

High Performance Street Fighting in Potch

By Johan van Heerden

Morné Swanepoel, President of JKD High Performance Street Fighting, conducted a High Performance Personal Protection Seminar in Potchefstroom on September 15th, 2007, at the invitation of Johan and Adéle van Heerden, Association representatives in Potchefstroom.

The topics covered in this dynamic seminar were personal protection, rape prevention, ground fighting, offensive and defensive pepper spray training, survival of realistic knife attacks and tactical firearm training with Airsoft.

People from Potch, Carletonville, and even as far as Gauteng, Bloemfontein, Virginia and Polokwane attended this seminar. This was one of the few seminars I've attended where the ladies outnumbered the men. For me it was great that these ladies took the responsibility to get the training to look after themselves. We all know that criminals are cowards and usually attack easy targets. These ladies opted not to be easy targets any more.

Although this could be classified as an "introductory" seminar, I'm always amazed at how much new stuff there is to learn at Morné's seminars, introductory or not. True to the original concepts and philosophy of Bruce Lee, JKD High Performance Street Fighting never stagnates but continuously evolves to be able to meet the requirements of modern conflict situations in South Africa and all over the world.

Although the basic concepts and training principles largely remain the same, the way of "getting the job done" continuously improve. What also is a nice part of the training is what is called "A-Z Training" or completing the whole scenario from beginning to end, i.e. starting with the pre-conflict cycle by communicating, through the possible physical conflict cycle, until you have facilitated your escape in the post-conflict cycle, and not simply stop the encounter with your takedown or disarm.

We all know that fancy, elaborate techniques usually do not work well in real world self defense situations because of the effects of the Fight or Flight syndrome (for example loss of fine motor skills, tunnel vision, etc.). Throughout this whole seminar we concentrated on gross motor skill techniques to get the job done as quickly and efficiently as possible.

This was especially clear during the Knife Survival segment of the seminar. There simply is no time for elaborated, fancy multiple techniques. You have to get the weapon under control and disarm or escape as soon as possible. The training focused a lot on surviving realistic surprise attacks (where you do not know which "angle" to expect) and setting up your escape, as well as escaping some of the most common hold-up techniques that involves a knife, such as

being grabbed from the rear with the knife against your throat, the same from the front, and also surviving one of the worse situations you can find yourself in: being attacked on the ground with a blade.

An edged weapon (knife, broken bottle, screwdriver, etc.) is one of, if not THE, most effective and intimidating close quarter weapons available – regardless if you are a man or woman, trained or untrained. That’s why it also is one of the most common weapons used by criminals to intimidate and attack their victims. Of course it is very important to train realistically against the type of attacks criminals would use, for instance as experienced in jails and not train to form bad habits against a partner that feeds you a perfect angle or give you time to perfect your block or disarm.

The next segment was the rape prevention part. All too often people think that what they see in the movies is the way it is going to happen in real life: A girl walks through an isolated parking garage. Suddenly, an evil-looking guy jumps out from behind an SUV. Girl jabs bad guy in the eyes with her keys — or maybe she kicks him in a certain sensitive place. Either way, while he’s squirming, she leaps into her car and speeds to safety.

That's the movies. Here's the real-life action replay: When the girl goes to jab or kick the guy, he knows what's coming and grabs her arm (or leg), pulling her off balance. Enraged, he flips her onto the ground. Now she's in a bad place to defend herself — and she can't run away.

So in the rape prevention segment, once again although basic, we learned quite a few new tips and tricks that could also be very effectively implemented during regular submission wrestling or ground fighting training, for the guys that also have an interest in the sporting aspect. Once again the techniques were simple, but effective and designed to get you out of trouble against a larger, stronger attacker as soon as possible. And of course, as with everything else, doing your training A-Z from communicating to counter-attacking if necessary and escaping was very important

The pepper spray training was quite fun too. We learned about the pros and cons of different types of spraying patterns and the ranges from which to deploy your pepper spray. We also learned how to create space in a close quarters fight to allow you the opportunity to get your spray in hand and use it to facilitate your escape. Then we actually sprayed each other with pepper spray trainers to get a feel for what happens under stress and how to create the space to safely use it against a resisting attacker. This was quite fun! But unfortunately because pepper spray is readily available, criminals also make use of it to “soften up” their prey. So a very important part was to learn how to protect yourself when being sprayed, and believe me we had great fun trying to catch each other by surprise to practice this drill!

Firearms are your most common projectile weapons associated with street attacks/crime. It is important that one needs to learn how to use and study some basic tactics concerning a firearm, to give you a better idea of what the attacker is able to do with his weapon thus giving you a better chance to survive.

So we ended this seminar with tactical firearm training using Airsoft. I really loved this part! I never realized just how great a part Airsoft training can play in learning how to realistically deploy and move with a firearm. We first learned basic firearms concepts, and then did a couple of tactical shooting drills which was great fun! Although I don't think training with Airsoft can completely replace "burning powder" on a range, it is essential supplementary training in my opinion. I think it will be good for beginner as well as advanced shooters. With Airsoft you can practice against realistic moving targets that actually fire back which is very hard / impossible to do on a live firing range. Also training with Airsoft is very cheap: I bought 5 000 BB's for R100 and can train at home so I don't have to always go to a range. My most favourite part was when we trained the whole conflict cycle (pre-conflict, the actual conflict and post-conflict) where we had to respond to a "burglar", move out of line and fire from the knees, and then "run over" our partners while shouting commands and controlling the other person with the Airsoft on the ground.

We would like to thank Morné for yet another excellent seminar, as well as his wife Aileen who, together with fellow Vice President Robert Ciapparelli, assisted greatly in promoting this event, and my own wife Adéle for assisting in administration. And then of course everyone who supported us: Thank you very much. We had a nice, relaxed atmosphere, and excellent people to train with.

See you next time!