

PreDefence

Self defense before SHTF

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AAR: CRG-2 with Gerald Bailey (Suarez International South Africa)

Categories : [Uncategorized](#)

Tagged as : [gunfight](#), [self defense](#), [Suarez Internationaltraining](#)

So the other weekend I went to Close Range Gunfighting 2, a Suarez International South Africa course (check out the [Facebook page](#)). As everybody knows, Suarez International leads the field. They pioneer where others stagnate. Their tagline is “gunfighting, refined”. And they deliver on that promise.

Gerald Bailey is the South African instructor for Suarez International, and he did them proud. And I say this despite him mocking me the whole day. But it's OK, we all made fun of him right back and had a good time of things.

First off & most importantly. While we all had fun, we all **improved**. We all learned stuff. (Even egotistical know-it-all me was fortunate enough to be humbled by Gerald (a couple times) - many thanks Gerald).

2 mental themes

While the drills were good drills, and they are great for building a solid base, there was a mindset that was repeated throughout that I'm very fond of. I call it “fix it”. It was Gerald's insistence that when something goes wrong, you don't mentally stop the drill while you figure out what went wrong, you're still in a fightcomp for your life! You fix the problem and run the fucking gun! You can wonder about things after you've lived. I've had instructors who will stop a drill and then help you fix a problem right then and there. Which, to me, is training your mind to give up fighting the moment something makes you go “Huh?” Everything is training, including giving up the “fight” to fix a problem. Because we all know fights go smoothly and nothing ever makes you go “[WTF?](#)”.

The second mental theme was the competence cycle. While Gerald never explained it to us explicitly, it was something he touched on a couple times (there never is enough time to cover everything in a course this good).

The competence cycle goes like this:

Unconsciously incompetent - consciously incompetent - conscious competent - unconsciously competent

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The most obvious example is driving. When you're first starting you don't know what you don't know. Then you get the basics pointed out, but you're still bad (you know what you're bad at, but you can't do it right yet). With practice you get better at those things, but you have to focus to get them right (you're good, but only when you're concentrating). Then after much practice and having to do all these things with other distractions ([like red lights and other drivers](#)) you get good, without having to even think about it.

CRG-2 takes us anywhere from consciously incompetent, and takes us to chipping away at consciously competent. And more importantly, equips you to keep chipping away at that yourself until you can start chipping away at unconsciously competent.

The other guys

One of the fun things about a course like this is meeting other gun guys. Everybody on my course enjoyed themselves and had a good time together. We all joked with each other and we all learned from each other. One of the better aspects of a quality course is you usually get quality personalities. And one of the big advantages of this is that when we made mistakes (and we all do), everybody was comfortable enough to make those mistakes and then laugh along with everyone else. Being OK with this is important because being comfortable allows everyone to learn from those mistakes. Mistakes are usually made worse if you don't learn from them.

Usually after something went wrong we got to hear Gerald gleefully saying "Guys, learning opportunity!". I'm a big fan of looking at "mistakes" as opportunities to improve. Gerald brought this across nicely.

And it was very kind of a shall-remain-nameless fellow trainee to provide so many Learning Opportunities with his .40 S&W reloads...

As a testament to how great my fellow trainees were - nobody shot Gerald's camera. Or is that a testament to how bad our aim was? Oh well.

Personal notes

A surprising find for me was that I wasn't switching on the emotional content as readily as I should've. I didn't put as much aggression into the drills as I would have done with a working opponent. This is something I need to work on. I want my emotions to be called up (and dismissed) on command. Being able to call them up without an opponent is a factor in this. One I found lacking in myself.

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Something else I discovered about myself (related I suppose) - I only properly switched on after Gerald jammed the muzzle of a blue gun into my sternum. It hurt. It woke me up. It was good. I don't like pain you see, but I find it does wonders for my mental state. It's that "[I don't want to do this](#), but I'm going to anyway" effect. Personally I would have preferred some additional contact and pain in the class. I suppose Gerald's Vehicle Dynamics is coming up soon ...

My unconscious incompetence

Besides the obvious of practising the drills until I'm unconsciously competent, there's something else I learned I need to work on: The "why's" of a drill. If I'm not aware of why I'm doing something in a drill, then I'm just "ticking a box" as Gerald calls it.

This hit home in the After Action Assessment drill. I was ticking (most of) the boxes - covering the Threat; 360° scan while in Sul (so you don't shoot your range buddies); moving away from my original position during the scan; double check the Threat; mag change & chamber another round; blood sweep; reholster.

So there I was, ticking all these boxes, feeling decent about myself, until Gerald comes along and makes me reevaluate. I was aiming at where the target would have fallen, then doing the 360 scan. Only I wasn't thinking at the same time. I was merely aiming, then turning around. I wasn't assessing: "Is he down? Does he look like he's going to attack again? No? Great. Start scanning"

And my 360 scan? I was looking, not seeing. I wasn't searching for additional Threats, I was just ticking the box "look around a bunch". After the one scan I asked myself what I'd seen, and I honestly couldn't answer.

This ties in with unconscious competence. I was working on being consciously competent at the movements, at the drill, **not** the "why" behind the drill. I don't care that I pointed my pistol at the ground. In itself that does diddley squat. What I must care about is that I evaluate if the Threat is still a Threat, or if it's safe (safer?) to move on to checking for if he has any buddies about to try kill me too. The drill is a tool. The **why** is the point of it all.

Takeaway? I need to have the drills down pat (unconsciously competent) so I don't waste my neo-cortex thinking "OK, now aim at the Threat on the floor. OK, next step is to go Sul & move around while looking around". My neo-cortex needs to be free to think "Is he a threat? Check for other Threats".

If all my brainspace is used up trying to remember how to change gears, I'm not looking around for other traffic or checking my blindspots.

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Specific cool stuff

The “Blood sweep”:

I like the idea behind the “blood sweep” vs the “visually check myself for holes”. Personally I think I’ll incorporate bot, but I like how the blood sweep lets you keep your eyes up while still checking for wounds. It’s like the mag change position - high enough for you to easily see what you’re doing, and you don’t have to look down, completely away from where any dangers might come from.

And considering that any holes in your body might be hidden by clothes, I think the blood sweep is a very valid technique for checking yourself for injuries.

“Bug out Sul”:

Bug Out Sul is a cool move. The misdirection it causes was very effective. It’s very [Apollo Robbins](#). And if you’re into [NLP](#), then you’ll just like it even more.

Painful experience

“Run it like you don’t own it” hurt me, Gerald. It hurt me a lot.

It was a good and unpleasant reminder that the weapon is [just a tool](#). Yes, it always hurts throwing clean mags into the sand. Same with racking perfectly good rounds out the chamber, yes, also into the sand. But Gerald, you bastard, thank you for making me do things that I didn’t want to do. If you didn’t it wouldn’t have been S.I., and I wouldn’t have enjoyed it as much and learned as much as I did.

Gerald himself

Summary: Gerald is a solid instructor.

I always appreciate getting the “why” behind a concept. I prefer principles over techniques, and Gerald was great about that, always taking the time to give us the reasons, the point of what we’re doing. Like I mentioned earlier, it’s no good just doing the movements of the drill, you have to be doing the mental part as well. Otherwise you’re just strolling around holding a gun, looking, but not

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checking for additional Threats. Without programming the “why”, you’re just “ticking a box”. Very much like my opinion on "[pay attention](#)", if you don't know [what you're looking for](#), paying attention is mere paranoia.

I greatly admired Gerald’s ability to give the emotional content behind every drill, and do it properly, with **intent**, even the "mundane" ones). Maybe because that’s where I found myself deficient, but he did a great job with that.

Gerald’s a kettlebell guy, you can tell just by looking at him (that and the fact that he said he uses kettlebells). And his insistence on staying in shape, as well as his attitude of “excellence” is refreshing in a day and age of appalling mediocrity and [comfort](#).

Despite my thinking less of him after he confessed to using a coffee machine, I’d train with him again (and fully intend to do so ASAP).

One thing though - he watches way too much TV.

Complaints

Well, the course eventually finished. And it always sucks when you have to stop shooting and go home.

Would I take the course again? Yes. I probably will. I just want to do Vehicle Dynamics and CRG-3 first. That and a bunch of dry fire practice.