



Just Another Action-Pistol Game? ⁶¹

all of us, would have run away from most of the conditions we are confronted with at the start signal. If I am confronted with six bad guys and all I have is pistol, I am a gone Muldoon.

I have my issues with IDPA rules and how they are applied. As I apply my suspension of disbelief, I just deal with the procedural and keep a happy face on, knowing that this is just a game. I am often dinged for the toes of my right foot hanging out of the cover (most gunfighters I know try and shoot their opponents in the toe), and there was the procedural I received for exposing myself to the rabid, armed coyotes. Are you kidding me? The rules call for the use of cover from all targets, even targets that have been identified as canine in the stage description. Ding! Procedural. After having shared this information with you, I have to applaud the clubs I shoot at for their tenacious enforcement of the IDPA rules. I might not like some of them, but they are enforced the same way every week.

I don't want to get on a personal rant here. I enjoy IDPA, and the gang I shoot it with. However, we must examine some other issues before we can put this training question to bed. First, we need to agree that during periods of extreme stress we all default to the actions we have been trained to execute. I once watched a well-known gun scribe tap the magazine and pull the slide back on a revolver that failed to fire...muscle memory?

Stage design and round count have a profound impact on what training value might be found on an IDPA stage. Most – if not all – IDPA stages are designed to be cool with a high round count. Situational awareness is a critical skill for the armed citizen. Be scared early, have your gun out before you need it and leave the area before you need to gunfight, are all golden rules for the citizen who is packing a gun. There is nothing neat or cool about gunfighting; you generally don't get to go home after the event is over, the police take your gun away from you, or worst case, you get a free trip to the morgue. This is not about gun handling, it is about your personal deportment and your ability to read your surroundings; IDPA Matches do not take these skills into account.

IDPA stages are prop-intensive. Alas, most IDPA props offer concealment and not cover. "Oh, we are simulating cover by using concealment. Excuse me; I simply did not understand the con-

cept." Now that I understand the concept, let us take a minute to review training: repetition and memory. If every time you seek cover, it is behind a big blue plastic barrel, where have you been trained to hide under duress? Or if the stage is designed in a living room, and you hide behind the easy chair, where are you training yourself to hide in a home-defense event? There is precious little cover in your home; the exception may well be your gun safe if it is in the house. Sheetrock walls, kitchen appliances, living-room furniture and tables are not cover. However, we – IDPA shooters – routinely use these items as cover.

My plan is to give up the first floor and make my stand upstairs. There's not much of real value downstairs, and I have a phone and a means to defend (with a reload) myself upstairs. There is only one way upstairs, and several places for me to conceal myself and still engage the staircase. Using the staircase as a shooting ally allows for a high probability of a first-round hit and allows me to account for the rounds fired in the downstairs floor. Most shooters will use "real" ammunition during this sort of event, and accounting for the fired rounds is a critical task. This is the sort of ammo that will clear your home and enter the neighbor's home if fired without consideration to what is in the next room or the neighboring lot. These are considerations that are not often made in an action bay.

Real conditions and personal conditions (training) often do not have much in common with what happens in an action bay. I will concede that individual gun-handling skills are trained and reinforced at a pistol match, but nothing beyond that. If you train to hide behind concealment, that is how you will react during periods of great duress. Plastic barrels, sheets of plastic, sheetrock and old furniture will not protect you from gunfire. Every time you use these sorts of things as cover, you are reinforcing a BAD gunfighting habit.

No, shooting an IDPA Match is not training or even a training event. It is a game with timer, score sheet and an all-seeing performance adjudicator. It is a fun event and is another reason to go to the range and hang out with other like-minded shooters. Do not go down this path. Do not try and mix the very serious task of gunfighting with playing a shooting game in a controlled environment.

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