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JULY 2015

RANGE • MASTER

Volume 19 • Issue 07

RANGEMASTER

DEFENSIVE TACTICS
FOR THE REAL WORLD

Firearms Training Services
MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

by Steve Moses
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Tyler, TX

TIME WARP

19th Century Shotgun Design *Meets* 21st Century Training

I started defensive firearms training in 1993, back when the handgun preferred by nearly everybody was a steel-framed Government model 1911, and the only long gun anyone had for defensive work was a Remington 870, Winchester 1300 or Mossberg 500/590 slide-action shotgun. The really high-speed guys back then installed ghost-ring sights on the shotgun and took pleasure in the fact that they were now capable of putting a wheelbarrow load of hurt on a goblin as far away as 100 yards. As far as we were concerned, words like “kydex,” “Magpul,” and “EOtech” were nonsensical.

A lot has changed since then. Polymer framed, striker-fired pistols are now the standard, and the long gun of choice is an AR-15 or similar small-caliber semi-automatic carbine bearing an electronic red-dot sight. Most of us eventually relegated the shotgun to the darkest corner of the gun safe. After all, they don't hold much ammo, they aren't that much fun to shoot, and they essentially are a short-distance weapon. In my opinion, they didn't work as well as we hoped past about 10-15 yards unless

slugs are used, and then the lobbing trajectory of a one-ounce .76 caliber slug made 200 yard hits problematic.

Perceiving myself as being on the cutting edge of tactical technology, I actually sold all my shotguns at one point, noting smugly that there was no situation that I would ever come across that could not be handled with my AR-15 or AKM rifles and my Glock 19. I later found on several occasions that ignorance, in addition to pride, goeth before a fall. My first brush with wisdom came during a forced entry my team did in which I ran smack-dab into a pit bull while armed only with my Glock (disclaimer: no dogs were shot during the making of this story), but what

Most of us eventually relegated the shotgun to the darkest corner of the gun safe.

really drove the message home was going after wounded wild pigs in creek beds after dark during a two-year stint of professional guiding. I remember mumbling under my breath on numerous

occasions while working in a dark, claustrophobic environment that if I got out of this particular situation unscathed, I would bring Mr. Boo-Yah (a compact slide-action shotgun stoked with 00 buckshot) with me the next time I did something so stupid. I also noted the similarities between what I was doing at the time and dealing with one or more potential violent criminal actors where the need to place fight-stopping hits on fast-moving threats in low light was a strong possibility.

I may be slow, but I eventually got around to embracing reality and getting myself and my gear up to speed. I had studied the use of the defensive shotgun in the past under such masters as Louis Awerbuck, John Farnam and Jerry Miculek, so it was simply a matter of acquiring an appropriate defensive shotgun and then knocking the rust off my shotgun skills. I have spent some



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time doing executive/VIP protection and law enforcement while working out of cars, and wanted something short and lively. Having recently seen the movie "3:10 to Yuma," I decided to suck it up, buy the tax stamp and go the NFA route, and acquired a Remington 870 with a 14" barrel and modified choke. I then shortened the buttstock by 1" despite my orangutan-length arms, added a two-point sling, patterned it with a couple of different brands of 00 buckshot, checked

I contracted Tom Givens from the nationally-recognized Rangemaster school in Memphis to come to North Texas and teach a one-day shotgun course...

my point of impact with reduced-recoil slugs, and pronounced myself ready to rumble.

Time eked on, and I became anxious to run my shotty through a class. I have been a firearms instructor for 15 years, but like nothing more than to be a student from time to time in order to obtain an objective assessment of where my skills are, plus pick up (okay, steal) training material from others. Therefore, I contracted Tom Givens from the nationally-recognized Rangemaster school in Memphis to come to North Texas and teach a one-day shotgun course for us. Before becoming a full time trainer in 1996, Tom Givens completed a 25-year career in law enforcement and specialized security work, including patrol, investigative and firearms instruction duties. A graduate of the NRA Law Enforcement Firearms Instructor School and Tactical Shooting Instructor School, the FBI police firearms instructor school, Gunsite, TEES, and other academies, Givens has trained with Jeff Cooper, Ken Hackathorn, Chuck Taylor, John Farnam, Clint Smith, and a dozen other notable instructors. Givens was an active competitor in the early days of IPSC, and is a Master in three IDPA divisions. He has written five published firearms

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The 2016 Tactical Conference will be conducted over three days: March 11-13, 2016 (Friday through Sunday). This prestigious event will be held at the excellent facilities of the Memphis Police Department Training Academy. There will be classroom seminars, hands-on training segments, and a live-fire tactical pistol match scheduled over all three days. The Academy has multiple classrooms and multiple live-fire ranges, which will allow for live-fire blocks of instruction running current with the defensive pistol match and the classroom lectures. Participants may attend as many training blocks as time permits. All training segments, the pistol match, and a prize drawing are included in the entry fee. There are no other costs/fees.

The pistol match involves realistic scenarios and reactive mannequin targets that only fall when struck with solid, vital-zone hits. Target identification and discrimination are involved, along with shooting under stressful and realistic conditions. Only daily carry street guns and gear are allowed, and you will need about 100 rounds of ammunition.

Last year's Tactical Conference faculty roster included John Farnam, Massad Ayoob, Tom Givens, Southnarc, Paul Sharp, Steve Moses, Wayne Dobbs, Darryl Bolke, Karl Rehn, John Hearne, Chuck Haggard, Jim Higginbotham, Dr. Martin Topper, Andrew Branca, John Murphy, William Aprill, Greg Ellifritz, and many more—over thirty trainers in all. The 2016 Conference promises to offer an even greater wealth of unbelievable talent and experience. This is a rare opportunity to take part in knife, empty-hand, handgun, emergency medical, and tactics training all in one location. The entry fee of \$299 represents the best value for your training dollar in the entire industry. This event fills to capacity months in advance every year, as space is strictly limited. So it's best to register as early as possible to avoid disappointment.

To register, go to <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/tactical-conference-2016-tickets-16064134258>.

Don't delay. Every year we turn away dozens of people who wait too late to register. This event fills completely several months in advance every year. ■

www.rangemaster.com/2016-tactical-conference

Combative Pistol 1 Denver, CO Area July 11-12, 2015 (Sat-Sun)

Combative Pistol is a fast paced two day course that covers a lot of shooting skills and mental development. This is our only course in the Rocky Mountain States this year. The primary instructor is Tom Givens, assisted by other Rangemaster-certified instructors.

Firearms Instructor Course KR Training (near Austin, TX) July 24-26, 2015 (Fri-Sun)

We'll be conducting our signature Three Day Firearms Instructor Development Course in the Austin/Bastrop, Texas area this summer. This course is suitable for those who wish to begin teaching defensive pistol skills to others, for those who are

already teaching and wish to improve and polish their skills, or for any shooter who wants to master the use of the handgun. The very best way to master any subject is to teach it.

Training is conducted over three full days, about evenly split between classroom time and range time. Each student will fire about 1,000 rounds of ammunition. Each receives a 200+

page training manual, which is a valuable reference resource. The classroom portion will be conducted in a comfortable, air conditioned classroom.

The primary instructor will be Tom Givens, assisted by other Rangemaster-certified instructors. Contact Karl Rehn (rehn@krtraining.info) or Tom Givens (rangemaster.tom@gmail.com) with questions.

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textbooks and over 100 published articles in SWAT Magazine, Handguns, Soldier of Fortune and other publications, and serves as an expert witness on firearms training in state and federal courts all over the United States. I had recently reviewed his DVD on the use of the defensive shotgun, and in all honesty believed Tom was imminently capable of teaching a good shotgun course that would get me back in tune. I was wrong. Tom taught a great shotgun course using methods I had never considered, and I walked away far better off than when I arrived at the range.

Prior to training day, Tom and I laughed about consumers that would acquire a certain weapon with the understanding

that the distance that lethal force encounters take place would simply magically adjust to accommodate the weapon system wielded by the good guy. Ergo, if you had a pocket pistol, all fights would now take place at 6 feet, and if you had a rifle, they took place at 200 yards. Reality suggests otherwise. The bad guy commences the assault at the distance HE can accomplish his objective, and this distance is usually within the length of a room or one or two automobiles. To that end, the student should be prepared to react very quickly to a threat, have the ability to rapidly get his shotgun into play, and be able to put as much of the shotshell pattern as

possible on the bad guy where it counts so as to quickly terminate the threat while keeping in mind that every stray projectile that misses the target is capable of injuring or killing innocent parties. Most civilian-sector gunfights take place at the distances that a shotgun reigns supreme due to the size of the pattern and damage to tissue that a load of 00 buck is capable of tendering. I can't think of a better weapon for use in a structure or around a car where the bad guy is using hard cover. A one-ounce load of hardened buckshot contained within a fist-sized pattern slamming into a gun-wielding hand and the face right behind it at 1325 feet per second is capable of melting the resolve of the fiercest armed felon.

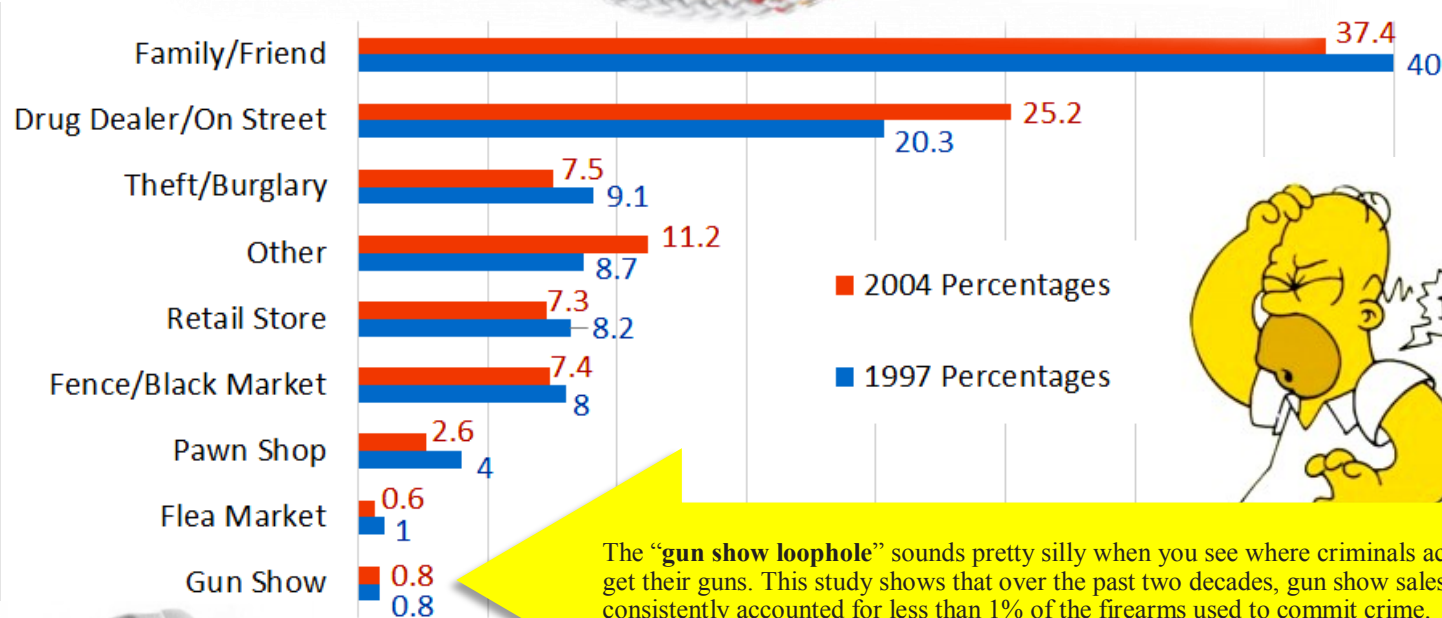
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THE REAL GUN SHOOPHOLE

Source of Firearms Possessed by State Prison Inmates at the Time of Offense (%)

Source:

Bureau of Justice Statistics Survey of Inmates 1997 & 2004 (NCJ 241730)
[Click here for full report.](#)



The "gun show loophole" sounds pretty silly when you see where criminals actually get their guns. This study shows that over the past two decades, gun show sales have consistently accounted for less than 1% of the firearms used to commit crime. ■

“ I am not afraid to be unarmed. I just find it undignified.”

- Jeff Cooper

Amen. I simply refuse to be a victim of feral people who live outside the social contract. My life and the lives of loved ones are my responsibility, not someone else's. ■





Tactical Tips

If you absolutely *must* clear a room or structure (either because there's no time to call the police, or because you *are* the police, or for some other urgent reason), keep in mind these precautions:

- 1** Move with your weapon at the ready! Do not dangle your sidearm. Be prepared every moment to actually find an adversary! Expect to find an enemy in every place you look for one. If there's nothing to it, don't bother to look.
- 2** Stay out of doorways! "Doorways are the picture frame of your death. Stay out of the picture!" Always check beyond a doorway carefully.
- 3** Stay away from corners! Corners are death traps. Stay as far back from a corner as possible and "cut the pie", playing the angles.
- 4** Search in rays, not bands! Vision band searching has a strong tendency to become fixed at one particular distance. If a potential attacker hides at any other distance and simply remains still, searching in bands will often cause you to miss seeing him. Shift your visual focus in and out, moving the rays laterally at a gradual pace as you search. Remember to look up and down, not just side to side.
- 5** Control noise! Move carefully to avoid bumping into things. Do not let equipment jangle. Do not drag your feet. Do not drag your back against the wall.
- 6** Maintain your balance! Do not cross legs while moving. Maintain a balanced, poised fighting posture at all times. Don't walk the beam.
- 7** Maintain light discipline! If you use a flashlight, use it sparingly. While your flashlight is on, it is a lead magnet – drawing fire from any direction.
- 8** Use all of your senses! Particularly in low light environments, use your senses of hearing, smell, and touch. People have distinct odors, especially under stress. Be alert for odors, colognes, gasoline or grease, body odor, and even the smell of waste. Listen for heavy breathing or any noise that is alien to the environment.
- 9** In tight places, use a weapon retention position to avoid being disarmed! Keep your weapon in high and tight. Be conscious of the likelihood of a close contact encounter. Do not lead with your weapon around corners, doorways, etc.
- 10** Take your time! The natural tendency is to rush. This is not a race. Search carefully and thoroughly. Never turn your back on any area you have not checked. Do not pass by doorways without checking them. ■

To that end, Tom focused the class on developing an intimate relationship between each student and his shotgun. The first two-hours were spent in the classroom covering shotgun selection, outfitting, and selection of appropriate ammunition. I was somewhat amazed at the wounding mechanism of buckshot at the distances most attacks take place, and Tom's methods of teaching accountability for rounds fired at speed was unlike any that I had previously experienced. Tom works off the following theory when it comes to teaching shotgun skills: **NEGATIVE TARGETS EQUALS POSITIVE RESULTS.** I can tell you first-hand that his method works.

Like any good shotgun course, the first hour on the range was spent learning proper stance and grip following by exercises covering ready positions, establishment of weld points (support hand, strong hand, cheek and shoulder), sight picture and alignment, trigger control, follow-through, vigorous working of the slide-action on pump shotguns, and reacquisition of the target. I would be remiss if I failed to mention that Tom continually stressed the

Tom is an instructor's instructor, and he was not about to present us with a problem without offering a solution.

importance of keeping the shotgun loaded, and it was pleasantly soothing to hear him repeat the old Mantra: "Shoot one, load one, shoot two, load two."

Good stuff, but I had been there and done that and it was nothing to write home about for an experienced shotgunner. However, the beginners in the class would beg to differ, as most of them had never taken any kind of defensive shotgun course, and I noted a vast improvement in their gun-handling abilities by day's end.

Then, the class got very interesting. Tom uses the concept of Negative Targets to teach students to mate precision, speed, and proper ammunition selection; and suddenly I was challenged. Tom takes a standard cardboard target and then cuts out that portion of the center that would house the heart and lungs on a real-life adversary. The objective then becomes to drive every round, buckshot or slug, through the negative target zone, and Givens considers every penetration outside of this zone to be either a failure on the part of the operator, the ammunition selected, or both. I found myself working very hard in speed drills to meet his standards, and soon cursed myself for being somewhat lackadaisical when it came for selecting

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buckshot for the course. At 15 yards, my modified-choke 870 would not keep pellets inside the negative zone, and I was using reduced-recoil 00 buck made by a major ammunition manufacturer. Fortunately, the Winchester Ranger Reduced-Recoil slugs performed much better, with my bead-sighted shotgun shooting very near to point of aim at 30 yards.

Tom is an instructor's instructor, and he was not about to present us with a problem without offering a solution. Givens is a major advocate of Federal Premium Vital Shok 00 buckshot with the Flite Control wad. As I understand it, this wad actually remains with the copper-plated buckshot for up to 10 yards from the time the shotload leaves the barrel, resulting in a much denser pattern. We saw this demonstrated repeatedly with nearly every shotgun in the course, and it is my highly fallible opinion that it may no longer be necessary to carefully match a particular load with a particular shotgun in order to get the best pattern possible. My own 870 was throwing 10-12" patterns at 15 yards with every other manufacturer's 00 buck that I tried until I tried Tom's preferred load, which graced me with a 6" pattern at 15 yards.

The end result was a new focus on my part to make sure that I hit my target as close to dead center as I could every time while being ever mindful of the outcome of a slightly pulled shot or failure on my part to consider the effect of distance. Once I had worked out all of the bugs associated with ammunition selection, I was entirely free to problem-solve my way through the rest of the course, including variations of the old Rolling Thunder drill and Tom's Defensive Shotgun Qualification Course of Fire. Without going into a lot of detail, the course tested our ability to manipulate the shotgun, shoot accurately (again shots only counted if they impacted the negative zone), and load the shotgun in a series of timed drills. Slugs were used from 15 to 25 yards, where abbreviated time frames made precision shooting tricky. Good stuff!

In summary, the shotgun is far from dead, and the weapon of choice under certain circumstances. Much as I love my rifles, I could probably make it through the rest of my days armed with little more than a properly set-up shotgun, some selected 00 buck and slugs, and my Glock. The gear and gun geek in me cringes to admit that maybe simple really is good. ■

- by Steve Moses



Students in a Rangemaster pistol class work the "Casino Drill," which involves high level gun-handling and shooting combined with mental processing.

pop quiz

HIGH STAKES!

Tom's (in)famous "Casino Drill" gets its name from which of these gaming industry classics?

- A) Roulette
- B) Baccarat
- C) Poker
- D) Blackjack



facebook

Who will claim the coveted Rangemaster knife this month? Be the first to post the quiz answer to our Facebook page and the prize is yours!

Instructor Development

We still have four more Rangemaster Firearms Instructor Development Courses coming up in 2015. Here they are:

- July 24-26 (Texas)
- Sept 11-13 (Indiana)
- Oct 30-Nov 1 (Ohio)
- Nov 20-22 (Ohio)

We only have one Advanced Firearms Instructor Course, Oct 3-4, McCloud, Oklahoma. You must be a prior graduate of our three-day instructor development courses to attend the advanced course. Visit our [Eventbrite page](#) to sign up for classes. ■

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