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DECEMBER 2018

RANGE • MASTER

Volume 22 • Issue 12

RANGEMASTER

DEFENSIVE TACTICS
FOR THE REAL WORLD

Firearms Training Services

MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

Ernest Langdon's Tactical Pistol Skills

After Action Report
by Tom Givens

I first met Ernest a little over 20 years ago, when he was not long out of the Marine Corps and was just getting established in handgun competition. I knew then he was going to do well in the competition and training world.

Ernest served 12 years in the Marine Corps, including seeing combat in a Scout/Sniper platoon and serving as an instructor at the High Risk Personnel program at Quantico. His deployments with the Marines included Panama, Cuba, the Philippines and the Persian Gulf. In addition, Langdon is a California POST Certified Firearms Instructor and the graduate of 40 formal shooting schools and 4 anti-terrorism schools, with instructor certifications from the FBI, NRA, US Army, and US Marine Corps. Ernest has over 25 years experience in competitive shooting and holds a Grand Master rating in USPSA and is a Distinguished Master in IDPA. He has won 10 National Championships and 2 World Speed Shooting titles.

I had been trying for years to get to one of Ernest's pistol courses, but he only

teaches a few of these each year, and anytime he has been teaching within 500 miles of my home, I've been 1,000 miles away teaching somewhere else. In November I finally had a chance to drive down to Miami and catch his Tactical Pistol Skills course, which is a two day intensive pistol class. I paid for a spot for Lynn and one for myself and we showed up as regular students, which is the way I like to audit courses.

The venue was the Homestead Training Center, which is located among some palm tree plantations on the south end of the Miami metro area. The nearest hotels are in Homestead, Florida, and most of the major chains have locations there. The range itself is quite nice. It is a large complex that hosts the Florida state IDPA championships and other large events.

I used my Boresight Solutions customized Glock 17, in a JM Custom Kydex IWB #3 holster and JMCK magazine pouches, on a Graith Specialist belt. I went through a bit over 800 rounds of Federal American Eagle 147 grain 9mm ball, and had no equipment issues throughout the class. I shot the entire class from concealed carry, IWB under a Hawaiian shirt, just like I dress every day here in Florida. Lynn used a Boresight Glock 17, as well, and also used JMCK kydex gear.

Our class had a total of 14 students, with a good mix of local law enforcement officers, a doctor, a couple of newly separated veterans and several regular Earth people. About half the class ran a Beretta handgun, either a 92 or a PX4, with an M&P, one Wilson Combat EDC9, and

a few Glocks present. About half had JM Custom Kydex holsters and mag pouches, not really surprising, given the high quality of JMCK gear.

On TD1 we started in the classroom. Ernest spent a total of almost three hours going over a variety of topics, including safety, developing a combative mindset, and nuances of grip and trigger control. I have seen a number of trainers over the years cover these initial topics on the range, with everyone standing in the sun. Bad ju-ju! I am a firm believer that administrative and academic topics should be covered in the classroom, where students can sit comfortably and view a Power Point or other visual aid to enhance their comprehension of the topics covered. I was glad to see Ernest use this approach. His lecture was concise and covered a lot of information effectively.

Once we moved to the range, we worked on a variety of basic handgun shooting skills. These included presenting the pistol, both from the holster and from the ready; single shots, progressing gradually to multi-shot strings; shooting cadences; reloading skills; and more. I picked up several nuggets related to explaining specific skill sets and a couple of drill variations I had not seen. One thing Langdon does that I like is he periodically has the class shoot a drill one at a time, in front of everyone else, with Ernest timing them. The drill is selected to encompass some of the skills we had been working on, and is a good way to see how well the students can perform those tasks under a bit of pressure. Our last such drill on TD1 was Ken Hackathorn's "The Test," 10 shots at 10 yards, in 10 seconds or less, on a B-8 bullseye target. Ernest offered an LTT ball cap as the prize for the best score on this drill. I managed a respectable 95 points in 7.66 seconds (all in the black), but noted gun blogger Caleb Giddings was in the class and turned in a 98, to win the cap. Caleb was on fire all weekend, more on that later.

On TD2, we spent the entire day on the range. After some warm-up on the skills we learned on TD1, we got heavily into shooting on the move.

Lateral movement as the handgun is being drawn was introduced, then we went on to continuing to move while placing accurate fire on the targets. We moved forward, rearward and laterally, then did figure eight drills around static barrels. Before long, most of the students were drilling the targets with a flurry of accurate shots, while getting further away or moving toward cover. To tie in with that, we then worked shooting from behind cover, from both standing and kneeling positions. Steel targets were used for some of these drills, which gave immediate feedback to each student. We also worked on shooting with one hand only, including the dominant hand and the support hand.

One of the highlights of TD2 was a chance to shoot the late Todd Green's FAST drill as a solo evaluation run. Ernest and Todd were close friends, and Todd authorized Ernest to carry on as the arbiter of the FAST Coin, awarded for 2 sub-5 second runs in a row in a formal class, in front of the shooter's peers. As mentioned, Caleb Giddings was really hitting his stride in this class, and he pulled off two clean runs in under 5 seconds, earning him FAST Coin #18. That means he is one of just 18 shooters to pull this off in the ten years of the coin's history. Congratulations, Caleb! My personal best in class is 5.95, so I'm pretty impressed by a sub-5 second run. By the way, Ernest demonstrates every drill in this class, and he shot a sub-5 second run in his demo. That kind of on-demand performance is rare, indeed.

Despite rain part of the day on TD2, we all managed to get through the class and have a great time learning, honing and refining our defensive shooting skills. Ernest is a gifted shooter and a very talented instructor. His passion for the subject matter is obvious, and his humble demeanor belies his fierce competitive spirit. See Ernest's website, langdontactical.com, for details about his Beretta handgun parts and custom work, as well as his class training schedule. His training dates are limited, so if you have to travel a bit to take his class, do it! I did, and I found the trip very worthwhile. I look forward to training with him again. ■



CONTINUING EDUCATION

FOR INSTRUCTORS

by Tom Givens

It is critical for a firearms instructor to continue training, learning and growing throughout his career. Mastery is a journey, not a destination.

I, for instance, have been teaching professionally since 1975, and full-time since 1996. Over that extended time frame equipment has evolved, shooting technique has evolved, our understanding of motor skills learning has evolved, and the nature of the threats we face has evolved. Trainers who have not changed as these trends changed are now obsolete. When you consider training with an instructor, you might ask him, "When and with whom was your last recent class as a student, not as an instructor?"

Back in February I took Gabe White's excellent "Pistol Shooting Solutions" course, which I have written about here

previously. In November, I attended Ernest Langdon's "Tactical Pistol Skills" course. A review of that class appears in this edition of the newsletter. In between, I attended several lectures at the Tactical Conference in March and the Northwest Tactical Conference this Summer in Washington state. I learned something useful in every one of these training events. For instructors, especially, hearing other trainers explain techniques can provide you with alternative phrasing, drills or demonstrations you may not have thought of on your own. Finding a single nugget can make the entire class trip worthwhile.

We have several events in 2019 designed specifically as "in-service training" or "continuing education" for trained firearms instructors. Listed to the right are some options for continuing your journey as a professional (click the dates for info). ■

APRIL 13-14, 2019

Advanced Firearms Instructor Development Course
Athens, GA

MAY 4-5, 2019

Annual Rangemaster-Certified Instructor Reunion
Lincoln, TX

JUNE 1-2, 2019

Advanced Firearms Instructor Development Course
Culpeper, VA

Eventbrite



Stocking Stuffer!



Rangemaster offers a professionally produced video, over two hours in length, called "Defensive Shotgun." This is essentially a basic fighting shotgun course, without the range session. Topics covered include shotgun selection; history; safety; modifications and accessories; loading, unloading, and reloading skills; cruiser/closet ready; patterning; ammunition selection and capabilities; shooting technique and more.

If you know someone who has a shotgun for home defense or protection of a business, this could be a very valuable gift. It can also be very helpful preparation if you plan on taking a shotgun class from us in 2019. For this sale, send personal check, company check, or money order made payable to Rangemaster (no credit card sales) for \$25.00 to Rangemaster; 1808 James L Redman Parkway, Suite 226; Plant City, FL, 33563. This price includes shipping. Merry Christmas! ■



by
Tom
Givens

In 2016, *The Trace* published an article highlighting a drastic increase in guns found in personal bags and carry-on luggage at airports. Here is a link to the article: <https://www.thetrace.org/2016/08/tsa-seizes-guns-airport-security> (or you can click the image below). What can we glean from this trend?



The TSA Is Finding More and More Guns at Airport Checkpoints

from
TheTrace.org

The article from *The Trace* focused on guns seized from carry-on luggage as passengers go through the screening process to get to their gate. The figures cover the period of January 1 through August 18, 2016—a mere seven-and-a-half months. During that period, 1,908 guns were seized, an average of 8 per day! In those seven-and-a-half months, 110 guns were seized at Atlanta's Hartsfield Airport and 105 at Dallas-Fort Worth Airport. The majority of these were found in purses, back-packs, and briefcases. When confronted, the most frequent excuse from the traveler was, "I forgot it was in there." Of course, that excuse is not accepted, and the offending traveler

faces civil fines of up to \$11,000.00 and possible criminal charges.

This is the result of casually carrying a gun as a talisman, rather than a defensive weapon. These are usually small handguns dropped into purse, back-pack or briefcase, and then completely forgotten. The gun is never handled, never practiced with, never maintained. The owner has no skill with it and no ability to access it in a true emergency. The gun is, actually, forgotten.

Wear your gun! If you wear your gun, you'll have access to it in an emergency. If you wear it, you'll have

to handle it daily. If you wear it, you are unlikely to forget about it when you're on your way to the airport.

Most people think of that gun in the briefcase like a rabbit's foot. Always remember, the rabbit had four of them, but somebody caught him, skinned him, ate his flesh and sold his feet as good luck charms! ■



The RANGE • MASTER Bullseye Course

by
Tom
Givens

Over my several decade long shooting career I have been privileged to shoot with many of the finest shots in the country. Whether the discipline involved was small bore rifle, PPC, IPSC, or IDPA all of the very top shots in that field shared one thing in common. To a man (or woman) they all relentlessly practiced the fundamental elements of marksmanship and worked very hard to perfect the most basic skills. Then, no matter what challenge a match presented to them, they could focus on solving the problem, rather than on how to shoot. The same thing applied to several very experienced gunmen I have known, including the late, great Jim Cirillo. Cirillo spent thousands

of rounds working on very basic skills, which he told me allowed him to concentrate and get hits even under fire in his many on-the-job shootings. That essential practice on the fundamentals is the first purpose of the Rangemaster Bullseye Course of Fire.

The second purpose of this course is to help those who have a lot of restrictions placed on their live fire practice by the range rules where they shoot. Many ranges don't allow work from the holster, or even silhouette targets. Fortunately, if you are stuck with such a training venue, you can perfect your presentation from the holster during dry practice at home. You can use a silhouette target at home with your dry practice, to ingrain getting a proper sight picture on a humanoid figure. You use this course of fire at the range to perfect your actual shooting skill—the ability to hit what you wish to, on demand.

For this course, we use the NRA B-8 bullseye target. It has been a standard NRA bullseye pistol competition target for decades. It is scored as printed, except that hits outside the 7 ring count as zero (they would be misses on a human target). The course is divided into five stages, fired at 25, 15, 10, 7 and 5 yards, in five-round strings. Since all strings are five

rounds each, you can even use this with a five-shot revolver. All strings begin with the pistol loaded, in both hands, at the low ready. Use a shot timer, or have a shooting partner time you with a stop-watch.

The first string is fired at 25 yards, and it is designed to test your maximum precision with the gun and ammunition you are using. On the signal, fire 5 rounds in one minute. It is best to fire these one at a time, coming back down to ready to take a couple of breaths and get ready to go again. Think of these as five individual, precisely aimed shots.

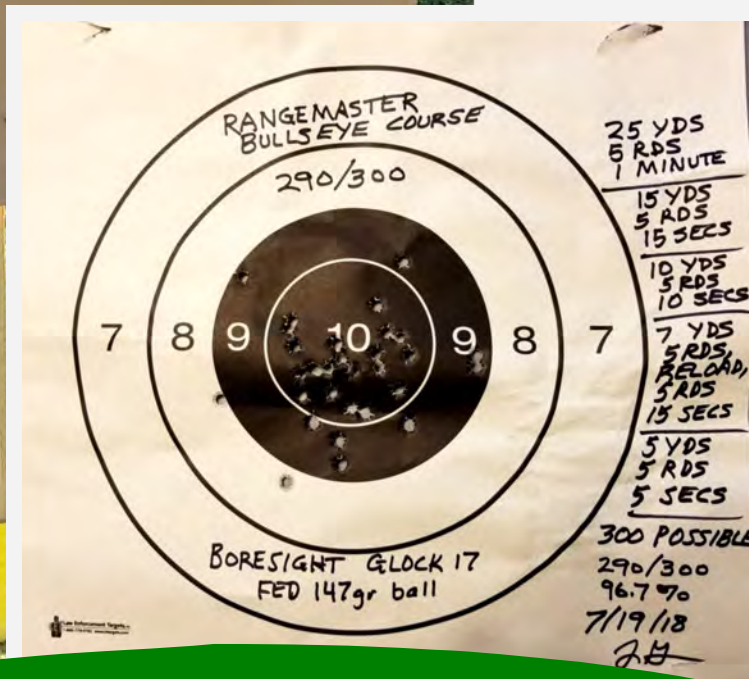
Next, move the target to 15 yards. On the signal, fire 5 rounds in 15 seconds. This is adequate time per shot to allow you to concentrate on getting a good sight picture and a smooth trigger press.

For the next string, move to the 10-yard line, and on signal fire 5 rounds in 10 seconds. Cutting the time limit forces you to work on immediate follow through and an appropriate cadence.

Now, move the target to 7 yards. Start with only 5 rounds in the pistol, and have a spare magazine, speedloader, speed strip or whatever you use for fast reloading on your person. On the signal, fire 5 rounds, reload, and fire 5 more rounds, all in 15 seconds. This drill works on trigger control, follow through, proper cadence, and reloading skill, all in one string.

For the last string, move to 5 yards. On the signal, fire 5 rounds in 5 seconds.

That's it. You have fired 30 rounds total, for a maximum possible score of 300 points. If you can consistently shoot 285 or better on this, under the time limits, you are a pretty darn good shot. You have also had a good work-out that covered sight alignment/sight picture, trigger control, follow through, recoil control/recovery, reloading under time pressure, and appropriate cadences for different distances — all in less than one box of ammunition. If you wish to compare the “shootability” of a couple of handguns, this will make it readily apparent if one shoots better for you than the other. Work on this drill periodically, even if your range does allow drawing from the holster, silhouette targets and so forth. Regardless of your current skill level this will make you a better all around handgun shooter. ■



The Rangemaster Tactical Conference is now sold out! Tac Con attendees come from all over the nation. Can you guess how many states will be represented at Tac Con this year?

(A) 48 (B) 36 (C) 24 (D) 18

Bonus question: Which state is sending the highest number of attendees to the 2019 Conference?

Think you know the answer? Reply to Tom's newsletter thread on the Rangemaster Facebook page.

The first person to reply with the correct answer will be this month's

WINNER!

