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TACTICAL GEAR

By D. K. Pridgen

2008—Tenth Annual Rangemaster Tactical Conference and Polite Society Competition

I began competitive handgun shooting, way back in the day (1978) because it was fun and so was the idea of sharpening my abilities. I believed the skills I would learn would trans-

late into increased survival potential should I ever be in an unpleasant situation. I was not alone, as a review of the gun magazines of yesteryear reveal.

Let's just say we were young and



Attacked in his patrol car, Chris Frantz hammers the two ne'er do wells down in short order, then exits the car to deal with another "crew."



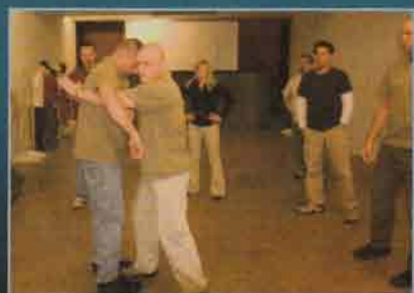
The Rangemaster Tactical Conference and Polite Society Competition moved last year to the new Memphis Police Department's state-of-the-art training facility.



This is a look at one of the enormous indoor ranges found at the Memphis Police Department's facility gives a hint of just how elaborate their system is.



Skip Gochenour provides insights into the criminal mind.



Trainers from USSA demonstrate working in the clinch.



Being in the clinch is a violent, draining situation that one must work to get out of quickly or pay the price.



For the final exam in the Clinch in a Weapons-Based Environment, students faced two padded attackers and were required to survive the melee.

designed shooting scenarios from the devious mind of Rangemaster's well-known trainer Tom Givens and his er, cronies, the Tactical Conference should not be missed. When not shooting, attendees are treated to lectures from a number of trainers from all over—trainers with specialties spanning a variety of disciplines.

The Shooting

One of the best aspects of the Polite Society Competition is the reactive target used in all tactical scenarios. Fully clothed, these targets are the brainchild of John Hearme of DVC Targets (www.dvctargets.com)



I.C.E.'s Rob Pincus defends himself as three armed goblins move in on his vehicle. (Light is much dimmer without the camera's flash.)



Tom Givens' demented mind added this twist of several strings fired one-handed from prone-facing targets standing at a normal height.

and have no discernable "hit" zones, but do display weapons. They must be dealt with as in real life. Non-threatening targets differ only in the absence of weapons. Talk about getting the old ticker pumping!

The competition included three tactical scenarios and two stages of basic exercises. (I will generously call them "basic!") Engaging 8-inch steel plates on an outdoor range from 7 to 25 yards, free-style, dominant-hand-only and support-hand-only was

made even more challenging (as if I needed any more challenge!) by the restriction that any reload or deployment of backup gun had to be completed one-handed during the appropriate strings.

Also on the outdoor range was an officer ambush scenario. Shooters started seat-belted in a patrol unit, where they engaged two reactive targets. Departing the patrol car, the officer came under fire from a shotgun blast

TACTICAL GEAR

and had to deal with several attackers partially obscured by a non-threat.

The other "basic" stage was under low-light conditions on the enormous indoor range. Givens' demented mind added the twist of several strings fired one-handed from prone-facing targets standing at a normal height. What an abs workout!

John Farnam (defense-training.com), Skip Gochenour (teddy-tactical.com), Mike Warsöcki (insightstraining.com), Steve Moses and Hany Mahmoud (bluffdale-firearmsacademy.com), T.J. Pilling (tigervalley.com), James Yeager (tacticalresponse.com), Claude Werner and Mike Benedict (rogers-shooting-school.com), Randy Harris (suarezinternational.com), Andy Stanford (optionsforpersonalsecurity.com), Paul Gomez



Classes for dealing with mixed martial arts practitioners require hands-on grappling for better learning.



Steve Moses explains a finer point to students dealing with a mixed martial arts practitioner.

The final two stages each centered around attacks at your vehicle under low light conditions. Reactive targets, another shotgun blast and no-shoot targets all combined to make them challenging and packed with adrenaline.

Trainers Galore

As challenging and exciting as the Competition was, I almost found myself begrudging the time spent shooting and away from the classes and lectures! After all, with the plethora of experts providing lectures, live-fire and hands-on training (over 20, most presented several times a day, both days) non-stop for two days is too much of a junkie's fix to pass up.

Training luminaries included



Once down, Moses shows the student how to keep an attacker off.

(tacproshootingcenter.com), Will Andrews (hhgunrange.com), Mike Brown (usshootingacademy.com), Karl Rehn (krtraining.com), Rob Pincus (icetraining.us), Southarc



Handling a confrontation is not just man's work!



Avoidance and defusing are always the best options for managing unknown contacts.

(shivworks.com) and John Hearne, William Aprill, and Tom Givens (rangemaster.com).

Just as time did not allow attending each trainer's session (There were so many scheduled at the same time I had to make many very difficult choices), space does not begin to allow discussion of even those I attended. I will hit a few highlights, with the understanding that not discussing a presentation is in no way a condemnation.

Mike Brown and a talented cadre of instructors from USSA presented a hands-on insight into the Clinch in a Weapons-Based Environment. This strenuous class had students



Not only is Andy Stanford a talented trainer, he is an equally talented accordionist!

dealing with an attacker hell-bent on grappling and pounding on them. Hard to double-tap an attacker when tied in knots! Steve Moses' class concentrated on escaping from the attack of someone trained in mixed martial arts. Practitioners of this are quick and deadly. (Remember my earlier

comment about empty-handed skills playing a more valuable role in survival than quick double-taps?)

Southarc hands-on class, Managing Unknown Contacts, showed ways to avoid, defuse and, if ultimately necessary, physically deal with being accosted. (Avoidance.) Karl Rehns' Low Light Force on Force put students right where most violence occurs, in reduced lighting.

Both Hany Mahmoud's Active Shooter Response and James Yeager's Setting Up an AR/AK for Combat presented timely, pertinent information on the use of long guns. Why pertinent? Long guns are more effective and efficient than handguns when dealing with threats.

Skip Gochenour's Criminal Behavior presentation was, as always, an interesting and informative look into the minds of criminals. William Aprill's The Warrior's Burden—PTSD dealt with the toll on those who make



The mastermind of the Annual Rangemaster Tactical Conference and Polite Society Competition himself, Tom Givens gives away the prizes at the end.

life and death decisions.

I've only covered 40 percent of the classes, but it should be obvious to students of tactics that the Rangemaster Tactical Conference and Polite Society Competition is an event not to miss! In 2009 it will still be under the auspices of Rangemaster but held at the USSA facility in Oklahoma. See you there! ©

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