

MDTS Defensive Edged Weapon Workshop AAR, 3-06

Our recent **workshop** on using a folding knife as a defensive weapon was completed yesterday. **Chris Fry** was the instructor. Chris has MANY years of training experience with edged weapons, from many different instructors and styles of knife fighting, in addition to his martial arts background.

The workshop started with a safety review and ground rules, mostly common sense, to ensure a safe and productive training environment. We began the session by disarming our live weapons. It was amusing to see the pile of weapons appear on the back tables. One person joked that a soccer mom stopping by to ask for directions would likely have a stroke, but the most telling comment was the reply that this was likely the safest place she would be all day.

Protecting your eyes is paramount in this type of instruction. Chris gave a brief presentation on metal vs plastic training knives, and had a large number of "real" knives on hand for demonstration and inspection. Different types of opening mechanisms (and the legality). Some considerations for carry: one handed opening, clips, and a lock on the blade to prevent unwanted closing. Many knives do not have this feature. All people in the class except one (10/11) brought knives with them. Most of us routinely carry knives.

We discussed aspects of fixed vs folding blades, types of opening devices on folders, benefits of a textured grip surface (especially if your hands get sweaty or bloody), curved vs straight blades, thumb placement, and more. Other considerations in a fighting knife: using your "closed" knife as a striking implement or for hitting pressure points. Does your knife extend BEYOND your hand to allow this option? There is really a lot to consider when purchasing a knife for carry if you are serious about properly using it. Before this class, I had considered only a few of the issues.

Chris discussed placement carry, usually strong side pocket or front of your torso clipped to the belt, and should ideally be accessible with either hand. Possibly carrying a knife on your support side when carrying a gun on your strong side. A fixed blade knife works very well for this. Other locations, like neck carry from a necklace. Many options that the average guy would never consider. "Tip up" or "tip down" carry.

Chris demonstrated opening of the folders (different types require a different grip-how does your knife open? Do you shift your grip after it is opened? How much? How secure is the knife during the opening process?).

Next was the key portion of the class, the basic building block for the beginner; presentation of your knife and proper stance, the defensive and offensive guard: The rapid knife presentation of a clipped pocket knife is similar in principle to

drawing your pistol: Slap your pocket, acquire the knife firmly, thumb in pocket to webbing of your hand around the handle of your weapon, index finger on clip, draw knife out of the pocket, maintain the heel of the knife indexed on your hip after opening the blade in a defensive guard (support hand UP to the side of your head, strong side leg BACK, knife back out of reach of your opponent, then shift to an offensive guard-strong leg forward, in a lowered (butt slight back)aggressive stance. Here is a neat feature. In an offensive stance, your support hand moves to the CENTER of your face (in front of your nose). This allows you to rapidly move your support hand to either side of your head to block a strike. The support hand placement and stance protects your eyes, neck, and torso.

The other aspect of this stance is that your support hand is in position to STRIKE as well as block. The blending of unarmed and armed fighting is starting to become apparent to us as the classes progress.

We had the option of practicing presentation with trainers or using our actual knives. Chris prefers us to use our actual knives as that is what we carry. He had some warnings: 1) he has cut himself on EVERY knife he owns, and 2) don't cry if you drop your knife and blunt your tip. After several minutes of working on presentation, we chose a partner and formed lines across from each other, about 8 feet away. The drill was this. Your hands are clasped together in front of your chest. As soon as your partner steps forward, you are to draw your knife and assume the defensive position. After several reps, we then transitioned to the offensive position. I will say this is not easy and will take some work on your part. A person can close on you very rapidly. We addressed some aspects of this in later drills.

We then worked on snap cuts, horizontal cuts, vertical cuts. Fast, smooth extensions of your knife, and RETURNING to your hip index after the cut!

Then things got interesting. We removed all our real knives and took the trainers out. We worked on striking/cutting pads held by our partner to get the basic movements down on a target, stationary then moving. We worked on grappling and cutting techniques on an opponent with his arms in a defensive posture. I won't even try to describe how to do this, but will say that you will be amazed at how quickly you can have a knife in your throat with a trained opponent. DO NOT let a person with a knife get close to you!

We then did some drills with blue guns. Your opponent is drawing his pistol. We drilled grabbing his arm, doing a chin jab, grabbing and forcing the head back, forcing his arm away from his body, gaining control (hopefully) over the opponent-and then drawing a training (folding) knife to cut him. We did a few different variations on this. Blade up, blade down. A fixed blade knife will necessitate different techniques than a folder. While simple (when watching Chris demo it!), it will take a LOT of drilling to get good with it-and keeping in mind that

out partner is being a good training partner. I will say this, when someone is forcing your chin up and head back, you are in trouble.

My partner Rob missed last months training, so I "cheated" on the first drill when I went to draw my gun. As Rob moved in to grab me, I quickly brought my left elbow up into his throat, protecting my face, leaning into him, pushing him back and drew my blue gun, elbow up and gun indexed close to the body. He would have been rapidly shot in the lower part of his body. Game over. This is one trained response to someone trying to take control of your gun. He quickly replied how sorry he was to have missed the last session. After that, I was a good partner.

We probably did an hours worth of these types of drills. Really an eye opening experience. The last eye opener was the final drill. A "gentle" force on force simulation. You have 2 opponents (wearing full protective head gear). One has a foam club, the other a foam knife. You have five seconds to defend yourself from 2 attackers. Chris demonstrated the technique of using your opponents to block each other, so ideally you don't have to face more than one at a time. On my turn, Chris was one of the attackers. During the scramble, I knifed him straight in the stomach, as his hands were up with the "club" preparing to hit me. "STRIKE THE FACE!" I replied that he had been open there, giving me an "easy" target but Chris pointed out that most guys can take a torso stab and keep fighting, but a solid stab in the face will likely end the encounter. I was the bad guy when Chris did the last demonstrations. I got a LOT of FAST knife jabs in the face, Point taken (every pun intended!).

This was a lot of material, really eye opening material. As Chris said, ideally spread over many hours with many repetitive drills. I now have some appreciation for the skills required to be a knife fighter, and some basic skills to work on. This was time well spent on a blustery afternoon.

I have omitted a lot of Chris's demonstrations, techniques, and commentary. There is a hell of a lot more to knife fighting than the rookie would think. Suffice to say, the training workshop was greatly appreciated by all in attendance. Our next workshop in April will be a continuation to this one.

One of the students yesterday was Phil Elmore from the **Martialist**. He took a few pictures and will be posting articles about our workshops on his website.

If you train with a firearm only, you are doing yourself a grave disservice.