

AAR - SHIVWORKS PRACTICAL UNARMED COMBATIVES & EXTREME CLOSE QUARTERS CONCEPTS 1&2 by Tom Notarpole

Practical Unarmed Combatives (PUC) 1800-2200hrs

The Friday night instructional block was an incredible precursor for the following two days of extreme close contact. I can't imagine making an attempt at ECQC without this very technical and well designed course concerning the "criminal assault paradigm". The evening started with discussion and demonstration of two primary components present in a criminal assault. These two components give the "bad guy/s" the upper hand through initiative, close contact, and multiple aggressors, and must be realized and worked into your thought process as you attempt to maintain awareness of yourself and your surroundings.



Practical Unarmed Combatives Intro (PUC)

Once we became aware of the challenges involved in the opening moments of a confrontation, we discussed MUC or Managing Unknown Contacts. This not only provided us with the skills necessary to potentially avoid the criminal assault by controlling distance and maintaining positional dominance while remaining focused, but gave us incredibly valuable pre-assault queues. We took the opportunity to practice our pre-recorded verbal responses and allowed each other a chance to be exposed to and recognize the different pre-assault queues that commonly occur. Pick any criminal assault footage available online, and you will see these queues virtually screaming out to the soon-to-be victim.



Managing Unknown Contacts (MUC)

This brought us to the point where perhaps through all of our efforts, we were unable to remove ourselves from a hostile situation and were left to deal with it, problem solve, and win. We discussed and drilled the concepts of the default guard, body positioning and posture, as well as minimal telegraphing strikes. All the while with the goals of "stay on your feet, stay conscious, and stay in the fight"; much easier said than done. This night block of instruction worked me over quite well both mentally and physically but offered solid concepts learned and vetted on the streets, by one of the most impressive instructors I have ever had the opportunity to train under. I am purposely leaving TONS of information out of this AAR out of respect for ShivWorks as well as my fellow students. All of those who attended this course literally fought to gain this information and I feel it's fair to try and protect such a valuable learning experience instead of just laying the course content out.



Developing the default response

Extreme Close Quarter Concepts (ECQC) -Day 1 0900-1800hrs

ECQC 1 started off with a very thorough safety brief and medical response plan. Extra time was taken to detail not only what each safety rule was but how these rules apply on the streets and



Live Fire Safety Brief

ways to make them more effective. The idea of a "hard focus point" for the high frame index of the trigger finger is something I had not heard before and will absolutely be applying to my regimen. Carefully choose a point high and away from the trigger that allows you tactile sensation of finger placement (ejection port, take down lever) and use that point without fail.

The first part of the day consisted of live-fire exercises following discussion and demonstration of a fluid, 4 count combative draw stroke. I was able to increase my efficiency and reliability almost immediately as we covered topic of the "number 1" or accessing the final firing grip. The main focus of day 1 live fire in my opinion was the ability to establish a solid and repeatable number 2 retained firing position. The importance of this position became very clear as we moved into FoF evolutions later on in day 1 and day 2. The same body platform we had discussed in PUC was applied in our deployment of concealed carry equipment and was drilled into us constantly. The topic of concealment garments and proper clearing techniques was included and practiced throughout the morning, despite the climbing heat and humidity. We also discussed the importance of a high transition near the eye line, from position 2 to 3, allowing sight alignment at the earliest opportunity. We were then tasked with making "A" box hits just as the shooter reached extension, proving that proper body platform, final firing grip establishment, and consistent transition throughout the draw stroke would allow the student to place a round instantly, with no sight searching pause.



Developing the #2 retention shooting position



Concealed carry discussion and the combative draw-stroke

The later portion of the day was dedicated to hands-on techniques allowing us problem solve the initial close contact attack. Once the training area was sanitized of all live defensive tools and verified by training staff we covered techniques used while working in the clinch, echoing back to our previously covered and all important body platform. Select hooks and ties were presented and drilled with numerous training partners of all sizes. I had the opportunity to be dominated (unwillingly) by not only very large men but also a very dedicated and talented young lady. This drive home



ECQ clinch work development for In-Fight Weapon Access (IFWA)

the point that proper training and retention of skill sets were the key to winning and not size or strength. Moving on into the grounded portion of instruction, we covered numerous topics including the spider guard and proper hip movement necessary to regain a dominant position. Once everyone had taken the time to work these concepts both consensually and not with different partners, we finished off the day with our first FoF evolution.

The idea of this encounter was to place the armed "good" guy in a grounded position with a single encroaching threat, testing our ability to apply the newly learned techniques and fight back from an inferior position with the possible attempt for weapon access in an all out fight. If my memory serves me right, a gun came into play typically due to the loss of concealment during the struggle and not because a superior position was established and allowed for the access of a firearm. The previous "stay on your feet" discussion was truly driven home in this evolution, as was the incredible exhaustion experienced from struggling with just one threat.



One on one force-on-force (FOF) evolutions

ECQC - Day 2 0830-1730hrs

Day 2 kicked off with the second live fire session, lasting throughout the morning. We revisited the weapon deployment concepts discussed and drilled the day before, with special emphasis



Developing the #3 position, extension and compression of handgun based upon distance from threat

again placed on firing from retention. The importance of a well structured and functional draw stroke appeared again as we moved into an instructional block on firing from a compressed position, as well as firing at points through extension and compression. The main point of this proficient draw stroke was to allow the shooter to place effective rounds as immediately necessary, regardless of timing, distance, physical contact or space available. As each of us pushed for consistency and adherence to tactics throughout

the morning, the effectiveness of ShivWork's TTPs was proven over and over. We ended the live fire portion of the day with a highly specialized presentation of armed threat response while present in a vehicle. The attention to detail and precision in which this was completed was

absolutely stunning. I had not had the opportunity to experience this before, so not only was it unexpected but it was some serious icing on the cake.



Grounded engagement development, structure and spider guard concepts

After we returned from lunch we dove into more man on man reinforcement of our previously learned PUC skills and pushed on into threat disarming techniques. These techniques tied in perfectly with the PUC tactics already established and allowed us the chance to experience consensual and non consensual disarms. These drills also provided an opportunity to take note of the risks involved with deploying a weapon system in close contact and reinforced the importance of satisfying the requirements of In Fight Weapon Access (IFWA) before attempting to bring a weapon into the fight.

The remainder of the day was reserved for more FoF evolutions, this time involving multiple threats. These evolutions would be a proving ground for everything that had been learned over the past 3 days. For the first evolution, the "good" guy would be faced with an unknown threat. A threat that is attempting to close distance, engages verbally, and may or may not be armed. A secondary threat was present but the location and timing of that second threat was completely unknown. After each person had encountered and fought through their scenario, they



Grounded FOF evolutions against standing aggressor

they were then interviewed and asked to describe what happened, what they saw, how they felt, and why they reacted the way they did. It was very interesting to see that there was often a disconnect between what the victim saw and experienced, and what the bystanders saw. The exponentially increased difficulties faced by adding just one more threat was scary to say the least and I can honestly say that before this training evolution I had never been to a point of exhaustion like that before. The fighting mindset really came through in this drill, or should I say fell through for me. Just that is worth the price of admission.



Final FOF evolution "Car Jack" & Vehicle Brazilian Jiu-Jitsu (VBJJ)

To end the day, we took our skills and moved them into a unique environment. The front seat of a car, or as Southnarc called it, VBJJ (Vehicle Brazilian Jiu Jitsu). This simulated a carjacking scenario in which the driver picked up an unknown person. Completely unscripted with verbal interaction and problem solving skills at play, this quickly turned into a robbery at gun point contained within the confines of a 1997 Ford Aspire. A true test of reaction, positional dominance, IFWA and weapon

disarms; I felt it was priceless learning opportunity.

This course went above and beyond my high expectations at every point throughout the weekend and I feel confident in saying that you will not find a better, more comprehensive and highly specialized curriculum any where today. These concepts were born and proven from violent street encounters experienced firsthand, and won by the instructor. Where else will you find that?