



OCTOBER 2020 NEWSLETTER

DRILL OF THE MONTH

Throughout 2020 we will be running a Drill of the Month in each edition of the newsletter. The goal is help motivate folks to get to the range and actually shoot their defensive weapons, and to have some fun in the process. Each month we'll post a drill or a short course of fire. You are encouraged to go to the range, shoot the drill, and then post your thoughts and a photo of your target on the Rangemaster Facebook page, <https://www.facebook.com/groups/rangemaster/>.

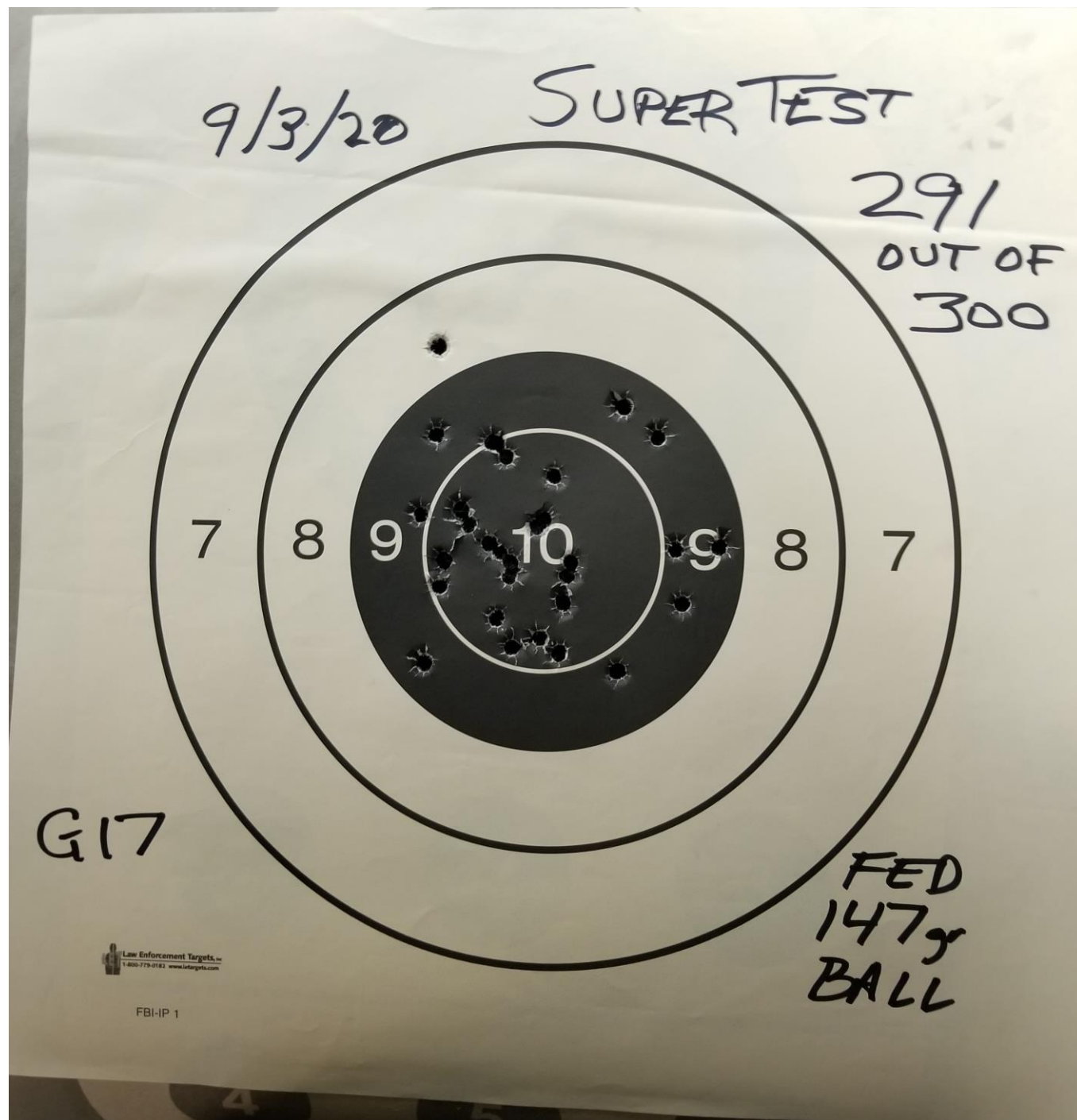
The Super Test

Years ago Ken Hackathorn came up with a deceptively simple drill he called "The Test". This drill is a very good measure of a shooter's mastery of the fundamental/essential skills in pistol marksmanship, with just one target and ten rounds of ammunition. One B-8 repair center is engaged from 10 yards, with ten shots fired under a time limit of ten seconds. So, it's ten shots, at 10 yards, in ten seconds. Very simple. A maximum possible score is 100, and anything above 95 is very good. Some trainers have adopted the variation of just keeping everything "in the black" for this drill, but I prefer to score it as printed.

Wayne Dobbs and Darryl Bolke operate Hardwired Tactical Shooting (<http://hardwiredtacticalshooting.com/>) in Dallas, Texas. They came up with a variation of this drill which further tests the shooter's ability to match his firing cadence with the degree of accuracy required by a specific shooting problem. They call this drill the "Super Test". It is also shot on a B-8 repair center, as follows:

5 yards	10 shots in 5 seconds
10 yards	10 shots in 10 seconds
15 yards	10 shots in 15 seconds.

Maximum possible score is 300. I think anything above 270 (90%) indicates a pretty high skill level. For the best idea of where your strengths and weaknesses lie, I suggest you shoot each distance on a fresh B-8 repair center. You can fire all 30 shots on one, but it is more difficult to score accurately. In addition, with three targets you can see your group for each distance, which can be enlightening. At first, shoot this from The Ready. Once you are shooting above 90%, I'd start working from the concealed holster. Give this drill a try. It's more demanding than it sounds.



Structured Practice or Just Making Noise?

As I have mentioned before, I never go the range and “just shoot”. I always shoot timed/scored drills so I can accomplish several goals. They are:

1. Check to see exactly where I am, this day, on my own personal skill curve;
2. Measure specific skill sets and compare to a personal baseline;
3. Look for any skill subset that needs remediation; and
4. Compare gun/ammo/accessory combinations to others in a measured, meaningful way.

Recently I had time to go to the range for about an hour, so I shot some specific drills on B-8 bullseye targets with my EDC Glock 17, worked over by Boresight Solutions. First thing, a cold skill check. The first ten rounds today were fired on the excellent “Five Yard Round-Up” drill. My cold run earned a score of 99 out of a possible 100. I then shot five iterations of this ten shot drill on the same target, for 50 rounds, and a possible score of 500. My composite score was 494 (98.8%), all under the time limits.

I then moved a B-8 to 10 yards and shot “The Test” four times on the same target. “The Test” is 10 rounds, at 10 yards, in 10 seconds. My times were running in the 7.0 to 8.5 second range, with my best time being 6.72 seconds. My composite score was 395 out of 400 (98.8% again).

I then fired some rounds on a silhouette target at 7 yards, working on Failure Drills and a few shoot/reload/shoot drills. In a bit over an hour I fired 200 rounds and accomplished my training goals for the day.

Next time you go to the range try this approach. Before you go, plan what to work on and pick some drills to measure your skill, including a scored drill shot cold, no warm-up, for score. This will give you a more accurate assessment of your on demand performance and maximize the benefit of your range trip.

Optimizing the Snubby Revolver

An awful lot of people carry a small frame, short barrel revolver (snub, or snubby) as a Back-Up Gun or as a primary sidearm when in a circumstance/environment where a larger gun would be a problem due to

legal or employment ramifications. Obviously, a compact or mid-sized semiautomatic pistol would have several advantages over the snubby, including the auto's higher capacity; easier, quicker reloads; and generally superior shooting/handling characteristics. None of those advantages matter much, however, if the semiauto is left at home. If the snub is what you have, it's best to make the gun as effective as possible.

There are three things that can really help make the snub more shoot-able and effective. They are more visible sights, better stocks, and careful ammunition selection. Careful attention to these details can make the snub much more effective and a lot easier to use well.

The whole idea of the snub is to have a minimal sized package, to aid in real concealment, often hidden in a Belly Band or a pocket holster. Thus, the sights are usually small, low profile fixed sights, which can be hard to use at speed. One thing I really like about the older (pre-1972) Colt snubs like the Detective Special, Cobra, or Agent is that the front sight is a full 1/8th inch wide and a good bit taller than the front sight on a J-frame Smith & Wesson. With the addition of a bit of bright red or orange paint, the Colt front sight stands out fairly well. On older S&W snubbies, the front sight is very narrow and hard to see. More recent production guns have a wider, more visible front sight. Claude Werner (The Tactical Professor) is a snubby sage, and he advocates painting the front sight bright white, then adding a coat of red or orange to the part of the front sight that just fills the rear sight notch. This makes getting an adequate sight picture much faster and easier, as you can readily see what portion of the front sight belongs in the rear sight notch. The fixed rear sight on a stainless steel revolver also needs some attention. With a pointed Sharpie you can black out the recess around the rear sight notch, providing contrast for the brightly painted front sight.

Stocks that are designed for fast double-action shooting really make hitting in a hurry a lot easier. Properly designed stocks spread out the felt recoil, prevent the gun from squirming around in your hand during recoil, and position the trigger finger to press the trigger straight back, which is critical. The grip frame of the modern double-action revolver was actually designed for thumb-cocked, single-action shooting. The empty space behind the trigger guard was put there to raise the middle finger higher, which put the thumb closer to the hammer spur, for easier thumb cocking. Fast double-action work requires the middle finger to be lowered, so that the trigger finger can pull straight back throughout the double action trigger stroke. Stocks designed for double action work will fill in the gap behind the trigger guard. When choosing stocks, remember that the whole purpose of the

snubby is compactness, so don't put great big, bulky stocks on the tiny gun. The photos show several good examples of stocks that enhance shooting without adding excessive bulk to the gun.

Finally, intelligent ammunition selection is important. Fired from a two inch barrel, even modern hollow point .38 Special ammunition is very unlikely to expand in real flesh. Also, especially in an aluminum or Scandium framed fly-weight revolver, heavier loads recoil pretty fiercely, making follow up shots harder. If you only have 5 or 6 shots, you'd better be able to make them count. A good, reliable factory wadcutter round, like Federal Gold Match is probably as good a terminal performer in a snubby as anything else, plus will have mild recoil and usually shoots right to the sights. Since the low profile fixed sights on the snub are hard to adjust, I recommend finding a load that hits right where you aim and go with it.

Set your snubby up correctly, find a load that shoots to point of aim, and then **practice with it**. These little guns are quite hard to shoot well. Yes, very credible shooting can be done with one, but you have to do the work.





Rangemaster Instructor Course Notes:

This was written during the “shelter in place”, state mandated COVID quarantines. Heeding Samuel L. Jackson’s plea to “stay the f--- at home”, I had some time to do some filing and crunch some numbers. Every couple of years I audit the results I record from various classes. This is one of the methods I use to ensure the quality of the class material and its delivery.

To that end, I looked at the records from 21 Three-Day Firearms Instructor Development Courses conducted all over the US. A total of 386 students were involved, for an average of 18.4 students per class. This appears to be an optimum size, as only half shoot at any given time, while the other half of the students coach them. With me as the primary instructor and an AI or two, we’re able to watch everyone pretty closely, and offer advice or corrections in detail.

Of those 386 students, 344 passed the course. That is an 11% wash-out rate, which indicates we’re doing things right. We absolutely do not want this class to be a “gimme”, but we do want anyone who comes in with the right attributes to be able to pass. Those who fail the course invariably fall into one of two categories.

The first group are true beginners, with no prior formal training other than maybe a basic NRA class. We have had people show up with NO prior training, and so far, two who had never drawn a handgun from a holster. Why someone like this thinks they are ready to teach is beyond my understanding.

The other group come to class with a laundry list of bad habits, and either make no attempt to or flatly refuse to change them.

Us: You need to change -----.

Them: But this is the way I’ve always done it.

Us: But that does not work for you.

Them: But this is the way I’ve always done it.

Us: But you are not performing to the standard. You will not pass unless you change.

Them: But this is the way I’ve always done it.

Us: OK

These 386 students showed a high skill level on the tests involved on the third day of training. There are two shooting tests and a written test, and a score of 90% or above is required on all three. Their average scores, including the scores of those who did not pass, were as follows:

FBI Pistol Qualification Course	97.0%
Rangemaster Instructor Qualification Course	96.3%
Written examination	94.6%.

This is probably the most important course we teach. There are so many “instructors” out there who have no clue. This course is a good first step toward becoming clueful.



I have had the privilege of working with Gabe White for several years now. He has presented at the Tactical Conference, and I have had the pleasure of attending two of his courses as a student. He is a truly gifted shooter, but also an excellent teacher. The following article was submitted by Gabe. --- Tom Givens

Knowing What You Need to Know

By Gabe White

Epistemology is the branch of philosophy that deals with the study of mechanisms of knowing, and ascertaining the validity of those methods. Epistemology seeks to differentiate between poorly-founded belief and actual knowledge (or as close to actual knowledge as we can get.)

If you’ve been in the shooting world for very long, you may have heard the phrase ‘see what you need to see to make the hit.’ That statement refers to the fact that a shooter can use various different visual or other references in order to align the gun with the target. But aiming is about more than just getting the gun aligned with the target - it is also about the

shooter's **certainty** of that gun-target alignment. Aiming is epistemology in shooting. The different ways we aim are different epistemological answers to the question, "How do we know the gun is aligned with the target?"

Knowing by seeing is generally better than **knowing by feeling** because it is more precise and certain. The gun gets more closely aligned with the target using vision rather than feel. Also of critical importance is that the shooter will be far more **certain** that the gun is sufficiently aligned with the target.

Point shooting is the primary or complete use of kinesthetic awareness to establish gun-target alignment (aiming by feel and general awareness of body positioning, rather than by the use of vision.) Point shooting has a bad reputation, and overall, it should. However, there is at least one context where it is entirely appropriate. Shooting from retention, and thus aiming by feel, is a necessity if the threat is physically proximate enough that the gun can easily be grabbed. Training, practice, and the appropriate circumstance – an extremely close threat – is why this very coarse method of aiming has a place. It is a necessity for a well-rounded practitioner of defensive shooting.

As the gun enters the shooter's cone of vision, alignment by seeing becomes possible. The less extended the gun is, the more awareness of gun-target alignment will be driven by feel/kinesthetic awareness. The more extended the gun is, the more awareness of gun-target alignment will be possible by use of vision. At or very near full extension at eye level, the most precise and certain awareness of gun-target alignment becomes available by using the sights or red dot.

There are lesser levels of visual awareness that can be used for aiming from full extension, such as seeing the back of the slide/hands superimposed over the target area. Those are worth some familiarization, at least so that the shooter has an understanding of what kind of problem they can and cannot reliably address that way, and may be appropriate if the shooter is in an intermediary position where the gun is further out than a pure retention position, but not yet at/near full extension where the sights or dot can be seen, or equipment fails at the worst time and the front sight comes off the gun and isn't available to be seen.

However, in general, if there is enough distance from the threat that the gun can safely be brought to full extension at eye level, it is best to use the sights or dot. Precision and certainty in aiming will thus be maximized. One of the arguments against sighted fire is that it can take longer. It may well require a lot of work to reach this point, but it doesn't have to take

longer to aim well using the sights or dot, than to just stick the gun out there and shoot without aiming at all. Extensive practice at sighted fire can cultivate great speed at seeing and being aware of the sights or dot.

Aiming with iron sights can further subdivide into sight-focused (front sight sharp and clear, rear sight and target blurry), and target-focused (front and rear sights blurry, target sharp and clear) shooting. Both of those methods are in the category of visually verified sighted fire. Equipment can be a consideration as well. A person who experiences difficulty in seeing the front sight clearly may especially benefit from a brightly colored front sight that is highly visible even when blurry, or a red dot.

The greater the visual awareness of the aiming process, the more precisely the gun will be aligned with the target, and the more certain the shooter will be about that alignment. This is a truly critical point to translate shooting in training and practice on the range, into real world application. A sufficient level of certainty facilitates ongoing decisionmaking and thus is key to unhesitating and correct action. The importance of managing certainty is crucial. The consequences of using deadly force, as well as the limited time available in emergencies, both demand it.

It pays to practice with a handful of aiming methods. Retention shooting and sighted fire are both necessities. Intermediate levels of extension and awareness should also be addressed. Amazing levels of speed can be cultivated with sighted-focused shooting. Amazing levels of precision can be cultivated with target-focused shooting. What both have in common is that the gun is brought to full extension at eye level, and **vision** is used to establish the finest level of gun-target alignment that is practical under the circumstances, and create sufficient and well-founded confidence, enabling the responsible application of force when it's necessary.



R.I.P., William Aprill

In August of this year, the training community was stunned by the sudden death of one of its brightest lights, William Aprill. William was a long time colleague and friend of mine, and he helped Lynn through some very dark passages in her life, as well. I first met William in the late 1990's, when he attended a class I taught. I immediately recognized a very high degree of personal skill at arms, a keen intellect, and a biting wit. We immediately became friends, and he subsequently presented at just about every Tactical Conference. We also co-taught classes a couple of times each year. He will be sorely missed. The following is from his official obituary.

"William Townley Aprill passed away on August 6, 2020, in his very...William way. Born in New Orleans on October 14, 1966 to the late Jane Gardner Aprill and Dr. Charles Neville Aprill, William grew up and spent most of his life in his native city. He graduated from Williams College (BA Anthropology), the University of Rochester (BA Psychology) and Tulane University School of Social Work (MA). William dedicated himself to the field of mental health, both in private practice and institutional settings. He met people where they were – in formal sessions, ad hoc conversations, daily texts -- and said what they needed to hear, often at critical moments. William was able to shift, and sometimes transform, the way others saw the world, not only his clients but also his friends, colleagues, students, teachers, even people he never met. Through his consulting business, Aprill Risk Management, he spread a unique message of self-reliance, self-protection and a self-prepared mindset. For three decades, he worked as solo instructor and taught alongside others from the personal defense training community. He was a decorated competitive shooter. He was one of the Shivworks Collective. In interviews, writing, presentations, trainings, counseling work, and his digital presence, William gave deeply to his community. He shared his sharp intelligence, his carefully honed skillset, and his remarkable ability to mediate thoughtfully among a vast array of competing ideas. Perhaps most importantly, William explored and exposed what he found in the interstice between a profound knowledge of the human psyche and a passionate belief in personal defense and self-care. He was tough and soft; a gentleman and a savage; known and unknown; not an island, but an archipelago. The distinct facets of William shone selectively in the many contexts through which he flowed. He was a man of words and wit. He was crafty and clever. He was

intensely private. He was loved. William is survived by his father, his brother Stuart Charles Aprill, and his sisters and their families – Jane Crystal Aprill, her husband Antonio Flores and their children Vincent Anthony Flores-Aprill and Victoria Elaine Flores-Aprill; Susan Elaine Aprill and her husband Rick Coraccio; and Kelly Kathleen Aprill. His loss is mourned by his family, friends, colleagues, clients, and students, as well the larger training community to which he was dedicated.”



UPCOMING EVENTS

Oct 16-17 Intensive Pistol Skills, Florence, SC

<https://www.eventbrite.com/e/intensive-pistol-skills-south-carolina-tickets-65074432379>

Oct 18 Defensive Shotgun, one day format, Florence, SC

<https://www.eventbrite.com/e/rangemaster-defensive-shotgun-one-day-south-carolina-tickets-65073901792>

Rangemaster Tactical Conference, March 26-28, 2021, Dallas, Texas, Dallas Pistol Club

<https://www.eventbrite.com/e/tactical-conference-2021-dallas-tickets-100629329032>

The annual Tactical Conference is the premiere training event of the year. Over 40 well known trainers will conduct tracks on handgun, shotgun, edged and impact weapons, empty hands skills, emergency medicine, personal tactics, legal issues, and more. There are as many as nine or ten concurrent tracks, with three days packed with training and networking. This event fills several months in advance every year, so don't procrastinate.

The 2021 trainer line-up includes Tom & Lynn Givens, Southnarc, Massad Ayoob, John Farnam, John Hearne, Chris Cerino, John Holschen, Tatiana Whitlock, Scott Jedlinski, Gabe White, Wayne Dobbs, Darryl Bolke, Cecil Burch, Paul Sharp, Tiffany Johnson, and many more.

