

Defensive Shotgun Course AAR, Oklahoma  
By Bryce Ratchford, Engineer, Oklahoma City

---

This is my AAR from when I took Shotgun I last year. For those not familiar any time spent with Tom is time well spent.

I took my first defensive shotgun class today (9/23/09) and had a blast (no pun intended). I've taken several pistol classes and a couple rifle classes but nothing with the scattergun.

If you want to quit reading here I'll sum it up with go take a class.

Who: Rangemaster/Tom Givens

What: Defensive Shotgun

Where: Shawnee, OK

Gear: Mossberg 930SPX, Federal 7 1/2 (1290 FPS) Game Loads, Federal LE133 00 Buck, Brenekke KO slugs

Round count: Between 125-150 birdshot, 60 rounds of buck shot, 15 slugs.

Attendees: 3 LEOs, 3 civilians

The week before class I headed to the range to try out Winchester SuperX birdshot in my gun. I'd bought a bunch the past couple years when it goes on sale before dove season so I planned on running it. It flat wouldn't run in my gun; I had 5 or 6 FTE out of a box of 25. I knew that would be a PITA during class so I picked up a box of Federal Game loads and Winchester High Speed loads. These both cycled my gun fine so I bought enough Federal for the class. I zeroed for my slugs and buck and called it good.

Class started with covering ready positions, presentation, stance, and manipulating the gun. We were soon doing dry presentations and those running pump guns were dry firing and working the slide. We started the morning shooting birdshot at 5 yards working on keeping the gun topped off and running. This was the emphasis of the morning and most of the day. Since the shotgun is a lower capacity weapon it must be kept full. Replenish what you shoot so it is ready to run. All loading and manipulations were done with the support hand, the gun hand never left the pistol grip. I started off trying to load an empty gun, open ejection port from the bottom, I was fumbling and having some issues so I switched to loading over the top and things really smoothed up. I also switched my ammo in the butt cuff from brass down to brass up and this helped smooth my reloads. We ran a variety of drills concentrating on getting hits and keeping the gun loaded. The morning ended with a series of Rolling Thunder drills to put a little stress on you to get loaded and ready to shoot.

We had a classroom segment covering shotgun history, types, modifications, and performance. We watched a video demonstrating the effects on the pattern by changing ammo in the same gun. Patterning was a point of emphasis so that you know what your gun and load are capable of.

The afternoon started with a rolling thunder drill to warm up and then we switched over to buck shot. We shot buck at 5, 7, 10, 15, and 20 yards to see how it patterned. This was very interesting

to see the performance in different guns and types of ammo. My gun was still shooting an almost solid hole at 15 yards by 20 I was starting to see some opening but it was still a very tight group. Other guns were throwing pellets off target at on head shots at 7 yards. We ran many of the same drill from the morning using buck during the afternoon.

We then moved onto shooting slugs, we shot from 15, 25, and 50 yards to see how our guns grouped and where they hit. Tom then demonstrated with his personal gun the importance of trying different slugs out and how guns will like one better. He shot 3 different types of slugs at 25 yards; 2 groups were hand sized and one was a single hole. We then worked on transitioning from standing to kneeling for taking a shot.

After running the slugs we went through a small qual drill and wrapped up the day.

I came away a much better shotgunner, being my first class I was able to soak up material and really feel improvements during the day. My gun ran like a champ and patterned beautifully it really improved my confidence in the little Mossberg. A lot of the myths and BS surrounding shotguns was dispelled and replaced with facts and first hand knowledge. This was one of the more fun classes I've been to and now have some drills I can run on the range to improve my gun handling.

If you are thinking about taking a class it's well worth your time and effort.