



Clearing the warehouse.

TAC PRO SHOOTING CENTER'S THREE.

BY WILL COX

Tac Pro Shooting Center opened for business just west of the Dallas-Fort Worth metroplex in 1999 and is gaining a reputation as one of the premier private shooting schools in the United States, which is to say the world. Unlike most such institutions, however, ranges are open to non-students and are also the site of some quality matches such as the Sniper's Paradise competition and the shooting center's own three-gun tactical match. It is also the home range of the Tarleton State University Rifle Team—the only collegiate high-power rifle team. The most recent three-gun tactical match is the subject of this report.

The October 2003 match was the eighth such event, which is now being

held twice a year. This most recent match consisted of five stages, some employing only one type of weapon with others requiring a combination of handgun and long gun. Bill Davison, owner/operator of Tac Pro Shooting Center, personally designed the stages to test not only marksmanship, but also safe and correct gun handling and, as the name suggests, proper use of tactics. He is well qualified to do so.

Davison, a British expatriate, holds credentials in the combative use of firearms that are comprehensive and unique. He served in the Special Boat Service with stints as helicopter sniper, CQB instructor and member of the counter-terrorism team. After twelve years he retired from Her Majesty's

Royal Marines and became a private citizen teaching firearms and tactics primarily to British law enforcement and qualified civilians. During this period and even up to the present, Bill takes on private security and close protection contracts mostly in Europe and the Middle East. So the head of Tac Pro Shooting Center is the authentic article—an operator who knows how to design a course of fire that is challenging and relevant to real world tactical problems.

A shooters briefing in the classroom preceded the commencement of hostilities. Davison and his range officers covered administrative matters and demanded safe gun handling from all participants. Next, squads were formed and each left for their respective first

stages, and then rotated through the others as the day progressed.

FIVE CHANCES TO DIE

The stage one scenario was that the contestant was returning from a dove hunt in South America in a bus that was attacked en route by terrorists. Bummer! Since it was a recreational hunt, shooters were not wearing handguns and had to engage all targets with shotguns and birdshot. Time began with the participant kneeling next to his shotgun at the back of the bus. At the timer's beep, the contestant loaded two rounds and knocked down two Pepper Poppers from the back door, then grabbed a bag of ammo, exited and shot the other eight to ten poppers as they became visible along a path paralleling a creek bed. As this stage was designed to simulate the proper tactic of "load two, shoot two" or "load one, shoot one", no more than two rounds were allowed in the gun at any time.

The second stage was a conventional building clearing exercise using handguns and shotguns. The "door" through

gun ran out of ammo the R.O. pushed the button on a remote control which activated a moving target that crossed the back of the room. Out of the ten shooters in my squad only two hit it, with most not even drawing their handguns until it was out of sight. Tough! Davison's evil mindset in evidence.

Stage three simulated being attacked

the door (actually a tarp again) closed behind the contestant it was pitch dark. As the day was bright and sunny, some were caught without a light and thus pretty much out of luck. Oh well! The Davison tactical mindset at work again.

Rifle marksmanship was tested again on stage five and again many were found wanting. The scenario was as fol-



This participant had the foresight to bring a light to a gunfight.



Proper use of cover is stressed on all stages.

by a group while working in the well house on a rural property. At the signal, contestants used handguns to shoot down poppers from perhaps eight to ten yards while moving laterally towards a pickup truck where their rifles sat on the seat with a full magazine and empty chamber. After leaning

downs: Participants were trying to fight their way to a helicopter landing zone to be evacuated while being fired on by enemy forces. Three barricades were set up at about 210, 165, and 100 yards from two sets of four steel LaRue self-resetting targets (one group painted orange and the other group painted green). Shooters began at the 210 yard barricade and at the beep, had to knock down each orange target from either standing, seated or prone, then move to the next barricade and knock down each of the green targets from one of the unused positions, and finally to the closest barricade and fire from whichever position was still unused on the orange targets again. Shooters were forced to think of position and movement while the heart rate was up.

HARDWARE

Guns used at the match were pretty much what one would expect at such an event. Ninety percent of handguns were either one of John Browning's designs or Glocks with the odd SIG and HK in evidence occasionally. Among the shotguns, I was a bit surprised by the lack of 870s and other pumps. Those I witnessed were mostly running semi-autos, primarily Remington 1100s and 11-87s as well as Benellis. There seemed to be more variation in rifles and while ARs did dominate, everything from HKs, FALs, and even an Enfield SMLE were

GUN RUN MATCH

which one had to enter to begin the exercise was not really a door at all, but a tarp covering the opening to the temporary structure. It was interesting to see how different people dealt with the problem. Some used their shotgun's muzzle to sweep it away while others used their hands. The range officers did an especially good job here of making sure shooters performed safely without crossing themselves with muzzles. Once inside, there were Pepper Poppers that had to be hit with the shotgun, which when empty was ditched as the handgun was accessed to deal with the remaining threats (these naturally were interspersed among innocent bystanders). What confounded most, however, was that as soon as the shot-

through the window, picking up the rifle and charging it, each was required to hit five eight-inch discs one hundred yards away from the front of the truck while seated and then move to the rear and hit them again from prone. This is where the difference between rifle shooters and rifle owners started to become apparent as many had difficulty connecting from the hastily assumed positions.

Pistols were all that were allowed to take on the "warehouse" full of dope dealers in stage four. The exercise was a fairly straightforward clearing drill with a kicker in the form of an "office" that contestants had to enter and check out. While the warehouse was an open-air structure, the office had a roof and after



left: Preparing to hammer a "terrorist" before exiting the bus in shotgun only stage.

right: Rifles for the match ran the gamut from AR15 race guns to WWII vintage such as this M1 Garand.

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represented as well. I should mention however, that this list was based on my own informal observations and I certainly did not see every gun at the match.

The rifle stages were designed such that a good bolt gun, especially one with a detachable box magazine or fed by stripper clips, was not handicapped significantly, if at all. Shooters with iron sights and those with optics on their rifles were scored separately, yet equally.

As I was only a spectator due to back problems, I had time to consider the ideal rifle for this type of match. AR carbines with red dot sights are all the rage lately and were very much in evidence. While certainly effective at CQB ranges, a four MOA dot is not ideal for making hits at two hundred plus yards. Stock AR triggers, with grungy six pound pulls only exacerbate the problem. As I watched several competitors struggle to connect at longer distances with their short urban rifles while others with fancy AR race guns fared much better, in my mind I began to design a "concept carbine," one that would be competitive with the race guns, yet still remain true to the tactical spirit of the match. By the days end I had a plan. It will be based on an ArmaLite

match upper and we'll see how it turns out.

SOFTWARE

This, of course, is what it all boils down to. While a few may have blown a stage due to a malfunction, for the most part everyone had quality guns and ammo that ran well. Those who were able to operate their weapons unconsciously, did not shoot bystanders, and watched their sights, of course came out on top. Those who didn't, didn't. No surprise there.

Interestingly, the largest disparity of skill among contestants based on my observations was in the area of rifle marksmanship. For many, it is difficult to get realistic trigger time with a combat rifle. IPSC, IDPA, and similar organizations have made it much easier to hone handgun skills and close range shotgun marksmanship is simply not as problematic. But how many ranges can you go to and practice shooting from kneeling behind cover with an FN? Not many. However, those who are motivated to be competitive in this discipline seem to have found a way and so could nearly anyone who wanted to bad enough I suspect. Of course those who are lucky enough to be

able to train at Tac Pro Shooting Center have the problem solved as Davison allows tactical rifle practice on his ranges if conducted safely.

WINNERS

At the awards ceremony it was announced that James Darst, local USPSA whiz, had bested the competition. James received a nice plaque commemorating his win and then it was on to the awarding of door prizes, selected via a random drawing. There were plenty of nice ones to go around, as the total value of the prize table was over \$10,000.

Tac Pro Shooting Center was very lucky to enjoy the generous sponsorship of many big name members of the firearms and accessories industry. These included Cold Steel Knives, D.P.M.S., Inc., BlackHawk Industries, S.W.F.A./RifleScopes.com, Surefire LLC, Wolf Performance Ammunition, and of course the premier tactical firearms and related topics journal, *S.W.A.T. Magazine*. Both Tac Pro Shooting Center and the competitors of the three-gun match wished to express thanks to these fine companies for their support.

Neat prizes, however, were not the most valuable things competitors took home. Rather they were the lessons learned. Bill Davison has designed a venue to test participant's skill and equipment under pressure and reveal any weaknesses that need to be addressed. Important lessons were learned in a positive environment while having a good time, so all were winners in that sense. Shooters were supportive of one another, loaning gear and ammo around, and the atmosphere was refreshingly absent of whining. The stages are constantly evolving and next Spring's match (see website for the date) will be different. Force-on-force events with Simunitions are also planned for the future.

Tac Pro Shooting Center's three-gun tactical matches are a perfect opportunity for tactically minded individuals to put their talents to the test. They are also great fun. Come. Learn. Enjoy. ©

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