

AAR- November 5, 2006 Combative Carbine Workshop Otisco Lake Rod & Gun Club, Marietta NY

Phil Elmore

I spent my Saturday a couple of weekends back in the company of Chris Fry and his assistant(s) in order to attend and participate in this Combative Carbine class.

This was a very professionally conducted seminar, very informative, and most certainly not for beginners - anyone walking into this without at least basic skills in running a carbine or handgun would have felt more than a little overwhelmed. (I do get the impression, though, that a complete beginner would have enjoyed the class and that Chris would have given that person any instruction they required.)



Chris demonstrating prior to a module.

Chris is an excellent trainer. He was consistent, approachable, friendly, and kept things moving. His martial arts background was evident in some of his body mechanics and even in a few of the things he said -- though I don't know how obvious this would be to someone who did not have the good fortune to have had at least a little of the same training, as I saw echoes of my Kung Fu/FMA/JKD training here and there.

Most everyone there was running AR15s, some of them sporting a wild assortment of gear and supporting vests and rigs. One fellow had an AK (complete with barrel-clamp-Brinkman MaxFire flashlight!), one fellow had a Ruger Mini 14 (at least I think it was a 14 and not a 30), and one fellow even had a Beretta Storm (which seemed to give him quite a few problems -- worth considering for anyone contemplating the Storm).



Students on the line during a shooting module.

I ran, for the whole class (expending something like 300-400 rounds), a Hi Point 9mm carbine with a magazine carrier on the buttstock and two extra mags stuck in the pockets of my 5.11 vest. Would you believe that ugly cheap gun worked and worked and kept on working, giving me no problems? I had one malfunction -- ironically, during a failure to fire drill! -- when the last round in the magazine didn't strip out of the mag and got stuck in it, leaving me with nothing to do but change out the almost empty magazine. The rest of the time that Hi Point just kept chowing down on Winchester White Box with nary a complaint. I don't think the barrel got completely cool for, like, two and a half hours, as during that time it never had the chance to go unused for long enough to manage it.



Me with that surprisingly reliable Hi Point.

We ran through basic self-defense responses and some alternative responses, aggressive firing stances (built off the isosceles for you handgun folk -- knees bent, feet shoulder width apart, rump back, thrusting

the carbine forward into the shooting. We worked snapping up the carbine from different ready positions (including a Diamond Position, a.k.a. Position Sul), transitions and firing with the support hand (never called the "weak" hand by Chris), some parallels to handgun use (though none of us actually switched to handgun, we could have). I'm leaving some stuff out -- there was a lot packed into the four hours and I was surprisingly sore for the remainder of the weekend. A few hours like this will teach you where all the rough edges are on a given gun -- and teach you to appreciate magazine loaders.

It was neat to see 15 other people in real life all more or less on the same page. Everyone had clip-equipped tactical knives; Chris had a Shivworks Disciple and a KaBar TDI and something else clipped to his pocket. Glocks and 1911s abounded as far as sidearms went. (I know Chris has trained with SouthNarc up in Canada recently and it would be a real treat to see the two of them together in one place.)

Those folks, like me, who had no sling quickly learned that we wanted one. Those folks who had two- and even three-point slings quickly learned that a single-point sling is really the only way to go if you don't want the sling getting in your way during transitions and manipulations.

There's something almost awe-inspiring about standing amidst seven other people, all of them shooting rifles and carbines around you, as the pressure waves and smoke roll over you like rain.

I will gladly sign up for more training with Chris when I have the chance and am scheduled to take his next class on December 10th. I am eager to take some of his force-on-force and empty hand combatives courses, too. He's a nice and knowledgeable guy who conducted a class that ranks among the best I've attended. I've had the good fortune to see a lot of training, directly or indirectly through contributors to my publication; This was spot-on, easily competitive with the big names in the industry.

- Phil Elmore

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