



An Unexpected Range Event!

By Steve Blanda – Former FFT Instructor

Reacting to action or no action takes an OODA loop. I see it happen every day I'm on a gun range. Let me explain:

A drill calls for a failure drill or true Mozambique drill, a hammered pair of shots to the chest, assess the threat and if you deemed he needs another one to end the fight (to either noggin or pelvic girdle), situational dependent. Time and time again I see people on range practicing for such an occasion run the gun dry half way through the drill, or maybe encounter a stoppage, by the time they assessed what has happened or not happened, fix it or reload, then go back to holster without finishing?!?.

Another situation I often see is when a student is running a drill that is the hallmark of gun fighting: (shooting WHILE moving and multitasking the brain) something unexpected happens, such as the magazine isn't seated correctly and falls out or they flub up a mag change. Panic sets in and they revert to a caveman like responses trying to stomp out a fire with a club, or they completely stop dead in their tracks to try and figure out the next step (and so become a stationary target) while trying to fix their flub. Then many want to just stop, time out, and maybe want a "redo." I don't know if the gun industry with the YouTube generation with the perfect cut and editing has turned shooters into a Barbie doll "impossible standard" thing or what? But gun fighting doesn't work that way. You don't get a redo!

I love failures, I love stoppages or malfunctions. I love things that happen unexpectedly which are not supposed to happen... besides negligent discharges of course. Because that's what fights actually are, reaction to unexpended actions. As the good guy, you are always told that we have to react, we can't just be pulling guns out on people who ask for the time, or just look like a "possible" threat. We are in fact behind the 8 ball. . It sucks, it makes you behind the power curve in most every confrontation.

What about anticipating? Professional boxers study their opponents and prepare on how to fight not just the fighter, but HOW the opponent fights. This is also taught in self-defense classes, like Martial Blade Concepts with Mike Janich, of Martial Blade Concepts where pre-incident indicators are discussed in great length.

Shooters however are in general trained to react to a specific stimulus, like a buzzer or command. The faster you react the better. The reactions to the beep or buzzer or command is usually met with a draw and a "pop-pop-pop." Not bad until something unexpected happens. Truth is most shooters do not train to react to something that is UNLIKELY to happen or to something that is NOT planned for...like the flub factor mentioned above. Horrible and embarrassing I know, BUT ...why not embrace it?

Think about it, isn't preparing for the unexpected WHY you carry the gun in the first place? The guy walking towards you in the parking lot drawing a blade is "your flub". It's flubbing up your night if not life. The same "oh!" when you realize what is about to happen to you is... unexpected. If it was expected, I doubt you would have stayed in the parking lot.

You should welcome the panic, the unexpected in training, embrace it. It better prepares you to be calm, rational and fix the problem. The more this happens in training, the better you become at responding to the unexpected, to the "flub". Ask NASA astronauts how many hours in a simulator they spend flying one disaster after another. I doubt any of their simulator missions are run without incident.

Train to react...train so it's to a level of unconscious competency. Don't give up on a drill! You might be the last person on the firing line to squeeze off your final shot on a failure drill with everybody looking down the line thinking "what's taking so long, or was that an ND" But it does not matter, you fought through the problem and finished the fight without stopping or timing out. OK, so you flubbed your magazine change...don't stop. Don't stand there and bend over to pick it up, grab another one from the belt and keep moving to the cover. Keep fighting. I'll give you a pass on yelling "oh no!" as long as you yell it while continuing to fight through it.

If you have a bad magazine... keep it, mark it and train with it so it forces unexpected things to happen in your drills. Don't have snap caps? Buy them, use them in training randomly and train! The more hours you spend on range, the more unexpected things happen...the more hours in the flight simulator the better you get! Now get out there and react...react to the unexpected!