different shooters is what breeds success and confidence.

One drill I like to run to gauge and understand the different tempo of my two hand and one hand shooting is the *down, but not out* drill. I will set two steel 12 inch round static plates eight yards away on four foot uprights, three yards to the left and right of the start box. I will then place a six inch steel plate 12 yards away and directly in front of the shooters box, on a two foot upright. When you are trying to establish your baseline

for this drill set your shot-timer on delay, then load and make ready your pistol. On the signal, you will draw and engage the two steel plates at eight yards with two rounds each and then transition to the six inch plate at 12 yards and engage with a single round. I will alter the order in which I engage the first plates to work on draws and transition moving in both directions.

When I am critiquing a technique to determine what works best for me I will run it one way during a drill five or six times and use the average of the three fastest times. I will then tweak the technique and repeat the process to determine which is best for me. This will usually be repeated for two to three trips to the range before I decide on which technique I will incorporate permanently into my training.

The next step in this process is on the next training day when I practice one hand shooting. I will set a par-time on the shot timer and strive to make the time consistently before lowering the par-time. By lowering the par-time it forces me to get on the gas pedal and push until I reach a time that I can only make 80 percent of the attempts. I always conclude the training on a good note; meaning I only end the day after a successful run, even if it means slowing down slightly.

The key to performing at your highest level is consistency and commitment to your goals. Set your bar high and train hard to achieve that level. One handed pistolcraft may be necessary with an injured hand or arm or if you must simultaneously perform another task with your other hand. Once you have developed safe and efficient one hand shooting skills with your dominant hand, you can expand your skills with non-dominant hand training. Draws, reloads, immediate action, and remedial action can all be safely performed with either hand alone. Master them dry and under the supervision of a competent instructor before working them solo. Firearms manipulation is unforgiving and errors can cost a life. ✓

BIO

James Washington served as a patrol officer, field training officer, firearms instructor and police sergeant. He served on the FBI Gang Task Force in Chicago for six years and is a firearms & tactics instructor for multiple agencies and armed citizens. www.bigh-desert-defensive-shooting-school.net



If we are with our spouse, children and other family members or friends who may not be trained for and experienced with violent encounters, our support hand will come into place to locate, guide or control them.

Accuracy is fine - speed is final! That's probably not the way you've heard that sentence before.

It's normally reversed and originally attributed to Wyatt Earp I think, though many tactical instructors have used it over the years. Why reverse it?

I have been shooting in competition for almost 20 years and teaching professionally for 12. Early in my years as a shooter and instructor we often said, "slow down, get your hits, speed will come" or some words to that effect to a new or struggling shooter. Why? It took me a while to figure it out and come around, but it's vastly easier to teach accuracy than it is to teach speed. Aligning your sights and pulling the trigger slowly is easy to teach and easy to do. The big challenge is pulling the trigger quickly without moving the gun off target.

During my years of instructing, it has been way more difficult to get the 35 to 60-year-old who has been shooting in some fashion for

many years to cut loose and push the speed envelope. This is likely due to overbearing safety concerns or a previous lack of access to ranges where you're allowed to cut loose, miss the center of the target, miss the target—

Hell, miss the berm. It happens and training that never creates a safe environment to push those limits is incomplete. Give me the 15 to 25-year-old who grew up on video games, has great hand-eye coordination, flying around the range with great foot speed but can't hit the broad side of a barn from the inside. I can teach that guy how to hit the target while maintaining his speed!

Why is this important for the tactician or concealed carry practitioner and why would I say, speed is final? Allow me to offer a couple of scenarios to get you thinking and to formulate your own answer: You are at the gas station pumping gas. You're approached by a

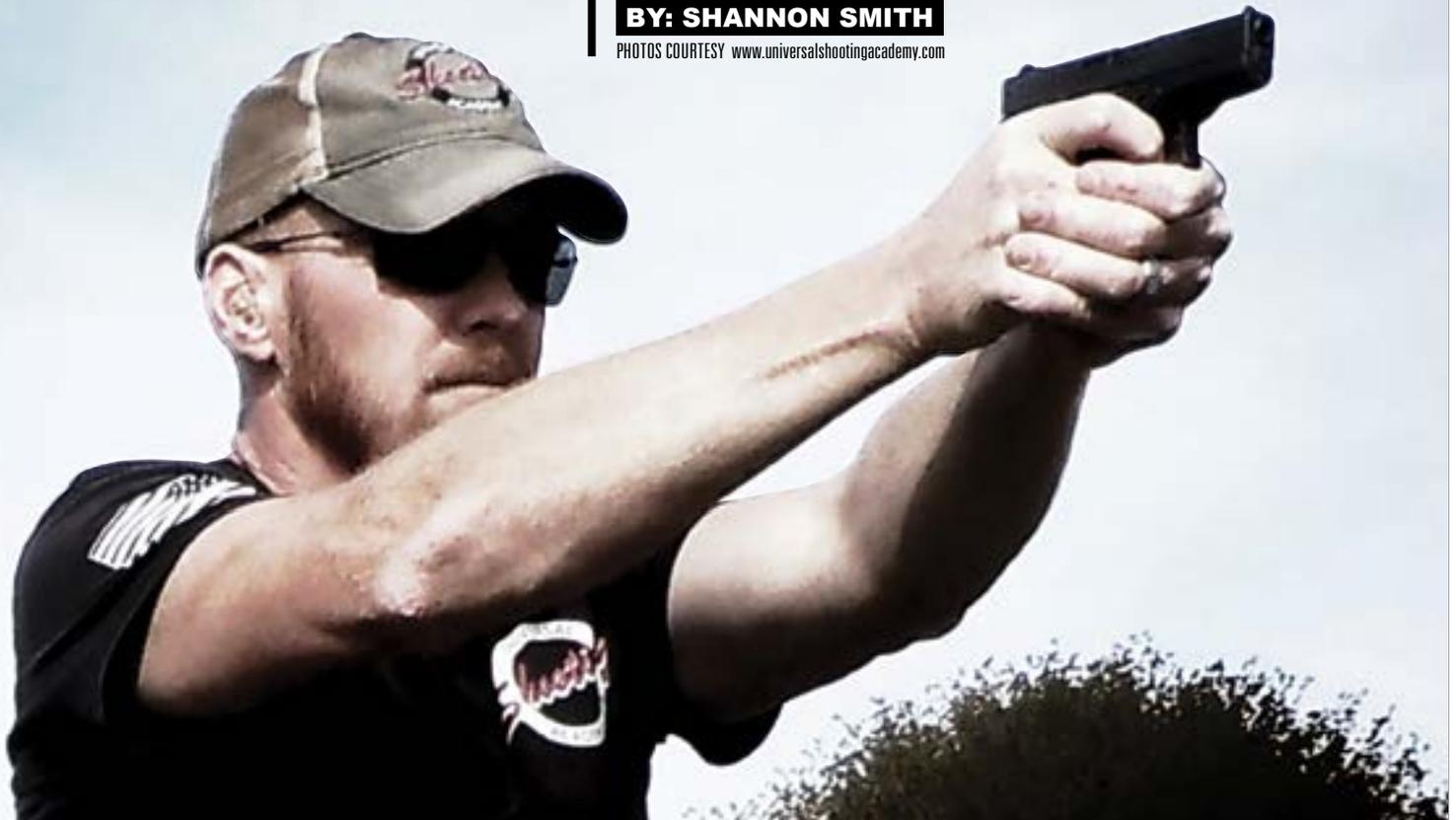
guy with an antifreeze can in his hand asking for a little bit of gas, because he ran out and has no money. You politely say no. He then produces a large knife and advances on you. Behind him is a clear background. Would you rather have a skill set to draw and hit him in the thigh or knee in 1.51 seconds or have a skill to hit him center mass in 2.6 seconds?

Maybe you're alone in the back of the local 7-11 grabbing a six-pack of Yuengling beer when a drug crazed, shotgun wielding ex-boyfriend of the clerk bursts in blazing. He kills her and is then looking for anyone else in the store. You are not near an exit and there is no cover. You've had time to draw and get ready. As he's coming down the aisle at you, how many rounds would you like to get off between his neck and pelvis in the two seconds it takes him to close the distance from 25 to 5 feet? One round? Two? Five? Six? Ten?

ACCURACY IS FINE SPEED IS FINAL!

BY: SHANNON SMITH

PHOTOS COURTESY www.universals shootingacademy.com





START WITH DRY-FIRE DRILLS, AND THEN LIVE-FIRE EXERCISES.

WHY TRAIN SPEED?

You can guess where I stand on these questions. As we used to say in the airborne world when posed with a problem, “You have the rest of your life to correct the situation.” As to the questions posed above, I would much rather hit the assailant sooner rather than later, regardless of bullet placement. Getting rounds on target ASAP is my main goal in a self defense situation. While he’s rolling around on the ground from an exploded kneecap I can continue to engage center mass should it be necessary. I certainly wouldn’t want to give up a half a second or a full second to the bad guy. Even if they suck, they could still get lucky. As to the second scenario, I would want to deliver as many rounds as necessary to stop the threat. Hopped up on adrenalin or drugs, caliber has limited importance and a traditional well placed shot may not do it either. You will need to shut him down either neurologically or structurally. That will usually require multiple rounds on target. Quick trigger manipulation while maintaining solid fundamentals will be required. *Fire quickly and accurately.*

GEAR CONSIDERATIONS

I can draw and deliver multiple rounds on target faster with my .40 2011 out of a speed rig than I can with my G17 from Kydex, which I can do faster than my G42 from inside the waistband. Shocking, I know, but you have to take into consideration what and how you carry to develop a standard for speed. A J-frame from the ankle isn’t going to be fast to draw nor deliver multiple rounds (not to mention the fact you only have five.) But if that’s what you have to roll with due to work or wardrobe considerations it’s way better than nothing.

Thunderwear is another option. I had a student show up for a tactical class with a Springfield XD. I didn’t see any gear, holster or anything. I asked him if he needed to borrow or buy something and he said no, he was using *Thunderwear*. It’s a pouch that holds your gun. It goes around your waist under your pants and the gun rides in your pelvic region. Dumb, right? I thought so too. But it turns out this guy was a dentist. He wore scrubs to work, shirt tucked in, no belt, just underwear under his scrubs. He said that’s how he carries and that’s how he wanted to

train. I said, “Alright dude, let’s do this.” He did great throughout the class. Not a fast draw, but he worked with what he had. He had made the decision to carry and was getting the training to be better. Good for him.

I see a lot of amazing appendix draws on YouTube. G17 w/ light riding high AIWB in what I call the WWE holster as it looks like the championship belt all under a super light t-shirt; usually an Affliction t-shirt. If that is how you—for real, no BS—carry, then good for you. I live in Florida. It’s eleven-billion degrees, seven months out of the year. Most days, I wear cargo shorts and a tee-shirt. Carrying a full size gun is not impossible but I don’t find it practical. 99 percent of the time I carry a G42 in a Blade Tech IWB either appendix or 4 o’clock along with a spare magazine in a Snag Mag. Carry position depends on what I’m wearing and where I’m going.

CREATE A STANDARD

It is difficult to put a time standard on a skill set with varying types of gear. Two seconds for a draw from hands relaxed to a single shot center mass on a 15 foot target is probably a good place to start. Obviously, the G17 from



DRAWING FROM CONCEALMENT CAN BE SLOWER THAN DRAWING FROM OPEN CARRY, SO IT'S IMPERATIVE YOU DRILL, DRILL, AND DRILL FOR SPEED!

appendix should be much faster and the J-frame from the ankle will be much slower. Similarly I would say two seconds is a solid time for five or six rounds center mass to a 15ft target starting from a high-ready position. Again this depends a bit on what you are shooting but .25-.30 splits would be solid.

TAKE ME HOME

There are many areas to work on and increase speed, but we have identified and been working with two scenarios so we'll talk about those. *Draw time* and *trigger speed*.

Draw time is simply governed by hand speed and basic gun manipulation. It is easily improved upon in dryfire. My standard saying about dryfire is, "It's only you and Jesus in the room. You are the only two people that know if you are working the drill correctly, so don't just go through the motions during dryfire, pay attention and focus each and every repetition.

Ensure your firearm is empty! Best practices are to also ensure **no ammunition** is even in the same room, and still **only point in a safe direction.** You will need a shot timer that can be set with a par time. Its a good idea to own one anyway for your live fire practice, but if you don't have one there are apps you can download that will work. I come from the crawl, walk, run school of learning and like to execute every drill in super slow motion. I not only do this when learning a new skill, but I go back to it even on standard drills after 20 years. I believe it helps ingrain the feel and basic movements.

Based on your skill level, I would set a par time for four, six or even eight seconds. From concealed and hands relaxed at your sides on the buzzer, you will draw, present the gun to target and execute a good trigger pull to a target placed at 10 or 15 feet. (I use one-third size targets in my man cave.) That should be more than ample time to guarantee a perfect grip, presentation and trigger pull. The key to presenting the gun with sights aligned is a good grip, and could be the foundation of another full article.

*You and Jesus...*remember? When you execute the trigger pull, whether you are using a target focus or sight focus (another possible full article) you must ensure your sight does not leave the target when the hammer or striker falls.

Next, reduce the time by half and go for more reps. Then, reduce the time by half again with the goal of being under two seconds. It may take a while to reach this goal, but you need to have goals.

Dryfire Draw Workout – 25 reps at super slow Mo speed. 25 reps at half speed. 50 reps at full speed. Four times per week. Log your times so you can adjust, increase or decrease as needed for the next workout.

Next is our trigger speed drill, live fire. This is basic fundamentals of marksmanship executed at a high rate of speed. From a high ready position on the audible start signal you will extend and present to a 10-15-foot distance target firing six rounds as fast as you can physically pull the trigger. We're working with a target focus here and we'd like to hold shots within the C Zone of an IPSC Target or -1 Zone of an IDPA target within a total time of two seconds. Trigger control (another possible full article) requires a straight back manipulation: constant, consistent, smooth application of pressure.

If you find you can't keep the shots in the desired area, you will need to manipulate the trigger more carefully. Notice I didn't say *slower*. Pulling the trigger has nothing to do with speed, it has to do with technique. You can pull the trigger correctly quickly. You just need proper training and practice.

If your accuracy is pretty good, but you can't meet the time standard, you simply need to pick up your trigger speed. Yeah, your accuracy may suffer a bit as you increase speed, but this is not a bullseye drill. We have a huge

acceptable scoring zone—use it. Our goal is speed here, not a one-hole group. Let it loose! Your life could literally depend on speed. You are solely responsible for your safety and skills. Inappropriate gun handling is dangerous, but producing your pistol too slowly or firing too slowly for the circumstance is dangerous too.

Live Fire Trigger Speed Drill – From high ready, six rounds to a 15-foot target. Goal is holding C or -1 Zone in two seconds or less. 10 runs each time you have a live fire range session.

LIVE FIRE EXPERIMENT

We run a competition at my range, Universal Shooting Academy (USA) we call Defensive Pistol League. It's centered around guns and configurations that folks actually carry. It gives our clients an opportunity to work their guns and gear in a somewhat stressful and competitive environment. As you know, most ranges won't let you draw from appendix, pocket, purse or whatever you choose. Here at USA you can. In preparation for this article and knowing the two scenarios I would be talking about, I set them up at a match on the weekend after Thanksgiving. Below is a chart showing shooter ability level as subjectively judged by me, and time for each drill. It should give you some base line on skills out there and maybe an idea where you fit in. Keep in mind, what I call novice is relative. These are not novice shooters in general, they are novice relative to skill sets on my range. ✓

| DRILL | NOVICE | EXPERIENCED | MEDIAN |
|----------------|--------|-------------|--------|
| Draw to 1 shot | 2.38 | 1.51 | 2.00 |
| 6 round rapid | 2.84 | 1.46 | 2.38 |

BIO

Shannon Smith is a National Champion across multiple handgun disciplines, member of the US National Team, and a full time instructor/part owner of Universal Shooting Academy (www.UniversalShootingAcademy.com) in central Florida. He is also a veteran of the US Army's 2nd Ranger Battalion. You may reach him through ShannonSmithShooting on the web, FB, YouTube and IG.



BACKUP PISTOLS

GOOD, BAD AND UGLY

BY: JAMES WASHINGTON

We all have our opinions concerning the carrying of backup guns.

Those that are for or against the practice use statistics and historical events for their arguments. Those that argue against the practice use statistics that state the average shooting lasts for three shots, at three yards, for three seconds, thus nullifying the need for a backup gun. Then, mostly from the law enforcement perspective, look at historical events like the 1963 "Onion Field" event in California in which an LAPD officer was held at gunpoint by a subject who was able to get his partner to surrender his weapon as well. One officer was executed, the second escaped disarmed. Consider the 1991 killing of a constable in Nacogdoches, Texas. He pulled over a vehicle with three men inside. The constable grew suspicious of the suspects and requested to see what was inside the trunk of the vehicle. The suspects disarmed the constable, then killed him with his own pistol. In both of these cases and many more, an informed argument can

be made that a backup gun might have saved lives.

I think one has to make this decision based on the environment they will find themselves working in. In the case of law enforcement officers, a backup gun is without a doubt the smart thing to have. There are plenty of cases to show that backup guns have saved the lives of law enforcement officers nationwide, whether it was during shootings or physical confrontations with multiple offenders.

I have known hardcore narcotic and gang specialist coppers who carry two guns wherever they go, on duty and off in case they were "made" while on the town. I have always made it a point not to play anywhere I worked, but have had occasions where I ran into those situations while socializing and where I was at a slight disadvantage numerically. Fortunately, none of these times resulted in a confrontation for me, but many have for others and I understand how those times



Good, bad or ugly - there are many choices from compact semiautos, J-frame revolvers, and ultra-concealable but small caliber handguns. From top to bottom: CZ RAMI 9mm, S&W 442, Kel-Tec P-32.

would require anything possible to give you the upper-hand. We will limit our scope to the average off duty officer and CCW citizens, particularly those in states that only allow CCW carriers to possess one gun at a time.

First, let us look at what makes a good backup gun. Without a doubt, comfort is one of the most important issues when it comes



Concealability isn't everything. Is the gun too small for your hand? Can you make fast follow-up shots with it? Is the caliber effective to stop an attacker? (Top inset, Freedom Arms .22 Magnum. Above inset: Colt Mustang .380.)

There are plenty of concealable handguns on the market that can serve as a reliable backup. Above, from left to right: Colt Detective Special .38 Spl., S&W Model 640 .357 Magnum, S&W Model 66 .357 Magnum, Taurus 617 .357 Magnum.

to committed, every day carry. However, often times this need to be comfortable trumps the need to be in possession of a legitimate-caliber gun. I am a firm believer in diameter and weight, maybe not to the extent that I am with my hunting rifles, but even though humans are thin skinned with low bone density you still need direct penetration with both large temporary and permanent wound channels. This cannot be as reliable with the sub-calibers that some decide to carry as a defense gun. Yeah, I hear the stories about

how dangerous the .22LR can be, but I also know nearly a dozen guys with .22LR bullets lodged in their bodies somewhere. This includes a personal friend who has walked around with a 22 bullet in his lower leg since 1988, after he was shot while standing in a

breezeway in Cabrini Green (Ed: Notorious Chicago public housing). That's not counting the fact that he was able to chase the offender up five flights of stairs before he started feeling pain in that leg, but was still able to walk to the curb and wait for an ambulance to arrive.

You are able to find small-frame reliable guns in 9mm and .40 calibers that allow for comfortable carry, yet have high *shootability* factors, which brings us to the next requirement: When the time comes to deploy your weapon to defend yourself and possibly those you love, you're going to need a gun that you can drive hard and fast. Once again, we see that comfort, though important, cannot be the sole deciding factor. I am without a doubt a semi-auto pistol guy, but with larger hands I can't shoot small, sub-compact pistols. My smallest compact pistol is a Smith and Wesson M&P 9mm, but with hand size being a handicap, I have become a huge fan of the Ruger SP101, 2.25 inch revolver, so that

I can have the ability to drive the gun hard if needed, while it still gives me carry comfort.

The revolver also gives you additional tactical applications by not having a slide as part of its cycle of operation. You can fire revolvers from a pocket, extremely close to the body without having to cant the weapon, especially if you have a revolver that is hammerless or has a shrouded hammer. Often times, the conversation reverts to the shortcoming of the revolver reload. I think that most of us can agree that from a concealed carry perspective, the revolver reload will always be slower. However, looking at the average shooting statistics we are back to 3 shots, 3 yards in 3 seconds.

Furthermore, revolvers are a little more forgiving when drawing from an alternative carry position other than the strong side belt carry. If one fails to get that perfect draw stroke the revolver can still be fired with accuracy and speed beyond contact distances without having to adjust your grip for the gun to operate properly. Those of us who train on a regular basis know that even from a duty holster, when you start adding speed and movement, establishing a firm final firing grip perfectly is not guaranteed.

Let's get down to brass tacks and discuss the important elements of the backup gun carry issue. Because of the carry options, you will have to decide where on your person you want to carry your backup gun: Strong side pocket, ankle holster, appendix carry, special overpriced 5-11 undershirt carry—or one that I hate the most—small of the back (SOB) carry, which is a perfect name for it in my belief. SOB carry forces you to open yourself up, on your strong side to alternate attacks. During classes, I like to break down attack and response cycles into quarter second intervals. Explaining that the average person can fire four rounds in a second, breaking down to one round every quarter second. The additional time it takes to move your hand past the traditional strong side carry to the small of the back and then returning to that strong side carry position will cost you a quarter second going each way. With this in mind, the disadvantage of ankle carry can also be seen. This gives your attacker a half second more, which means two rounds inbound. Additionally, about half of the violent armed attacks are done with multiple offenders, which means speed is paramount.

This brings us back to what is most impor-



ALL IMAGES THIS PAGE - BSHOUTS

HOW AND WHERE WILL YOU CARRY YOUR BACKUP?



tant and that is *training* and *mindset*. When you decide the best place for you to carry your gun, it is then time to train. In training, you can confirm proper carry of your weapon or fix it. Can you quickly get to your gun and safely draw it to make accurate hits from a holster? I highly recommend using a holster and not gangster carry with it just stuck in your waistline. I've been around police officers most of my life and have heard stories of how the gun just wasn't in the right place when they reached for it or that it made a very memorable sound when it hit the ground. Your training has to be dynamic enough to discover any shortcoming in your carry method.

To train seriously, you have to stay away from most indoor ranges because of their prohibition against movement, drawing from concealment and firing multiple shots. This is just the starting point for safe shooters to conduct serious training. Being able to grab a target that represents a possible offender and firing, all while moving off the line of

force is necessary. Transitioning from contact distance to three yards, while engaging a second offender, then to five yards while engaging another offender with solid rapid hits is worthwhile. Conducting a fast reload and then addressing your threats in the immediate area is something to practice.

These are techniques you need to learn before you are assaulted in real life. The essential tools for survival need to be taught by qualified instructors and safely practiced on a regular basis. Just as important, you need to know your state's laws concerning the elements of self-defense and review them regularly because case law changes. ✓

BIO

James Washington served as a patrol officer, field training officer, firearms instructor and police sergeant. He served on the FBI Gang Task Force in Chicago for six years and is a firearms & tactics instructor for multiple agencies and armed citizens. www.big-desert-defensive-shooting-school.net



POINT SHOOTING

BY: ERIC LEID

Everything old is new again. –Peter Allen

This is a phrase I like to use often, especially when I see or hear something posed as a new or revolutionary idea. Firearms and tactical training are no exceptions. Recently I had a discussion about the relevance of point shooting in modern firearms doctrine. With the evolution of premium tritium sights and even slide mounted red dot sights on pistols it would seem that quick aimed fire is within the capability of even mediocre shooters, but is it possible to make substantial hits on target quickly without using your sights? Are there advantages to this skill? How much time will it take to develop?

“Point shooting” is described in Chapter 2,

Section II, US Army Field Manual 23-25, *Combat Training With Pistols & Revolvers* as follows:

When a soldier points, he instinctively points at the feature on the object on which his eyes are focused. An impulse from the brain causes the arm and hand to stop when the finger reaches the proper position. When the eyes are shifted to a new object or feature, the finger, hand, and arm also shift to this point. It is this inherent trait that can be used by the soldier to rapidly and accurately engage targets.

This is a pretty general description, and one can only assume that it would still require a

fair amount of practice to be considered combat effective. We can see by the simple design or complete lack of sights on early flintlock, wheel-lock and black powder cap and ball pistols that pistoleros of those eras likely used point shooting techniques that evolved from trial and error.

Even noted subject matter experts such as Eric Sykes, William Fairbairn and Rex Applegate of World War II era Special Operations Executive (SOE) and Office of Strategic Services (OSS) training fame advocated point shooting. Through their combined experience with the Shanghai Municipal Police in the turn of the last century and their revolu-



Perfect score on the author's qualification course of fire. He delivered precision aimed shots at 25 yards, point shooting at 3 yards and blended techniques in between to meet time constraints.

Photo courtesy of the author.

tionary development and use of shoot houses, they determined that point shooting was the fastest and most reliable technique to deliver effective shots on target in close combat.

In the course of my shooting career, I've seen several variations on this theme. In both the Marine Corps and the army I've seen this concept presented as "quick-fire", quick-kill" and "reflexive fire"; essentially point the pistol as you would point your finger and press the trigger without disturbing the weapon's orientation. For rifle you would come to full presentation (the high ready) and engage your target while looking over your sights. At close range and with a little practice, both techniques prove reasonably effective. These techniques were very useful in days before everyone had weapon mounted lights, lasers and red dots on their rifles.

When I got out of the Marine Corps in 1991, a buddy of mine invited me to come down and check out the range operations of the Detroit suburb where he was an instructor. The technique they used was to draw, raise the arm with locked wrist and elbow (as one would do as if throwing a bowling ball for example) and as soon as the pistol was in the line of sight, squeeze the whole hand to fire a shot. I found this method to rely on mostly gross motor skills and was easy to teach and learn. This of course was far removed from what I had learned in the USMC Rifle and Pistol Coaches course, but it did seem to be effective at close range.

After retiring from the Army, I worked as a police officer in a mid-size North Georgia City. The local sheriff's department had contracted one well established tactical training company whose fundamental doctrine was based on TTP's (tactics, techniques and procedures) developed by the Israeli Defense Force. After four days of defensive tactics training we conducted a range training evolution in "Israeli Combat Shooting." The technique taught was a pretty radical departure from what I was accustomed to. In the initial steps, the shooter squats, draws, bringing his elbows high, and basically spirals the pistol towards the target acquiring the support hand grip, and discharges the pistol once it gets to full extension. The shooter focuses on the target, not using his sights at all. The chief instructor and his assistants were all very adept at this style of shooting. As full time and part time officers, they stated that they could shoot qualifying scores on their agencies' qualification course using these techniques. The instructor also caveated that in Israel they carry in condition 2 (loaded magazine, no round in chamber), and fire one handed, slingshotting the slide to chamber a round as the pistol is rotated out to full extension and breaking the shot.* The "Israeli Combat Shooting" technique no doubt works well for these folks, but after a fair period of trial and error I felt I was giving up too much of my own personal skill to relearn this particular technique.

I've been a martial arts enthusiast since I was a kid growing up in the 1970s. And like a lot of kids I idolized Bruce Lee. One of his most useful quotes is: "Absorb what is useful, discard what is not, add what is uniquely your own." That is precisely how my personal shooting style has evolved.

I consider my shooting techniques in two categories, "performance shooting" and "defensive shooting." Performance shooting is what I consider tactical, qualification and competition shooting. Typically this would include a full size duty or competition gun, holster, mag pouches and appropriate clothing and gear and possibly personal protective equipment (PPE). In defensive shooting, I'm typically carrying a small framed pistol with holsters and mag pouches designed more for concealment than speed or security, and of course, wearing street clothing.

For performance shooting, we teach the "four point draw." It has been demonstrated as an effective way to break down the steps for this critical task. Position one is to break the bail/defeat the retention device and establish the grip while the non-firing hand simultaneously moves to center-chest. In position two we clear the holster and orient the pistol towards the threat, angling the slide outboard slightly to prevent the reciprocating slide from catching our clothing. Here we can engage the target by point shooting if we are within grappling range much the same as the "speed rock" or "shooting from retention" techniques. At position three we marry up the support hand with the firing hand establishing our two handed firing grip. Again, here we can fire if necessary by "point shooting" if a threat is at point blank range. Position four is bringing the pistol to full extension as we acquire our sights. Notice that at positions two, three and four we can point shoot if necessary. What would make that determination? Your proximity to the threat or target and the proficiency with which *you* can deliver this type of fire. In fact, at farther distances like 25 yards, I slow down my cadence slightly to ensure I pick up a clean sight picture for clean hits. At closer distance, 15-7 yards I pick up my sight picture, but in the interest of speed my sight picture will be less than perfect, with a larger "wobble area" in my sight picture, but still good enough for hits in the hydraulics of the upper thoracic cavity. Seven yards and in, I'm essentially using the same draw stroke motion but firing immediately as my pistol



CLOSE RANGES OR UNUSAL POSITIONS MAY MEAN YOU CAN'T GET A PROPER SIGHT PICTURE.

comes to full extension, either using the rectangular outline of the back of my Glock as a sight reference or not using my sights at all. If you've put the amount of repetitions in necessary for a good one-second draw stroke, you may be surprised to find that you can still land a solid hit without using your sights. Also worth noting is my trigger manipulation changes based on my proximity to the threat as well. For longer shots I'll use a smooth press with a short reset before breaking the next shot. At closer ranges I'll use a faster press and nearer to full range of motion on the trigger. At closer ranges it may be necessary to fire multiple shots quickly, and I don't

want to chance short-stroking the trigger.

In performance shooting, we are often operating as a member of a team and have a sector or lane to clear or a position of dominance to establish. Defensive shooting is more dynamic with fewer known variables. As a result, I change some of the techniques. I carry a Glock 43 in appendix carry. I use my support hand to clear my clothing while my firing hand establishes my firing grip. I focus my eyes center of mass on the threat and come to full presentation with my strong hand only and fire as soon as the pistol comes into my line of sight (without actually looking through my sights), and as many times

necessary to stop the threat. All this is done while moving forward, backward or laterally and then scanning for additional threats. I can establish a two handed grip at any time to address additional threats if necessary. If I am inside grappling range, I'll use my support hand to cover or deflect a blow, or push off to increase my reactionary gap, draw and again fire using the "speed rock" or "shooting from retention" technique. Again, moving forward, back or laterally, scanning for additional threats.

There is a good chance that you have been admonished "never" to point shoot at some time in your training. You may even work for an agency that forbids point shooting, citing liability concerns. I think it is worth noting, however, that you are responsible for damage done by every round that comes out of your weapon regardless of how you brought the weapon to bear against your target. You will also be the one to suffer the consequences if you are unable to stop an attacker in time. I also think it is worth sharing that many of the agencies that forbid point shooting for their employees have stages of fire in their qualification courses of fire where their employees are nearly obligated to point shoot short range, fast time limit stages of fire to pass.

I suggest that you use proximity to threat as your guide as to when to point shoot or use aimed fire. I try to use sighted fire whenever I can (and call my shots as well). At closer ranges, speed may be an increased factor and this is where point shooting really shines if it is a skill you have developed. As always, (perfect) practice makes perfect. It is beneficial to put in substantial training time for precisely aimed fire before considering any point shooting training. Get those quality repetitions that you'll need to perform under pressure and maintain an accurate understanding of where the limits of *your* performance capability are today. ✓

BIO

Eric Leid has more than 25 years of military and law enforcement experience, the majority of which was as a U.S. Army Ranger and Ranger Instructor. Currently, Mr. Leid works as an independent contractor providing training and "operational support" to U.S. Government agencies in high-threat zones.

EDITOR'S NOTE: TOP-TIER ISRAELI UNITS CARRY "CONDITION ONE" CLOSED BOLT WEAPONS (ROUND IN THE CHAMBER, SAFETY ON) JUST AS AMERICAN UNITS TYPICALLY DO.



POCKET PISTOLS

FOR SELF DEFENSE

BY: MAC MACKINZIE

Carrying firearms for personal protection is a tremendous responsibility.

In some states obtaining a concealed carry license is an uncomplicated process, while in states that are less respectful of the Second Amendment to the US Constitution, you may have a better chance of winning a lottery than getting issued a concealed handgun license. The great state of Texas, for example, permits citizens to legally carry con-

cealed after taking a six hour course, passing a simple live fire qualification and submitting an application and fingerprint card.

Once you have confirmed you are in compliance with your state's laws, what should you carry? How about a .50 caliber Desert Eagle, tucked away in your waist band? Better than one, how about two? Let's get

real. I have been working armed, either as a U.S. Marine, firearms instructor or personal protection specialist for more than 22 years and carrying a firearm has been a way of life. I used to say, "What is wrong with our country? Our calibers and bayonets are getting smaller and shorter after every war." But, I have to admit that the older I get, the smaller my carry weapon of choice is becoming. The assignment or situation will still be the determining factor in what I will carry, of course. If I am working as a personal protection officer at home in Texas, protecting a high profile client, then I will go with my favorite: The Glock 23 with an extended magazine and two spare magazines. While I am on the range training new shooters I still favor my trusted Glock 17 with high capacity magazines and plus-two extensions. When I free up some time and get a chance to shoot at my local IDPA match I enjoy shooting my Glock 19 with the same set up as my G23 to reinforce training fundamentals for my duty configuration while doing it with a more cost effective caliber. I am a Glock fan.

Colonel Jeff Cooper, one of the pioneers of modern tactical firearms training, used to make the point that the value of a pistol is a tool that can be used to fight your way to a rifle. He's not wrong. A pistol is a weapon of limited value, but it certainly has higher value for self-defense when you have one immediately accessible without potential attackers knowing it. So what's the best self-defense pistol? The one that you actually have on you (that performs reliably). I have found lightweight, durable small frame handguns to be a favorite for every day carry. Whether you are a police officer, soldier or citizen, I am sure you will agree that a small 9mm in your hand will do more for you in an emergency than your favorite full size .40 or .45 that is at home with a dozen spare mags in a holster rig that is inconvenient enough to put on that you don't bother bringing it out every time you go out.

Some of my favorite pocket pistols include:

SPRINGFIELD ARMORY XD-S 9MM

I know it's not a Glock, but I really like this little handgun. It is comfortable to carry on a regular basis. On several occasions I even forgot I had it on, it rides that well. The simple, single stack magazine frame makes this weapon very easy to carry. I like the feel and the grip it allows me to obtain. The entire frame sits almost perfectly within my strong hand

and allows for a very simple, full wrap-around with my support hand. Seven rounds of 9mm is adequate and gives me enough ammo to fight my way to an AR-15 in my truck. Springfield has done well with their XD series of weapons. I believe they took some of the best features Glock had perfected and implemented them in this handgun with some of their own creative ideas as well. The only thing I don't like about this handgun is the grip safe-



A pistol is a weapon of limited value, but it certainly has higher value for self-defense when you have one immediately accessible without potential attackers knowing it. So what's the best self-defense pistol? The one that you actually have on you.

ty. I believe it is an unnecessary redundancy. On several occasions I have observed some of my students struggling to lock the slide to the rear safely due to having to get a full grip on that grip safety.

GLOCK 26 9MM

I have carried a Glock 26 for many years as a personal weapon. On several occasions I

carried it as a backup in an SOB holster in case I had to draw with my support hand. It is extremely reliable and durable. You can use high capacity magazines from other models such as the G19 or G17 to give you that extra magazine capacity capability. If you just want to stick with the original stock magazine it will give you 10 rounds of 9mm. The only thing that bothered me about carrying this handgun was that at times it felt cumbersome, as if I was carrying a full size Glock. I also felt more recoil directed toward the palm of my strong hand (especially with a .40 caliber G27). Recoil management is still an important fundamental for follow up shots so at times I found myself readjusting my grip due to the width of the grip in a shorter size. It is, however, still one of my favorites for concealed carry.

TAURUS 850B2UL .38 REVOLVER

I carried a Taurus 850B2UL .38 for many years as a backup. Yes, a revolver. The Taurus was affordable, lightweight and durable. I have put well over 1000 rounds through it without a single problem. The concealed hammer forces this handgun to be fired as a double action only. That means the hammer is forward. The shooter must pull the trigger in a smooth controlled fashion allowing the hammer to come back to full extension and then forward again, striking the firing pin and discharging a round. Some old revolvers are strictly single action. That means the external hammer must be pulled manually by the shooter. Upon pulling the trigger it releases the hammer which strikes the firing pin. Having to manually cock the hammer on a single action revolver would require fine motor skills during the elevated levels of stress of a gunfight. I don't recommend carrying a single action revolver for self-defense.

These are my favorite pocket pistols, but they are not the only options. There are some small double action (semi-automatic) pistols that can fill this role well; the single stack 9mm Smith and Wesson 3914 would be a good example. For shooters who like 1911 style .45s or carry one on duty, there are some excellent small frame .45 1911s that can be used in this fashion. The point is to have a weapon small, light and comfortable enough to carry all the time without hesitation that still delivers an adequate fighting caliber and performance.

Shot placement is always more important



left: Springfield Armory XD-S 9mm.
below: Taurus 850B2UL .38 Spl.



Shot placement is always more important than caliber.

than caliber. If I hit an assailant in the ass with a .45, chances are he is going to survive and continue to attack me. If I shoot him in the *medulla oblongata* with almost any caliber, my chances of immediately terminating his attack are pretty good. In my experience, hitting anyone with *any* caliber tends to change their mindset about hurting you pretty quickly, though you need to be prepared for a worst case encounter.

If you are carrying a pocket pistol; that is, a pistol in your pocket, extra precautions must be taken to guarantee safety. I do not recommend carrying a pistol in your pocket without a holster designed for the pocket that can safely contain it without hindering your draw. This is especially important with Glocks and similar pistols (see the MIC holster or the SEALed Mindset ConSEAL holster for a creative idea with both pros and cons). Do not carry anything else in the same pocket. Do not sacrifice safety. The benefit of a pocket pistol is convenience. The cost is a less efficient draw stroke than you may have from a well-designed belt holster.

The final, but most important piece of the puzzle is training. Shooting for defensive purposes is a complex and perishable skill. Much of the DOD and many law enforcement agencies provide minimal handgun training that, as individuals who pursue ex-

cellence and recognize the life and death consequences of firearms skills, we must acknowledge are best described as *minimally* adequate. Most state concealed handgun proficiency requirements for citizens are not any better. Shooting with your uncle Bob who has been shooting and hunting for 20 years may inadvertently reinforce unsafe habits or inefficient techniques.

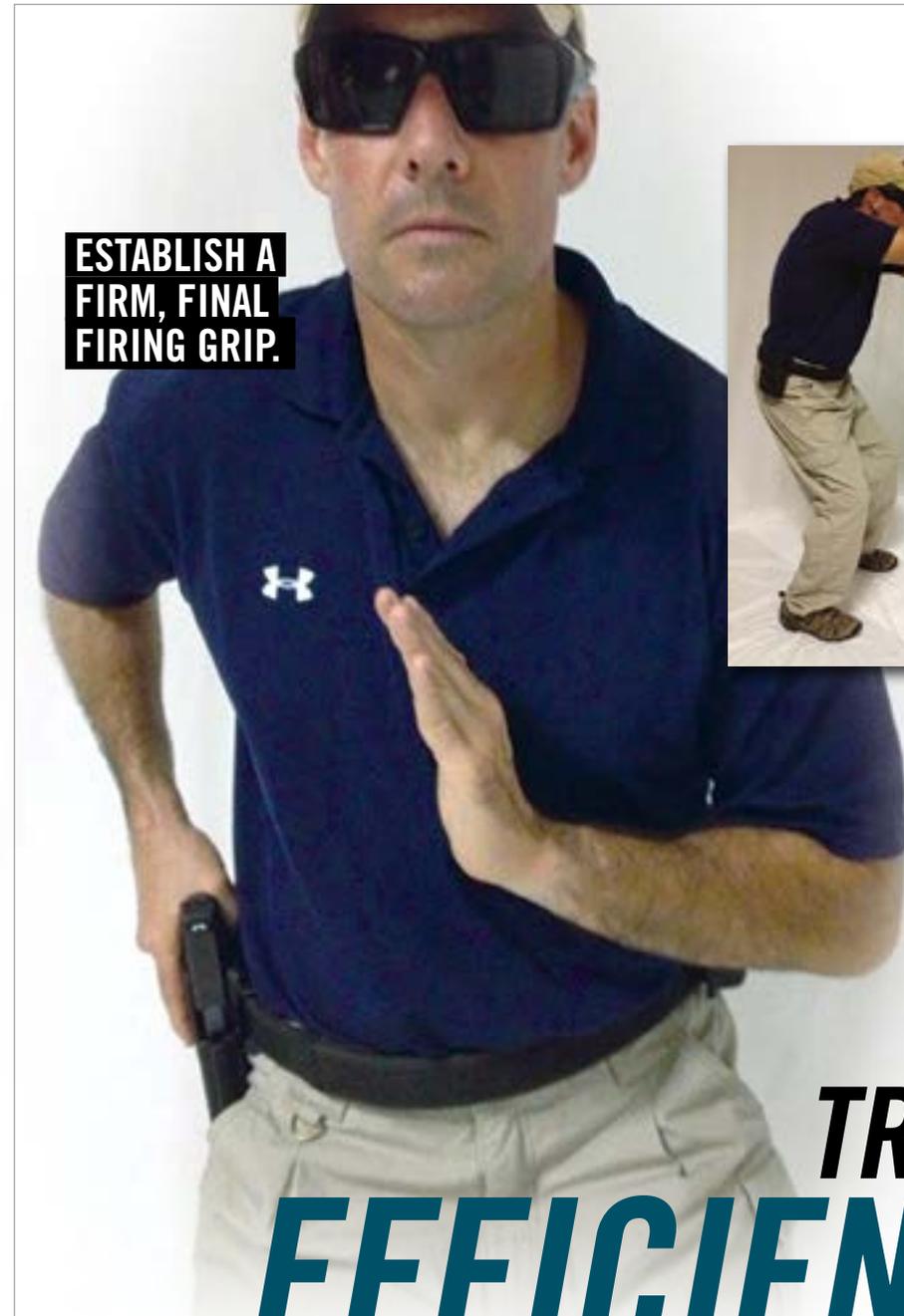
Conduct live safety training with an NRA certified instructor in your area before training on your own. All instructors are not great, but there is great training available within a day's drive anywhere in the country. Be cautious of the tactical lessons taught by individuals who have never been in a gunfight (and won). Commit to training on a regular basis. Well planned dry fire training can be the majority of your training. There is no need to practice *live* any skill you have not already mastered *dry*. This enhances safety and saves a ton of money. You are responsible for your own safety and you are responsible for complying with all relevant laws.

After receiving live safety instruction, practice your draw stroke dry (unloaded) every day for at least a week. Check whether you are "printing" or not (whether someone else can make out the shape of the weapon through your clothing). Each session can be as short as five minutes. Practice extremely

slowly until achieving perfect precision. Consider re-holstering to be slow practice for perfect precision also. Both should be executed with your eyes on your target. Make certain your finger never enters the trigger guard and any safeties are not deactivated until sights are aligned on target and make certain your finger is removed from the trigger and any safeties are activated before the weapon comes off target. Practice a covert draw for when you may have the option of inconspicuously drawing the weapon (such as under a restaurant table) and a dynamic draw for when drawing quickly but safely is critical. Once your draw is well honed, practice it at least weekly and add in different positions such as starting with your hands down to your sides or in an interview stance, drawing standing, seated or drawing while moving to cover, etc. Be safe, train hard, semper fi. ✓

BIO

Mac Mackinzie is a former ANGLICO Marine, competitive shooter, personal security specialist, security manager and project manager. He has trained hundreds of citizens and personnel from military, security and law enforcement agencies worldwide. He is director of Critical Defense Group (www.criticaldefensegroup.com)



**ESTABLISH A
FIRM, FINAL
FIRING GRIP.**



**AFTER PROPERLY
LINKING THE GRIP,
EXTENSION BEGINS
AND THE ARMS ARE
EXTENDED OUT TO
THE SHOOTER'S
STRONGEST POINT.**



TRAINING AN EFFICIENT DRAW

BY: JAMES WASHINGTON

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When it comes to a fight it is always best to get off to a good start, set the tempo and fight your fight.

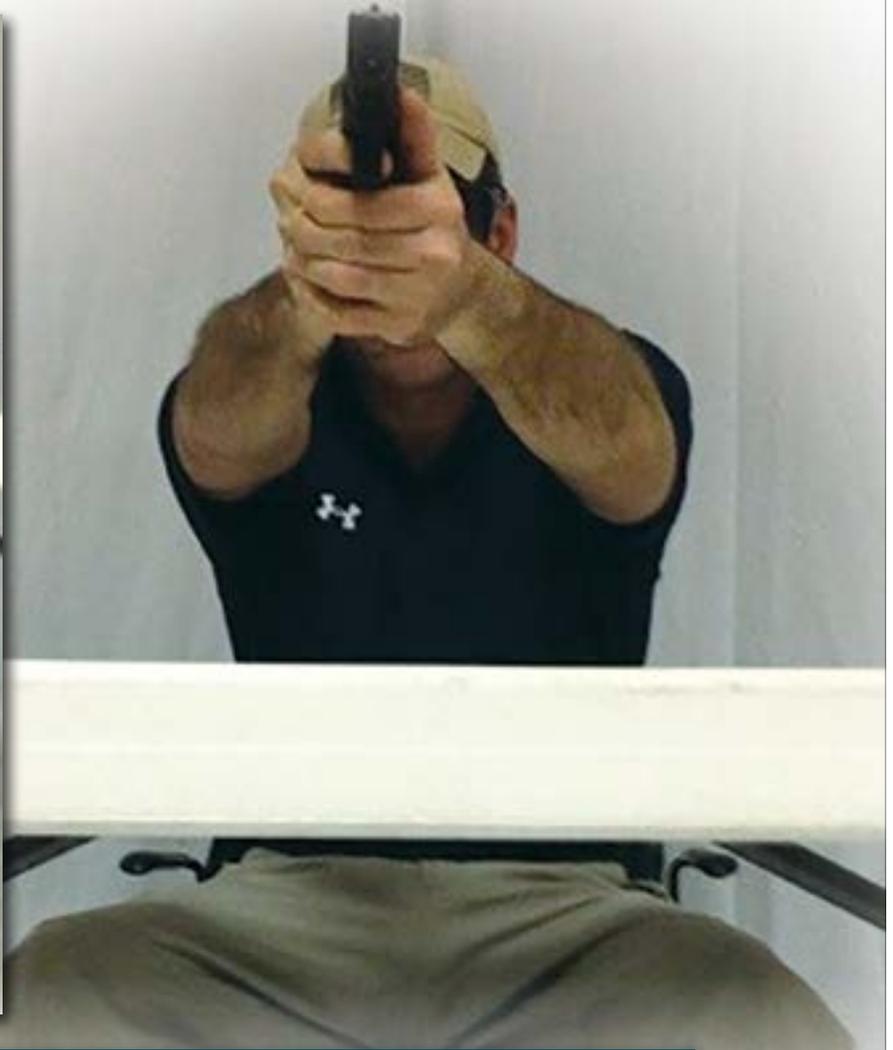
Since we are going to be looking at the issue of the draw stroke from a lawful, defensive point of view, action beats reaction, but we must be prepared for reacting to deadly force incidents and not initiating them. However, if we practice situational awareness in order to see and avoid, our training can be drilled with this fact in mind and we will be equipped mentally to overcome the reactionary gap. A fast, smooth and efficient draw stroke honed by hours of dry practice and live range time with a timer, mul-

tiple shoot and no shoot targets positioned closely together and adhering to basic skills developed over time will help you through these moments.

Once a deadly force incident has been initiated, first control the mind to allow the body to perform as trained. When this is done we are able to draw on our training by instinctively moving off the line of force (if we are not moving as the lead member of a stick or stack during a team movement.) This forces the aggressor to pause and reorient his en-

gagement or he will have to fight through recoil to acquire and realign his sights to get accurate hits. His hesitation will aid you in regaining some of the time lost during the initiation of the assault if you were unable to see and avoid the incident as it developed.

Now you must make the most of this opportunity by returning a high volume of accurate fire to neutralize the threat. This can only be done by a fast, consistent and properly practiced draw stroke that has been rehearsed over time with real-world relevant



WHEN SEATED BEHIND A DESK, YOUR DRAWSTROKE MUST EXTEND THE DISTANCE THAT IT IS MOVED VERTICALLY BEFORE ROTATING THE MUZZLE IN THE DIRECTION OF THE TARGET AS MUCH AS IS NECESSARY TO CLEAR THE DESK.

drills and compressed times. We all have heard the saying, “slow is smooth and smooth is fast.” I see quite a few people with robotic draws because in their mind’s eye they are being smooth and equating this with being fast. Well, I don’t buy that. I believe fast is fast and you must know what fast looks like in order to become fast. This is done by watching the top shooters from all the shooting sports train and compete. Jim Rohn once said, “Anything you want to accomplish in life you must make it a study.”

With that in mind, how do we become fast? Training academies have drilled into us that the combat draw stroke is a five step process. Because we should be concerned about the end product—an accurate high volume of

rounds into the threat—I like to break the draw down into a three step process. The first step is the grip. Before the gun is removed from the holster we must first establish a firm, final firing grip. Place the web of the shooting hand high on the tang, the middle, index and pinky finger wrapped firmly around the grip and the index finger straight along the outside of the holster where the slide is located. Just as important as the hand that grips the gun is the support hand.

The support hand must instinctively index to the same place on your body every single time. When you are practicing your draws, don’t do ten draws with the support hand just above your belt, another ten draws with your support hand at the top of your stom-

ach and then conclude with ten more draws with the support hand mid-sternum. If you do this, you did not practice your draw thirty times, but rather three different draws ten times each.

If your support hand is indexed in a distinctly different location, this affects the link up of the support hand and the shooting hand during the second phase of the draw stroke. This will cause the support hand to be either too high or low on the gun. At this point, one of two things must occur. Either, during the press out process you will have to make adjustments in your grip to properly align the sights *or you must fix the grip in the low ready while the gun is still close to the center of the body by the sternum.* This



Execute a perfect drawstroke, drop to the right knee, pressing the trigger to threshold as soon as sights are aligned on target and a decision to fire has been made.

is an unnatural and unpracticed technique that will extend the time the first shot will break. Either of these choices now forces you to pause your engagements and allows the threat to extend the reactionary gap. Although this may only cause you to pause for a second, you must remember that the average human being is capable of firing 4 rounds per second. Therefore, each quarter second of delay equals one less round inbound.

The third phase of the draw stroke is the press out or extension. This phase begins after the link up of the second stage. If you begin the extension prior to linking the strong and support hands together you will force the support hand to try and catch up with the strong hand insuring an improper link up, forcing you to delay engagement or not be able to aggressively apply numerous shots into the threat. After properly linking

the grip, extension begins and the arms are extended out to the shooter's strongest point. This will be different for each shooter and depends on body type, build and any previous injuries. I often see shooters over extending their arms and thus reducing their ability to displace recoil through the arms and shoulders.

If the decision to fire has been made, then during the extension process, the eye focus goes from the target to the front sight, while the finger rolls all of the slack out of the trigger. I use sight gears to determine the speed and tempo of an engagement. Sight Gear 1 is perfect sight alignment and is used for longer or precise shots. Sight Gear 2 is a flash sight picture, where the front sight wobbles in the rear sight notch and is used to get combat hits during intermediate distance engagements. Sight Gear 3 is front sight proximity

shooting and is used at distances from 10 feet to just outside contact distances. Proper grip and indexing hard with the thumbs into the threat until the front sight is observed just above the mid-stomach is paramount. Each situation will be unique, so you will want to use the appropriate sight gear to end the encounter.

Taking all of the above into account, we need to develop a few drills to allow us to record and track our training progress. I like to use IPSC/USPSA targets for a large portion of my training drills because of the "A" and "C" markings. I never allow "D" Zone hits to count, but rather use this area to determine how far off shooters are from their goals. I also like to use Action Target's eight-inch static steel plates to cut down on maintenance time on the range.

The first drill I like to warm up with and gauge performance with is the one-second drill. Set the eight-inch steel target at 10 yards and the shot timer to 2.5 seconds. Using the delay setting on the timer, draw and fire one round at the eight-inch static steel. After getting five hits in a row, reduce the time by a quarter of a second and repeat for another five consecutive hits. After getting down to 1.5 seconds reduce the time by a tenth of a second for three consecutive hits. Once the timer is down to one second, take a five minute break and then come back to attempt a one second draw with a hit. If I am unable to accomplish this in three attempts I will then bump the time up by a tenth of a second until I can get three consecutive hits while maintaining total control.

This drill is practiced once a week on the range, but also on my dry-practice training days as a warm up. Remember, no matter what drills you perform on the range or in dry-practice always maintain control and incrementally build up your skills. ✓

BIO

James Washington is a firearms and tactics trainer with multiple agencies. He has served as a sergeant with the Northwestern University Police Department and has more than ten years of service with the Chicago Housing Authority Police, serving six of those years detailed to an FBI Gang Task Force. The author is the 2003 Pan American Brazilian Jiu Jitsu champion and 2003, 2005 Arnold Schwarzenegger / Gracie Classic submission tournament champion (www.bighdesert-defensive-shooting-school.net).