

Whether you're a well-seasoned and experienced trigger puller or new to the art of combat weaponcraft, a lesson that never gets old is the importance of keeping your weapon simple. As a rule I don't add or advocate any so-called *enhancements*- extended controls or any other unique modifications to the basic layout of the weapon. From a training perspective it reduces the number of potential training scars while making the shooter better on the basic platform as-is. From a potential gunfighter guerrilla perspective, it'll make running any weapon you may potentially have to run on your team that much easier. In the end it all boils down to mastery of the fundamentals, and if you can do that, the rest is easy.

In the last Fighting Carbine Course I ran I had the honor of instructing a Marine Infantryman Vietnam Vet. The man had lost his right eye in Vietnam and became left handed out of necessity since then. A man who told me he's trained with some of the best over the years, chief among them the late great Louis Awerbuck. So for him, running the AR can be a bit of a challenge. Like most weapons it has a design shortcoming when it comes to left handed shooters...a design shortcoming that's overcome through training in the fundamentals. Nonetheless an AR that he had bought not that long ago had a few design implements to make it more practical to operate fully ambidextrous controls, magazine and bolt releases on both sides of the receiver, etc. And the weapon *looked* good. The problem was that during class many of the drills the students were performing were causing him a few issues, as his controls were completely unique to him. He was getting visibly frustrated, compounded by the fact that he was using only the flip up irons which came with the weapon.

He had one malfunction- a failure to extract that required mortaring the butt into the ground to clear. His buffer tube started walking loose and I pulled the gun offline. Although a bit disappointing for him, it turned out to be a blessing in disguise (*as most things are*). I placed my 10.5 inch Palmetto State Armory AR pistol in his hands topped with a Primary Arms 1x Cyclops that I've been running and evaluating since late June. Its identical to my 14.5 inch FN barreled carbine, topped with my tried-and-true TA-01 ACOG. The platform is bone stock; no frills, no shortcuts, no gimmicks. And when we hit the firing line again, like magic, he was a whole different shooter. The visible frustration was gone- his speed improved as much from

the optic as it did not getting hung up on a unique control layout. The drill that I showed him and the other left handed shooter for reloads with magazine retention suddenly became intuitive- using the right hand to manipulate the magazine release and the trigger finger of the left hand to hit the bolt release. He ran that weapon with complete proficiency the remainder of the course and gaining a ton of confidence along the way. As I told him and the class repeatedly, I wish I had recorded the difference between the beginning of the first day and to the end of the second.

For me, it reinforced the importance of simplicity once more, reminding me why every weapon I own that I may have to use in combat remains stock. Focusing on the fundamentals, a good shooter can become a great one through mastery of techniques, not gadgets. Once one masters those fundamentals, you might want to add a few enhancements here and there- and then again, maybe not. But by starting wrong through over-complicated equipment will never end right. There's no other way to master those fundamentals of a platform than by continuous training with it. And if you need ammo (*you need ammo, bud*), check out our friends over at Ammo.com and get \$15 off your first \$200 order.

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