

“To Scan or Not to Scan that is the Question”

By Tom Perroni

Saturday I completed the first day of a (2) Advanced Handgun Course. We have (15) students with a wide mix of backgrounds from the 20 year FBI special agent and HRT Instructor retired, to police officers, private security contractors and few above average citizen warriors.

Some key points that were taught in class that are not always taught in other courses were situational awareness before, during and after the fight. When I teach a skill, tactic or fundamental I always try to give the why as well as the how. All too often students come to my advanced courses and after they finish a particular drill in the beginning of the course they are quick to put the gun back in the holster and if they do perform a scan it is merely turning their heads back and forth not accessing the situation for more potential threats.

We prove this by one of my instructors standing behind the line of shooters and he/she holds up 2,3 or 4 fingers once the drill is complete I will ask the group how many fingers the instructor had up....If they cant tell me they are not scanning.

It is vitally important that emphasis is placed upon holstering the weapon *only* when it is safe to do so, and not merely because the shooting appears to be over. When the weapon presentation has resulted in shots being fired, a verbal challenge, or a building search the shooter should always be hesitant to return the firearm to the holster.

“Remember to get the gun into the fight is very, very quick!..... But don't be fast on taking the gun out of the fight”. **Chris Costa** (Instructor Magpul Dynamics)

At the end of all the drills in the beginning of the class I will teach my students to scan and breathe....The before they re-holster I will ask if they feel safe in their environment ? If the answer is yes! I then give the re-holster command.

“**Evaluate**” If shots have been fired and the immediate threat(s) appear to be incapacitated, students should bring the firearm to a “retention” position (a Guard or SUL) to open up their field of view. Students should be taught that just because an opponent is “down,” he or she is not necessarily incapacitated. Inflicted injuries, which may at first appear disabling, may only put the opponent out of action temporarily. *Immediately*, the trigger finger is indexed above the trigger guard alongside the receiver.

Always check your partner as well as yourself for injuries that you may not have noticed before. students need to actually see what they are looking at, rather than simply going through the motions of the scan.

Scan” Once evaluation has determined that the immediate, obvious threat(s) have been incapacitated, the students must train themselves to account for multiple suspects, tunnel vision, and other distractions. This requires the observation of 360°. Whether students turn their entire bodies or only their heads away from the initial threat will be dictated by circumstances and their environment. Regardless, they are responsible for controlling muzzles of their firearms. Under some circumstances, the “Retention” position may be sufficient to accomplish this task. A drawback to this position, especially in crowded environments, is that if students choose to turn their entire bodies by pivoting at the hips or by moving their feet, it is much more difficult to keep the muzzle of the firearm from moving laterally.

An advantage may be that it keeps the weapon pointing in the general direction of their original, and perhaps potential, renewed threat, and as the student turns to look over the left shoulder they rotate the wrists to the right so that the ejection port is facing down but the muzzle is pointing forward allowing the shoulder to loosen up and let you look completely over your left shoulder, then the handgun is rolled to the left with the ejection port facing up and the muzzle facing forward as you look over your right shoulder. This allows a much deep scan to the rear in a situation where you can not use position SUL to check your 6 o’clock position. We call this a “**Deep Scan**”.

Otherwise, the situation may be better suited to the use of the SUL position which provides better muzzle control, especially in crowded situation. When scanning 360° in the SUL position it is important that the student’s feet move. Simply pivoting at the waist will cause the muzzle of the weapon to point at the feet and legs instead of the ground between them. To avoid this, as students turn to look behind them, they should step back with the left foot when turning to the left, and with the right foot when turning to the right, keeping the muzzle pointing between the feet. Student’s evaluation of the circumstances will determine if turning their backs on the initial threat area is advantageous. In the meantime, training students in each technique familiarize them with options that they can employ as they determine their applicability to each situation. A first-aid scan should also be added to the list of tasks to be performed at this time.

The trigger finger remains indexed throughout the scan. Instruction must emphasize that students need to actually see what they are looking at, rather than simply going through the motions of the scan.

Another reflexive skill should be addressed at this point. If the presentation of weapon has resulted in shots being fired, the student should make it a habit to *reload* prior to holstering. The type of reload, as well as whether to reload and then scan or scan and then reload, is situational. Students should be reminded that since the eyes are not an essential element of reloading.

Remember: "Conflict is inevitable; Combat is an option".