

VIDEO REVIEW: 3GM ⁶⁹

By Duane Thomas

3GM stands for Three Grand Masters. (GM is the highest rating for shooting skill in USPSA/IPSC.) Subtitled "Shooting Techniques of the Grand Masters," this is a VERY interesting shooting DVD for USPSA/IPSC shooters, or anyone interested in improving their pistol skills, whether for competition or self-defense. 3GM contains shooting instruction from three top Grand Masters: Max Michel, Saul Kirsch and Angus Hobbell.

Max Michel attained his Grand Master rank at the record-setting age of 15. He's the 2004 and 2005 USPSA Open National Champion, winner of the 2005 Steel Challenge, and over 20 USPSA Area championships. Max is a member of the Army's Marksmanship Training Unit.

Saul Kirsch began his shooting career as an Olympic rifle competitor. Since then he's become a three-time winner of the European Steel Challenge, over 50 Level III (a major tournament with at least 120 competitors) matches, and has placed in the top five at the World Shoot.

Angus Hobbell has won the European Champion title, is a four-time winner of the American Handgunner World Shoot-Off, placed third at the last World Shoot, and has won numerous USPSA Area championships. Angus is the Captain of Team CZ USA.

All three of these men are not only highly skilled shooters, but highly experienced firearms instructors, as well. Each was filmed separately from the others, in different locations. One thing making this DVD really interesting is that each man is firing a very different type of gun. Max fires his Limited division .40, an iron-sighted, high-cap 1911 with huge mag funnel. Saul has his Open division gun; a compensated, red-dot-sighted medium bore, also with huge mag funnel. Angus fires his Production division gun, a 9mm CZ SP-01 (the competition version of the CZ-75) that – other than a bit of skateboard tape here and there – is bone stock.

Instruction is broken down into six areas: Accuracy, Stance and Grip, The Draw, Specialty Draw (both the turning draw to the rear and beginning with the gun on a table, both loaded and unloaded), Reloads (aka speedloading), and Transitions (moving into and out of position).

The first area is Accuracy. All three men make the case that – contrary to the common perception (even among many low-ranking combat pistol competitors) that the sport is all about speed – to really excel requires excellent accuracy capability. Shooting good points on target at speed is a process of trading away some of your accuracy for speed. If you don't start out with great accuracy skills, then you have nothing to trade.

There are both similarities and differences in recommended techniques. All three men use a variation of the isosceles stance. They all recommend a wider, more forwardly aggressive stance than we typically see with most shooters, even most other IPSC competitors, Angus a bit less so than Max and Saul. All three use a variation of the straight-thumbs grip technique, though Angus, as he puts it is "one of three shooters in the world" (the other two being Jerry Barnhart and Eric Grauffel) who still shoots with his support hand index finger wrapped around the trigger guard.

Saul recommends keeping the support hand relaxed and not bearing down on the gun with it. Max and Angus, by contrast, recommend squeezing fairly hard with the support hand as part of the grip. As Angus put it, "You should almost throttle the gun with the weak hand."

Angus' instruction on arm position is quite different from Max's and Saul's. All three believe in a bent arm position instead of straight locked-out arms (which will allow recoil energy to flow back into the body and rock you rearward during rapid fire) but Angus uses a much more radical bend, with elbows pointed toward

the ground, to actually apply pressure to and bear down on the gun to control recoil. At one point he fires a rapid-fire string; graphics provide a line right along the top of the gun, and we can see it barely moves. Can't really argue the results there.

Be aware that when Angus states that you're not allowed to make any changes to a gun in Production division other than grip tape, this is true under international IPSC rules, however in the United States, where we have a tradition of personalizing our carry/self-defense weaponry, there is a small list of mods we can actually visit upon the gun.

It really is fun and instructional to watch Angus do a .84 draw with his double-action-first-shot auto; Max gets it down to .76, Saul does a .75. And Max's .92-second speedload is just flat *pretty*.

Each man has his preferred techniques for the turning draw. Depending on the viewer, you'll find you really prefer one over the other. For me, it was Max's. For moving into and out of position, it was really Angus' technique that worked best for me, because of its simplicity.

I learned an immense amount from viewing this DVD. And as a recently minted IDPA Master, I've been doing this for a while. Of course, that means I've worked on my skill level for long enough, I'm just good enough that I can now really start learning.

"3GM: Shooting Secrets of the Grand Masters," a 2-DVD set, provides 160 minutes of top quality shooting instruction. It costs \$49.95, plus shipping and handling charges, through Dillon's *Blue Press* (See Page 33). I highly recommend it. 

