PDN PERSONAL DEFENSE NETWORK ACADEMY

CLASS SUPPLEMENT

COUNTER AMBUSH CONCEPTS:

PREPARING YOUR RESPONSE

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The following material is a supplement to the video material in the PDN Academy class **Counter Ambush Concepts: Preparing Your Response**. This is comprised of updated material from my book *Counter Ambush*.

— Rob Pincus

DEFENSIVE SHOOTING: YOUR MOST PLAUSIBLE DISTANCE

How do you decide at which distances to develop your defensive shooting skills? As is often the case, the empirical evidence tells us what we most need to prepare for.

Tom Givens and his wife Lynn owned and operated the RangeMaster facility for many years and have collected the most extensive set of details on actual civilian self-defense shooting situations that I am aware of. Tom, Lynn and their staff of instructors were known for their professionalism and dedication to making their students more capable of defending themselves and others with firearms. Thousands of students attended RangeMaster for all levels of firearms and personal-defense instruction over the years. Unfortunately, the greater Memphis area also has an incredibly high violent crime rate. Add those two facts plus Tom's dedication to learning as much as he can about actual defensive shootings, and you will find an enormous pool of data to study about the types of events you are most likely to find yourself in the middle of. Tom's analysis of the data from his own students' Dynamic Critical Incidents (DCIs) (approximately 60 at the time I studied the data) is so thorough and so good that I consider him the industry's leading expert on the hard facts of the types of situations you are most likely to face if you ever need to use your gun to defend yourself. I even invited him to join the list of industry experts who have contributed to the Personal Defense Network's library of instructional DVDs. His *Lessons from the Street* summarizes several of the actual events his students have been involved in and is one of our most popular titles. Tom graciously shares his data with professional instructors with a sincere interest in making all of us better able to meet the needs of our students.

One of the most important statistics Tom has collected is the distance between the threat and the defender during the DCIs he has studied. His data shows that an incredibly high percentage of events happen between a distance of nine and 15 feet. In fact, you could say that *almost all* of the events he has recorded have occurred in that range.

(It is important to note that the emphasis on the need for a Counter Ambush Training model is something Tom and I fundamentally disagree on, but he has provided this data for my use in illustrating the most probable distances you may face during your fight. For a more thorough understanding of the value Tom places on awareness and for a better understanding of how to apply the "color code" awareness concepts in your daily life, you may want to review his article in Appendix B of the *Counter Ambush* book.)

By looking at those numbers and imagining a nine- to 15-foot doughnut-shaped circle around you, you can see how someone could be close enough to attack you without you ever noticing their presence. You can easily miss many crucial details of your environment amid the hustle and bustle of daily life, and you can see how there would be many opportunities for an attacker to conceal themselves in a crowd or behind virtually anything bigger than a human (like a car, a mailbox, etc). By using actual data and observing the diverse environments we all live in, it is simple to see how an attacker can lie in wait and ambush their victim with relative ease and complete surprise.

There is no piece of objective information I am aware of in all of Tom's data that is more definitive than the most likely engagement distance. But our ability to reference industry professionals to guide our decision-making about the most likely scenarios does not end with Tom.

In his book *Handgun Combatives*, Dave Spaulding's findings show that, over the 30 years previous to his book's publishing, over 80% of defensive shootings took place at distances of under 20 feet, and the majority of those at under six feet. Yet at the time of publication in 2003, he observed that most firearms training courses were still conducted beyond 21 feet. His thoughts include the idea that running a static line of shooters is safer and easier for instructors than dealing with motion, and that one of the problems many traditional instructors have with realistic training at realistic distances is that in the time frame required, they cannot teach shooting as a purely mechanical marksmanship endeavor. It is observations such as this that led to my development of more progressive training

approaches such as those we use in the Combat Focus® Shooting Program, which teaches defensive shooting as an intuitive skill and integrates movement at every opportunity. In his book, Spaulding also condemns those who train primarily at distances of seven, ten and 15 yards. He concludes that they prefer to train at such distances simply so they can stand in their preferred stance, use their preferred grip, and draw and fire with less pressure.

Instructor Wes Doss lamented this same phenomenon in his book *Train to Win*. In the chapter titled Static vs. Dynamic Training, he writes: "The problem is many who teach never break from the static training environment, preferring to work constantly on the square ranges and at set distances." I'm certainly not the only, or even the first, member of this industry to point out the flaws inherent in the traditional approach to defensive firearms training.

Today, many instructors and schools emphasize close-quarters defensive shooting in the private sector. I've even noticed a move in the formalized world of law enforcement toward training at more realistic close-quarters defensive-shooting distances. Most agencies have done away with requirements like qualifying with shots from 50 yards, and many never go beyond 25. In the early 1970s, the FBI Practical Pistol Course, which was used by many police agencies around the country, featured pistol shooting at 60 yards and zero shots fired within 21 feet. In recent years, even the FBI has adopted a training approach that emphasizes close-quarters defensive shooting, with much approval from the private sector training industry.

Training programs have come a long way in that regard during my lifetime. I still have a copy of the PPC instruction manual my father was given when he was in the police academy, and the only word that describes what I think when I thumb through it is *incredulous*. It's interesting to note that nowhere in the booklet is there any justification for the course of fire in relation to actual shooting events. Amid the very specific descriptions of the techniques that are being recommended (including unsupported kneeling at 25 yards and hip shooting at seven yards, apparently considered "close distance"), there is not a single example, statistic or scenario offered for when the techniques would be used. In fact, the only justification for interest in the PPC is that there has been "enthusiastic reception" for the course at police departments that have incorporated it. We know today the private sector is capable of evolving much faster than large public-sector entities such as the military and federal law enforcement agencies.

The reason I included this example from the history of firearms training is to remind you that just because something has been done in the past, even by such a distinguished organization as the FBI, does not mean it is a good idea to make it part of your training. Just because many agencies, people, or private training schools have espoused a concept or training doctrine does not necessarily make it a good idea for you. I dare say that many of the most popular ideas about defensive firearms training over the last half century have proven to be ineffective at worst and at least inefficient. This has been underscored over and over again by dash cameras and surveillance cameras that show us exactly what people are *really* doing during gunfights. We stand on the shoulders of those who came before us, which allows us to see more and farther than they did in their time. It is vital to remember this fact as we seek to evolve our preparation for personal defense with all due respect to the best efforts of those who have taught in the past.

Once you accept the likelihood of a conflict occurring at close distances, you should make your preferred stances and grips ones that work well in that context. As for drawing and firing with less pressure: *Really?* You are training for a fight for your life! Accept that there will be pressure and train to defend yourself under it without reliance on controls, specific planning and choreography.

THE SKILL DEVELOPMENT CYCLE

The Skill Development Cycle (SDC) provides an easy way to understand the complete process of training and practice. As covered in the video portion of this course, everyone's training resources are limited. I have worked with people who can't own more than a certain number of rounds in their jurisdiction to train with at any one given time. I have worked with military personnel deployed overseas in low-profile assignments who operate in environments where they cannot live-fire train at all for months at a time. I have worked with the guys with the biggest budgets, with the highest level of need, at the sharpest tip of the spear when it comes to American combat forces, and everyone has some sort of limitation related to how much or how well they can train. Whether it's hours in a day, bullets in a box, access to a range, or even just motivation and interest to train, everyone's training resources are limited. So you can see it is important to make the most of your training resources and have an organized way to track your progress.

The SDC helps you use the resources you do have as efficiently as possible, and helps you focus on making sure you are getting the most you can out of any given training moment or opportunity. Too often people go out to the range with a gun and ammo but with no agenda, goal, or real frame of reference for what they should be doing when they are actually practicing or training. The SDC is comprised of three parts: learning, developing and evaluating.

LEARNING A NEW SKILL

The first thing you need to do is learn a skill. You need to make sure you are doing something right. Some people will tell you this is a matter of opinion. Some people will tell you there are many ways, not just one way. Some people will tell you that you need to collect tools for your toolbox in regard to your techniques and skill set. What I will tell you is, in my opinion, there absolutely should be a way that you choose to do the overwhelming majority of things when it comes to defensive skill sets. Especially when it comes to counter ambush skill sets, which you want to be able to execute in an automated way after recognition of a learned stimulus so you can be as efficient as possible.

Robert Smith, MD, founder of the Direct Action Medical Network, talks about establishing a "rut in the road": a pathway in your brain for executing complex motor skills that are stimulated by predictable things and result in efficient execution of the skill and completion of whatever goal it is you're looking for. I love the "rut in the road" analogy. If you've ever driven down a dirt road with ruts in it, you know if you go slowly you can keep your tires out of the ruts and negotiate the road. But if you try to go fast (if you're being chased by a pickup truck full of guys with shotguns on the rutted road), you may as well put the tires in the rut, floor it and go. If you try to stay out of the ruts, eventually you'll fall into the ruts, or bounce out of the ruts, or strip the tire off the rim, or hit a tree, or some other crazy thing will happen.

You need to just get in a rut and go, and that's really the way the brain works. There are structures inside the brain called neurons. Neurons have a lot of different parts. The axon is the part of the neuron that sends messages to the next neuron. It says, *"Hey! Do this. Do this. Do this. Reload now. Draw the gun from the holster. Manage the recoil."* As you use those neurons and send messages down this axon, a sheath develops around it, a fatty substance called myelin. The more repetition you get using that neuron to establish this pathway in your brain, the faster that message can be transferred because of this insulation.

I don't want to get too much into the biology and physiology of it, but it's a fact. We know from science that this happens. You've likely heard of "muscle memory," the idea that you can do something much easier after a lot of repetition. You may also have heard it was a myth, or heard it dismissed because "muscles don't have memory." While technically true, that statement reveals a lack of understanding of the science behind the colloquial concept. Myelination of the axon is what allows that message to be transferred faster after practice, and that is the reality of muscle memory. If a string of neurons get together and all act faster, it becomes a path of least resistance. Because the myelination creates a path of least resistance for messages to travel through the brain, it's more likely that under stress, the messages will flow through the neuron you want than it is that the messages will flow through a slower path that you don't want. If you have a big pipe and a small pipe and start pumping water in and the water can go either way, the water will obviously follow the path of least resistance (through the big pipe). The same principle applies here. I'm talking about an electrochemical signal, and it works the same way.

This process is good, but if you try to learn five, six, or seven different ready positions for your gun, ways to reload, or ways

to present the gun to shooting position from different places, you won't get a good solid buildup of myelination down the path you want to follow. You won't get a good, deep rut in the road; you'll get a lot of partial ruts. You'll get a lot of, "Well, it could be either way. Is it going to be this, or is it going to be that?" if you have to start making decisions all the time. Or maybe you'll get halfway through reload option number one and then decide to do reload option number two, and those two options don't work together, and the gun never gets reloaded. Under stress, you don't have a default reaction and response pattern that makes sense. The natural reactions, we are all stuck with, but the learned responses, we absolutely should pick and choose what is best.

Now, there's an asterisk. I always say, "When you take a class from me, I will be passionate about teaching you *the* way I think is best." This is life-and-death information. I'm not going to burden your brain with 15 different options. I'm not going to acknowledge there are lesser options you might want to learn to be a more well-versed firearms handler. I don't believe it. I don't think it's the right way to use your resources. I think you should learn the way that is best. And if you're paying me as a professional instructor to tell you what I think is best, I'm going to tell you. I could be wrong, I could change my mind tomorrow, and I have changed my mind about things; sometimes I even change my mind in class. A student may ask, "What about this?" and I'll say, "Well, I hadn't considered that. For you, you should do this." Or maybe it's been a huge evolution. Maybe another instructor has come up to me after class and said, "I didn't want to interrupt, but maybe you should consider this," and it's something I've never heard of before. Sometimes it's something I wish I had heard in class; sometimes it's good info that I've never thought of. I may say, "Let me play with that a little bit." If I find that the new thing is better, when I teach that next class, I'm going to use the new thing. That is how programs evolve.

When I say there's not a lot of ways, I mean specifically that there's *one way*. It's not there's one way *forever*, but if you give me 15 ways to look at something, I'm going to pick the one I want to learn, and that's the one I'm going to teach. I want to learn a way of doing something in as much context as possible. I can't learn how to shoot a gun in an actual fight; it's just not practical. I'm not going to go out in the street and pick a fight with somebody, wait till they pull a knife, and try to figure out how to shoot my gun in self-defense. That would make absolutely no sense. But on a practical level, even simply learning how to shoot your gun in a defensive, intuitive way, at speed, is beneficial.

Let's say you've never shot a gun before and I walk up to you and put a loaded gun in a holster on your belt. Then, when I say "Go," I want you to pull the gun out of your holster as fast as you can, drive it out toward the target, and put a round in the high center chest. "Go!" That is a recipe for disaster. No repetition, no coaching, no explanation. Just "Go!" Like you would have to do in a fight. Get the gun out, drive it out, and shoot. If somebody's never shot a gun, sticking a loaded gun in a holster and saying, "Go," without any coaching or slow build toward that process, you can see the potential for someone to get hurt. Because of that potential, you should learn a skill by slowing down for safety and to accommodate complexity. The more complex a skill is, the more you will slow down from reality, the bigger the safety concerns, and the more you will step out of context. This is really important, so you need to keep this in mind. First and foremost, learn a skill in as much context as possible. Slow down for safety or complexity as necessary.

When we get people started in the Combat Focus Shooting program, we start them from the ready position. Even if they've never shot a gun before, we have them pick the gun up from the podium and go to the ready position. They don't need to know how to load it, they don't need to know the terminology, they don't need to know the nomenclature, and they don't need to know what brand of gun it is. They just need to pick it up, get a good grip, and we will coach them through the rest. *Stand at a natural, neutral position, drive it out, press the trigger. The bullet shows up where it's supposed to be.* We want to get our students shooting at full extension as realistically as we can, achieving kinesthetic alignment. But we slow it down because of safety and complexity. For example, we have them fire one shot. Normally in defensive shooting (we start people out at ten to 20 feet, aiming at high-center chest), we want them to fire a multiple-shot string of fire. But because of safety and complexity, we start them out with a single shot and build them up pretty quickly to the point where they will then develop their skills in context.

DEVELOPING SKILLS IN CONTEXT

The second phase of the SDC is to develop your skill. This is what most people refer to as practice. You should always try to develop your skill in the expected context of use. What that means is you're not really practicing defensive shooting if you're shooting single shots into the high-center chest of a target at ten feet. The reason it's not really practice is that you're not planning to shoot single shots in that circumstance. You'll be firing multiple-shot strings of fire, and you'll need to

manage recoil. You'll need to make sure your practice isn't choreographed: you'll want to avoid always shooting twice, or always shooting three times. Make sure you're driving the gun out, visualizing a threat, and firing anywhere from two to five rounds. You'll stop your string of fire, pull the gun back in, and assess the environment to make sure you're safe. All those things replicate and reinforce the kinds of things you're going to want to do in an actual fight.

As you can see, sometimes you can learn a skill by stepping out of context. When you're truly developing your skill, you want to make sure you're doing it in a way that is congruent with the intended use of the skill; that's what I mean by in context. For example, in our balance of speed and precision drills, we don't say things like "OK, you're going to fire a single shot into the three. Stand by for the whistle." Or "Fire two shots into the chest on the buzzer." We don't say those kinds of things because in a counter ambush training model, processing information prior to the execution of the complex motor skill is imperative. That's what a counter ambush is.

You're thinking about what kind of food to order, or you're standing on the corner talking to your friend, and then BANG! *Whoa! What's going on?* Your brain will process information that tells you that you need your gun. Given this reality, you don't want to practice only for the moment when you get some warning that you're going to be in a fight. Imagine you're in a mall and you see someone walking through the food court with a rifle in his hand: "Hey, what's that guy with the AK-47 doing? I think I may need to shoot him in a second. Let me watch and wait."

That's not a counter ambush moment. That's an "I am aware and alert" moment. At this point, you're anticipating the need to shoot. If that happens to you, you will be much farther ahead of the curve than most people who need to defend themselves from lethal attack; but that's not counter ambush. In the counter ambush model, you have to process the information at the instant you need to access the skill.

In CFS, we do balance of speed and precision drills standing in front of a target. There are a couple of different commands students might get, and there are a couple of types of targets they might have to shoot. Whatever the case, they have to process the information and then execute the appropriate complex motor skill. Again, this slows response. Each command is different and the relative anticipation of each student is different from command to command, which means you cannot run a timer on this type of drill; it would be meaningless.

Keep these principles in mind whenever you are practicing the defensive skills you have learned.

EVALUATING THE ABILITY TO APPLY A SKILL

I suggest you only evaluate the application in a simulation or scenario. What does that mean? It means I don't care about your ability to merely perform a skill. If you're at the point where you've developed and practiced your skill, the ability to reload a gun is something I'm willing to take for granted. If you've been practicing, what is the point of me saying, "Put one round in your gun with an empty magazine, fire a shot, do a reload, and shoot again"? That skill in isolation is relatively easy to learn, relatively easy to get good at, and somewhat irrelevant to test. You're never going to be in a fight situation where you're going to load one round into your gun, put an empty magazine in, fire the gun at a bad guy, then perform a quick reload and shoot it again. I don't care if it's reloads, malfunctions, or on the buzzer to see how fast you can take your gun out of the holster and take a shot; that never happens, and it's certainly not counter ambush. Your raw ability to perform a skill is basically irrelevant. I want to know how well you can apply your skill in the situation it's meant for, so I want to create some kind of simulation.

On a square range, we use the Figure 8 drill, which simulates a 360-degree environment with a lot of variables, including where your attacker could be, what size the target is, and what distance the target is within the plausible ranges of defensive shooting. When you're in the Figure 8 drill, there are a lot of variables, and you have to process a lot of information. The way we set it up in class, there's also some anxiety and performance issues. People are watching, it's getting close to the end of the class, and everyone wants to see if you can apply the skill.

If you're trying to process all the information and you drive your gun out and intend to fire three or four shots, we know that some of this gets choreographed. We know students are going to stand there and think, "Next target I'm going to fire four shots." Let's say you're on the course, the next target comes up, and you drive the gun out to fire your four shots. *Bang! Bang! Slide lock!* Do you recognize slide lock and instantly start executing a slide lock emergency reload? Or do you still try to pull the trigger because you wanted to fire four shots? You failed to

recognize slide lock; therefore you failed to apply the skill of the critical incident reload when you actually needed it during the simulation. That's a failure. You'll realize you're out of bullets after you pull the trigger a couple times, and you may finally get the gun reloaded at that point. By then you have performed the skill but failed to apply the skill at what should have been your learned stimuli during that simulation: slide lock.

I want to distinguish between simulation and scenario. Scenario is when you have a scripted situation with role-players who are acting out a series of responses. In scenarios, you have to process a lot of interactive information that leads you to the correct execution and application of a couple of different skill sets. Sometimes the execution is not even shooting or any attack at all. It may be verbalization, movement, taking cover, and escaping, or it may simply be awareness of a potential threat followed by orienting toward the threat. Whatever the case, scenarios are complex and hard to run. They need role-players, props, protective gear, a controlled environment, and much more. Student-on-student force-on-force does not rise to the level of a training scenario. Because of budget and logistical constraints, it is often used as a poor substitute. Only with disciplined, trained role-players or (preferably) instructors playing roles to elicit specific responses, create reactions and guide learning can you truly take advantage of the real power of scenario training and the opportunity to evaluate the application of skill within them.

Simulations are easier. With just paper targets and a good dirt berm, we can properly and safely set up the Figure 8 drill and run a successful live-fire simulation. Using a shoot-house with reactive targets makes simulations better. Many ways exist to integrate decision-making and processing of information into live-fire training. The trick is to evaluate the application of skills, not the isolated performance. If you're still standing on the line isolating presentation and trying to see how fast you can go, you're missing the point. That is a skill in isolation -- great for competition, bragging rights, or to see who's buying the beverages after your time at the range with your buddies, but it doesn't test your ability to react and respond in a real fight.

Have you ever had a friend with a timer try to measure how fast you are from a new holster? You get ready and set. *Buzz!* You say, "Sorry, I wasn't ready. Can you do it again?" Then you get a good repetition. "What was the time?" you ask. "1.2." "OK, let me try again." *Buzz!* 0.9 on the second try, 1.0 on the third, and you round it off to 1.05 for the average. Then you think about what that speed might mean. You might even do some math based on the speed at which humans can move from a stand-still, and try to determine how close a threat can be and you'd still be able to get your gun out and fire a round. But that's crazy. The reality is, if some guy pulls out a knife in close quarters and says he's going to stab me and I react to that attack, that 1.05-second presentation on a range is completely irrelevant. It doesn't matter what you can do in those conditions. What matters is what you do immediately after processing the information, the recognition of what you need to do. All those things apply in a simulation or scenario, and don't apply when you measure skills in isolation.

CONTINUING THE CYCLE

What do you do next? It's a cycle -- to be more specific, a skill development cycle. What do you do after you evaluate your ability to apply your skill? Are you happy with your applied skills? Everyone comes to the table with different athleticism, intellect, coordination, interest, need, experience, and familiarity with their firearm. Likewise, everyone has a different starting point. Everyone's answer to the question, "Am I happy with the application of this skill?" is also going to be different. If you find yourself good-to-go, the cycle returns to step one: learning a new skill, or maybe learning a skill in a new context. For example, you learned intuitive defensive shooting with two hands. Now you're going to learn intuitive defensive shooting with one hand.

What if you find yourself lacking? What if you aren't happy with your performance? If that's the case, then go back to step two: developing your skill. You're not going to transition and learn something new; you're going to go back to practicing your skill in context, do a short loop, build your skill up a little higher, run another simulation or scenario. Again: test your ability to apply the skill until you feel satisfied. Once you're satisfied, take the big loop all the way back to learning your skill again.

The skill development cycle gives you a general way to evaluate what it is you're doing when you go to train. You should be able to ask yourself, "What am I doing right now? Did I come to the range today to learn how to shoot a gun? Did I come to develop my skill to shoot a gun I already own? Am I ready to evaluate my ability to use that gun in some kind of a simulation that my training partners are going to set up for me?" It's important to know what you're doing at any given time in order to make the most of your resource expenditure. And make sure what you're doing fits into one of the steps of the SDC, and the timing of that piece makes sense. Don't run out and try to evaluate your ability to apply a skill when you haven't even developed it, or if you're just guessing about how to do it.

CHOOSING WHICH TECHNIQUES TO LEARN

When it's time to choose a technique to learn to reload your defensive firearm, you might say, "I can reload this way, or I can reload that way," and then you want to jump to the evaluation phase to see which one is faster. Perhaps you try each one back to back, in a staged way, checking the results on a timer. If you haven't practiced either one of them, you might come to the wrong conclusion about which is best. If you have practiced one skill extensively and are introduced to a new skill and immediately try to compare them, you might also come to the wrong conclusion about which is best. Very often, people comparing two skills in isolation come to the wrong conclusion about which will be the most efficient when applied in the context of a dynamic situation.

There are two ways you can decide what to do. One way is observation, which sometimes is valid, and the other is applying reasoned thought. Some people misunderstand the viability of the second process. Thinking about two ways of achieving a goal (such as reloading a pistol at slide lock), applying reason to the situation, and asking yourself, "Which of these two techniques better fits the context of a defensive firearm's use?" is often a valid method of determining which technique you should practice. Once you've decided, start the SDC process. Learn it, develop it, then evaluate your ability to apply it.

If you jump right into the evaluation phase, far too often you'll get trapped by evaluating a skill in isolation out of context, and you may come to the wrong conclusion. This is the danger of just doing range drills and competition shooting. If you only do choreographed range drills or you get sucked into competition shooting as your method for determining what's appropriate, you can get really good at the wrong thing.

Double taps are probably the best example of this in contemporary defensive firearms training. If you get into competitions where they only score two shots or only the best two shots, you'll find yourself patterning all your shooting around double taps. You may need more than two shots, and you may not be able to fire four shots consistently into the high-center chest under certain circumstances at the same pace that you can fire a double tap. Pop-pop-pause, pop-pop-pause, takes a lot longer to fire six shots than pop-pop-pop-pop-pop-pop at your fastest consistent pace. So be careful what you learn and how you learn it. The Skill Development Cycle will help guide you through that process.

PROCESSING INFORMATION DURING YOUR DRILLS

In order for something to be in the counter ambush training category, it needs to involve the processing of information from the world around you. That's what sets it apart. Let's take a look at my fundamental shooting drill, the balance of speed and precision drill. All shooting is a balance of speed and precision. We call the precision component combat accuracy. The speed component is always as fast as you can be combat accurate. But if you're shooting in a rehearsed drill, using the skill in isolation, you're going to be able to perform it faster than you actually would if you had to figure out what to do.

It is important to note we are not just talking about the processing time being added to your performance time. What we see empirically is a difference in the performance time as well, because your brain and muscles are not primed. You aren't visualizing, rehearsing, warming up, or "in the zone" like you are in an athletic endeavor. If you're shooting in an athletic or sporting endeavor, you're going to get your stage briefing, walk to the course of fire, visualize it, think about it, etc. You're going to go to the stage, examine the situation, and get a plan; and you should. If you're trying to win that competition or at least score as well as you can, absolutely you're going to choreograph your responses. Competition is a sport and that's what it's all about.

Top-level shooters will tell you that you can be the best shooter in the world, but if you reload at the wrong time, shoot the targets out of order, or take a penalty of any kind, it puts you way behind in the competition. But in the real world, that doesn't happen. In the real world, you see a threat and you shoot it. Even if there are seven other threats around you, you deal with the one threat you are aware of and/or focused on first. Hopefully the peripheral threats won't take you out of the fight, but only in competition settings do you say, "Shoot that target first," regardless of any other variable or option. In the real world, during an ambush, things happen too fast for you to choreograph a response.

Your balance of speed and precision while shooting will be different depending on your target. Think of a torso shot and a head shot: you know there are different balances of speed and precision necessary to make those shots, even when everything else is equal. Both targets could be the same distance, you're dealing with the same distractions, and you're under the same circumstances. Yet each target requires a different level of skill. Under the most plausible defensive shooting circumstances, the head would be a sighted-fire shot for most people. The torso would be an unsighted-fire shot. The torso target would probably be addressed with multiple rounds, whereas the head would probably be addressed with a single sighted shot. You might need to fire a follow-up shot, but because of the nature of the bad guy's actions (flinching, moving, and turning), you're not going to fire a string of shots to the head. These two types of targets and two skill levels of shooting can be integrated into one drill, forcing the processing of information prior to the actual shooting being done.

This is a Balance of Speed & Precision (BoS&P) drill and is the most common type of drill we use for counter ambush shooting skill development. The technical components are:

- At least two different types of targets requiring different levels of BoS&P.
- At least two different commands tied to the different targets.
- No pattern in the calling of commands.
- 65 to 85% of the commands should be for multiple-shot strings to high-center chest-sized targets.

The trick in a BoS&P drill is to combine the likelihood of those two shooting problems. You know a torso shot is much more likely than a head shot in defensive shooting, so you skew your training and practice to shoot multiple rounds into the high-center chest more often. You could have multiple chest-sized targets or head-sized targets in one drill, creating more variables to process. Let's say you're standing on the line, waiting for your training partner to give you a command. That command could cause you to shoot a very precisely aimed, high level of deviation control shot to a small circle (representing a head shot), or the command could be to fire a multiple-string shot of between two and five shots into a high-center chest-size area. That processing of information is what makes it a counter ambush drill. Because you don't get a warning of a specific instruction about what to do, you are

forced to respond more like you would need to in a real event, where you did not know you were about to have to shoot. This type of training obviously works best with an instructor or training partner who understands the concepts and can both call the commands for you and critique your performance.

People often ask, "What if I don't have an instructor? What if I don't have a training partner?" Use technology to help you. Get a recorder, record a string of commands, put a little ear bud in under a set of protective earmuffs, and go. Better yet, use an MP3 player: record numerous commands as separate tracks, put the MP3 player in your pocket in shuffle mode with a random play of those tracks. For best results, leave four or five seconds on either side of each command. This will give you time to deal with reloads, assessment, and re-holstering between commands.

Once you're comfortable with the drill, add complexity by walking around in a Figure 8 in front of your target(s) and, when you hear a command, process that information and execute the complex motor skills. As you're wandering around, maybe you get the command "up" (we use the word "up" for a default chest multiple-shot string of fire), you recognize, drive out, and fire multiple shots into the chest. What you're doing is forcing yourself to process information prior to the execution of the complex motor skill. (A couple of years ago, I released a Combat Focus® Shooting App for iPhones. It allows you to select your preferred commands, frequency and number of reps for a BoS&P drill.)

You can buy targets with a very diverse set of possible commands, such as numbers, colors or shapes. You can also use directions (right/left) to distinguish between targets or target stands. With some spray paint and a little creativity, a piece of cardboard is a great target for this type of drill. You can spray paint small and large targets: default to multiple shots on the large targets and single shots on the small ones. From there, find a way to simulate a processing of information (whether a training partner or an MP3 player) so you can engage the target that a command dictates. You can even use your ambient environment as commands. Maybe you've got a moderately busy road behind you. If you hear a car coming from the left, engage the left target. If you hear a car coming from the right, engage the right target. You see a squirrel running in the woods on the left, shoot the left target. That's the kind of work I was doing when I first started training in this way. Of course, it was a long time before I referred to it as "counter ambush" training; I was just trying to create a more dynamic shooting environment.

When I first started doing this, before the system was sophisticated and before there was a history or training model, a lot of it was fueled by me trying to make it more fun and interesting. I had a target to the left, a target to the right, and a couple of targets in the center. As soon as I'd hear a car coming from the left, that would stimulate me to shoot the target on the left. I didn't do it because of the Balance of Speed & Precision, nor because of Warrior Expert Theory, but because it was fun and it worked to make a shooting session more challenging. It helped develop intuitive response to stimuli, a good patterned response to information coming in, and the execution of a complex motor skill. That's what a BoS&P drill is all about. Coming up with diverse ways to process information is vital to a counter ambush training program.

Thanks for purchasing this class from the Personal Defense Network. If you have a question on any technique or material you've seen in the class, please use the "Class Q&A Resource" feature you have access to with your online video class. A PDN Contributor will assist you.

MY NOTES