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Acknowledgements:

In preparing this post, I have attempted to put into writing some of the information that I have gleaned over the years specific to self protection and the “way of the street” In doing so , I had the opportunity to integrate a number of ideas and concepts from others in the field. To say that all of the information in this post was totally mine, would only ignore those people who have made this work possible.

I believe that there is no such thing as the “ultimate” fighting form. Every combative system has its own set of strengths and weaknesses. I believe the secret is to recognize and acknowledge those weaknesses and then go elsewhere to strengthen them. In doing so, there are a number of people who I must thank for the content of this post. Some of the below noted instructors/coaches/teachers I know personally and have trained with, others I only known through their own published works. It is because of these people that I have been able to strengthen my weaknesses and make this post possible:

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Taking It To The Streets:

The Police:

First of all, I am a police officer and have some knowledge in this topic. Most people believe that the police are the first line of defense. In a perfect world this may be true, but the fact is “YOU” are going to be the first line of defense. It is a fact that most police departments are far more “reactive” to crime than “proactive.” Although I would love to see a police officer on every corner, the fact remains that this will never happen. In our world, there are more criminals than there are police officers, this is why we call what we do the “thin blue line”. Police officers understand that if the criminal element was to band together as one cohesive entity, such as what happened in the L.A. riots after the Rodney King incident, there would be little police could do to regain control in the short term.

It is also a sad fact that unlike 30-40 years ago when most of the criminal element feared the police, today most do not and only see us as an “annoyance” to their criminal activity. Most of the experienced criminals know how not to get caught as well. We in policing usually catch the inexperienced, why?, because the experienced criminals have learned from their mistakes. The next sad thing is that even if the police do catch the criminal, many are soon released.

The Courts:

Even if the criminal is caught red handed committing the crime, the next step is court and the Criminal Justice system, or should I say “The Criminal’s Justice System.” Many criminals see the justice system as an advantage rather than a disadvantage. Why?, because most, including their lawyers, know the ins and outs of the judicial jungle, especially when it comes to a legal technicality or plea bargain. The fact remains that in some countries the criminal has nothing to lose but everything to gain by going to court. In some cases the punishment from the courts, if found guilty, does not deter the criminal from continuing on with their actions. The term “let the punishment fit the crime” seldom exists, but even if convicted to jail, there is a very real chance that the criminal will only have to serve 1/3 of their sentence anyways.

Who is the Street Predator:

So who is the Street Predator? The answer is “anyone”, but the average inmate housed in the Canadian Correctional system for violent crimes is:

- male between the ages of 15-24 years
- 5’9” - 6’0” tall
- 175 – 190 lbs

Most street predators can be split up into two categories; “The Amateur” and “The Professional”

The Amateur:

The amateur is an “ego” based animal who is looking for a fight “just because.” To be preyed upon by the amateur you do not have to be doing anything wrong, you just have to be in the wrong place at the wrong time. This beast is usually very identifiable;

- usually walks with attitude
- elbows pushed away from body
- verbally aggressive and rude to people within a few feet
- confrontations are usually triggered by eye contact

Some of the “Ritualized” combative signs that are apparent from the amateur prior to contact, but not limited to, include:

- splaying arms to express exclamation
- beckoning with finger

- nodding of head, usually accompanies finger beckoning
- bulging eyes
- acquires innate fighting stance
- will close distance during confrontation

The Professional:

The professional street predator is someone who I like to identify as the serial mugger, serial rapist, serial killer. These beasts usually attack for profit and not because they want to fight. These animals are a little harder to identify as they merge into society quite well and usually prey upon targets that have “no” situational awareness. When the professional strikes a target they usually follow a seven step process of target acquisition:

Step #1: victim selection:

- looking for subjects with no situational awareness
- attacks usually occur in sparsely populated locations out the view of witnesses and therefore reduces the chances of being seen heard or caught

Step #2: Victim Stalking:

- Once a target has been identified the professional will usually stalk first
- They are waiting for the time and place that suits their need for privacy and control

Step #3: Victim/Predator Positioning:

- the professional must place themselves in position to either attack by surprise or engage in a “street Interview”
- remember this beast is a lazy animal and does not want to fight but totally overwhelm

The professional will usually use one of five “relative” positioning tactics to set their intended victim up for attack:

1. Closing:

- Most common, walks directly up to target to get as close as they can
- the closer they get the more success he will have in his abilities to overwhelm and control
- this is why the “reaction gap” is so important once you have identified a person as a threat. If the threat has breached the gap when you have told him not to, he has clearly announced that his intentions are not good

1. Cornering/ Trapping:

- this is the second most commonly used tactic
- will want to corner you between himself, you, and any safe exit point

1. Surprise

- Surprise is the primary tactic that an attacker depends upon for full advantage

1. Pincer:

- usually used by two or more criminals
- one circles while the other distracts you

- one attacker follows from behind and while you are focused on them, there is a second attacker just up ahead
- things to be aware of, two people standing across from one another in a narrow space such as a hallway, staircase, or alley

1. Surround:

- most common in “packs” or “swarms”
- one in the pack will distract while the others surround
- instead of a fast swarm, the pack will usually drift towards you so as not to alert you to their intentions

Step #4: Testing the Waters:

- only used if the element of surprise is not available
- here the predator will use one or more “street interviewing tactics” to see if you are a low risk high gain target

1. 1. reasonable request interview:

- will ask you for the time, match, cigarette, spare change, directions
- as you are complying with their request, the attacker moves into a surprise attack position.
- This is a classic “distraction technique”

1. 1. The Distant Interview:

- takes place from a distance
- attacker is assessing your body language and awareness level
- the professional uses this method regularly to identify targets of opportunity
- most criminals are in plain view but because of no “situational awareness” the intended victim fails to recognize the fact that they are there

1. 1. The Escalating Interview:

- usually takes place in a pack situation
- starts off small but builds to the boiling point
- weapons are usually involved
- men are really bad for this because of “ego”

1. 1. the Bully Interview:

- will say things to you such as “ what the fuck are you looking at”
- the attacker hopes that by saying this to you, you will respond in kind thus giving them the reason that they were looking for to engage you either verbally and or physically
- this interview usually starts with the eye glare which then moves to the bully question which then leads to an escalating interview and then goes physical

1. 1. the Bully Interview:

- Continual eye contact made (non-verbal challenge)
- The bully interview: what the fuck are you looking at
- The approach towards you

- The bully question reiterated
- The response from you; usually a verbal challenge
- Escalating interview back and forth
- Actual physical challenge: let's fucking go right now
- Single syllable replies back and forth
- The actual attack; usually a hooking sucker punch
- During the last few stages prior to actual physical attack, not uncommon to have finger pointing, arm flailing, and slight one or two hand pushes. These are done as an intelligence gathering technique to ascertain your intentions and abilities to fight back

Step #5: The Assessment Stage:

- if after steps 1-4 there is a positive assessment by the professional, they will usually attack using the element of surprise. If there is a negative assessment and the victim appears to be aware of what is going on, the attacker will usually abort their attack and move onto another safe target

Step #6: Using Threats Of Violence:

- If a positive threat assessment has been made by the professional in step #5, it is usually followed by verbal threats which are sometimes aided by a weapon or an accomplice or both
- These threats are very direct and extremely violent in nature using very coarse language
- The professionals "goal" here is to create a state of "hyper vigilance" to cause you to go into "brain fart" mode. Why? because the professional understands that the mind guides the body. If they can get you into brain fart mode their in control.
- It is also very common that the attacker will promise not to hurt you if you comply with their requests. Why? They don't want you to make a scene that increases the risks of them being seen, heard, or caught.

Step #6: the Attack:

- after step #6 the professional now engages
- some of these attacks may be minimal, intended only to freeze you allowing them to take what they want. Most, however, will be frenzied and severe with one intent, to totally disable or even kill you before you can launch an effective counter attack

Although both the amateur and professional attacker are two different beasts, both will exhibit one or more pre-assaultive signs (Ritualized Combat) that if you know what to look for are real good indicators (warning bells) to let you know what may be happening.

Ritualized Combat:

Ritualized Combat was termed by a police trainer by the name of Roland Ouellette. Basically, these "body language signs" are rituals that the human body will, in most cases, go through just prior, during, and after a physical confrontation (not so different from the animal kingdom). These signs are important, why?, because they are really good warning signals to let you know what your potential attacker may be contemplating, even though he may not be "verbally" communicating this fact to you. Ritualized Combative signs have been both scientifically and empirically researched in such fields as "Human Performance" and "Neuro Linguistic Psychology." Here in Canada, I have used "Ritualized Combative Signs" successfully in the Courts during expert testimony in Self-Defense cases. I also possess hundreds of hours of videotape of actual street fights, and when reviewed both

in real time and in slow motion, everyone of the Ritualized Combative signs that I share in my articles and training, are seen prior, during, and after these fights. This is why I believe that all in the self-protection field should know about "Ritualized Combat". So what are these signs?

Assault Not Imminent But Possible:

- Head, neck, shoulders go back (person making themselves look bigger)
- Face is red, twitching, jerking
- Lips pushed forward bearing teeth (you see the same things in dogs before attack)
- Breathing is fast and shallow (oxygenating the body preparing for fight, flight, hyper vigilance)
- Beads of sweat appear about the face/neck
- Thousand mile glare
- Exaggerated movements
- Finger pointing/ head pecking
- Totally ignores you
- Gives you excessive attention during normal conversation such as direct uninterrupted eye contact
- Goes from totally un-cooperative to totally cooperative (people do not go from hot to cold they de-escalate over time)
- Acts stoned or drunk
- Directs anger towards other inanimate items such as tables, chairs, walls

If you find yourself confronted by a subject presenting these signs, awareness/self protection strategies should go up, and distance should be created. Your body language should be assertive but not threatening and don't be afraid to allow the person to vent verbally.

Assault Is Imminent:

- face goes from red to white (during a physical confrontation the blood will leave the surface of the body and pool to the big muscles and internal organs of the body needed for survival) In my job as a police officer I see this all the time and when I do one of two things are going to happen, the suspect is either going to fight or run
- Lips tighten over teeth
- Breathing is fast and deep
- Change of stance, their body blades and shoulder drops
- Hands closed into a fist (not uncommon to see the whites of knuckles due to hands being so tight)
- Bobbing up and down or rocking back and forth on feet (this is the bodies way to hide/ mask the initial movement of a first strike)
- Target glace (here you will see your opponent look to where he is going to hit, or where he is going to run/escape)
- Putting head and shin down (body wants to protect the airway, this action does so to a degree)
- Eye brows brought forward into a frown(again the body wants to naturally protect the visual system, this action does so to a degree)
- Stops all movements/ freezes in place
- Dropping center or lowering of body (no different that a cat or dog getting ready to pounce)

- Shedding cloths (very common, you will see your attacker take his hat, coat, shirt, or bag off just prior to the assault)
- One syllable replies (go from full sentences to one syllable replies..... reptilian brain is clicking in)

In this group of signs, you have about 1-1.5 seconds to act before your attacker either attacks or runs. If walking and talking your way out is inappropriate or unreasonable, then I teach "First Strike" philosophy, and continue on with a compound attack until your attacker is no longer a risk.

In both the Assault not Imminent and Assault Imminent phases, I do teach my students (in some situations) to bring to the attention of the attacker what they are seeing why:

1. The attacker may not know what they are doing. A lot of these signs are autonomic in nature, meaning they happen without conscious thought.
2. The bigger reason, I believe, is for this purpose; most attackers will only attack you when they believe that they have the element of surprise. By sharing with them what you see, you take this primary tactic away from them.

IT IS ALSO IMPORTANT TO REMEMBER THAT THERE ARE TIMES WHEN YOU SHOULD NOT LET THE PERSON KNOW WHAT YOU ARE SEEING, THUS USING THE ELEMENT OF SURPRISE TO YOUR ADVANTAGE!!!!!!!!!!!!

If you have been able to deescalate the situation you have found yourself in, non-verbally, verbally or physically, also look for these Ritualized Combat signs that are good indicators to let you know that your opponent is no longer thinking about fighting:

Signs Of Submission:

- Putting hands up in front of body with palms facing out.... (universal sign for stop stay back)
- Face returns to normal skin tone and color
- shaking hand. (almost as if the person has Parkinson's disease.... This shaking can be slight to extreme bodies natural way to burn out the adrenalin, nor-adrenalin, epinephrine that it dumped into the body for fight,flight,hypervigilance but was not used)
- turning of back with their hands covering their head (ensure you can see their hands if not create distance NOW)
- backing off
- bowing of head and lowering of eyes
- verbal tone, volume, rate, slows back to normal / full sentences once again
- falling to the ground almost in a fetal position
- grooming gestures (this one is weird but you will see it time and time again... person will adjust their clothing, play with their hair/mustache/beard, pick lint of their body..... you see this in cat and dogs after they fight and then groom themselves)

In all of the above noted signs, don't just look for one, but rather clusters of two or more. If you see one and know what to look for, you will see others guaranteed. As a police officer who has been involved in many physical encounters, I can share with you and others that "Ritualized Combat" is a tool that you can use to your advantage. Many of my students , who are not police officers, who have found themselves in 'situations" have also echoed the tactical benefit of such knowledge. One should also remember that a skilled attacker "may" be able to mask some of these signs, so never drop you guard and fall into a false sense of confidence !!!!! Also remember that if the voice and body don't match, always believe the body because the voice can LIE !!!!! If your attacker is verbalizing the fact that he doesn't want to fight, but yet he is showing Ritualized Combative signs that show otherwise, he's a LLPOF (liar, liar pants on fire)

Some people who don't know about Ritualized Combat, call it "gut instinct/intuition" They are right !!!!! The reason it is a "gut instinct/intuition" rather than a known empirical thing, is because no one has explained to them what "Ritualized Combat" is. What is happening in the "gut/ instinct" group, is that their "sub-conscious/reptilian brain" is picking up on these signs (rather than the conscious critical mind), thus turning on the warning bells. Some listen (the more experience), but most do not

Five tactical Advantages Of The Criminal:

Remember, most attackers have five very real advantages over most of their victims:

Advantage #1: Confidence

- will usually not attack unless he has full confidence in his abilities to win the physical encounter
- Confidence comes from ability to use the tactic of the sucker punch or the the ambush to his full advantage

Advantage #2: Experience

- Experience comes from actual street application rather than a training studio or martial arts school
- Experience comes from real lessons learned on the street. Both good and bad

Advantage #3: Competence:

- Most have one or two techniques that they have mastered to some degree
- This mastery comes from actual application in the real world
- Because of this fact, they know what works most of the time, and what does not
- Their combatives training is learned by doing under "real" street conditions

Advantage #4: Tactics:

- a criminal's tactics are that of simplicity, the simpler it is the better it will work
- when they do physically attack, it is usually a continuous attack until the intended victim has been knocked out or grounded
- physical attacks are usually very brutal and violent
- usually the criminal uses the advantage of FIRST STRIKE

Advantage #5: Psychological:

- Most people believe that this shit will never happen to me and because of this fact when attacked, go into a state of hyper vigilance which is a huge advantage to the attacker

REMEMBER:

The experienced predator on the street, in most cases, has an advantage over you. Respect that !!!! he has things that many martial artists do not have. He has hit real people, in real fights under life threatening conditions many times. You are in his arena, playing his game, by his rules !!!!!

The street predator keeps his attacks simple and direct. He masters one attack, instead of knowing 100 techniques that he can do in the air, and he knows one or two that he can really land against someone fighting back. And these techniques work in his game plan. Do not play his game; change the rules or you will loose !!!!

So Why Do Street Fights Occur:

Pride and Ego reasons are most common. Why?

- a person perceives that their ego has been challenged
- need to save face by fighting the person who they see as their challenger
- this is especially true if the person who's ego was challenged is with a peer group/gang. It is important when dealing with groups, a challenge to one, is a challenge to all

Alcohol and Drugs:

- The number one contributing factor as to why fights occur is alcohol and or drugs
- I like to call alcohol "liquid courage"
- Both alcohol and drugs override a person's thought process to the point where reality and fantasy are one in the same. Both remove a person's common sense factor

Property, Body, Life:

Here the attacker could want specific things from you including:

Property:

money, wallet, credit cards, jewelry, clothing

Body:

Pride and ego assaults, Sexual Assaults, Enjoyment Of A Violent Act

Life:

Self explanatory

Real Fights Are Not Pretty:

- not choreographed like you see on T.V. or in some martial arts schools
- Most are very sloppy, fast, and gross in appearance
- Most are not back and forth occurrences. The first person who gets in the first good neutralizing blow usually wins the fight
- Even a well trained combatant's technique will usually get very sloppy after the first or second shots are thrown
- This is why in a street fight, "functionality of technique" is far more important than "perfect technique". If what you do is pretty and perfect but not functional, what good is it going to be in the real world

Most Street Fights Are Over Very Quickly:

- most fights are usually over within the first 5-10 seconds
- Very rare to see a street fight last longer than 10-15 seconds

Most Street Fights Are Decided By A Strike to The Head:

- most street fighters are head hunters
- they understand that the brain is the computer of the body. You knock it out and the body will follow
- this is why in a street fight you "MUST" protect your head and neck

Most Street Fights If Not Over Quickly, Can Involve Grappling And Ground Fighting:

- if the fight is not over quickly, it can end up in a grapple and then go to ground
- Why?, if a person is getting the shit pounded out of them, they will usually want to close the distance in an attempt to smother/control the punches that they are being hit with
- Once grounded, you will usually be shit kicked "curbed" by the attacker, if he is standing, and his friends if any. These kicks are usually targeted for the head and upper body.
- This is why "ballistic" ground fighting techniques are essential for getting back onto your feet as quickly as possible. Unlike the UFC we can NOT spend a lot of time on the ground
- Remember, once someone starts taking blows, they will smother and grapple to escape the flying fists. Then it goes to the ground where your opponent and/or his friends will start shinning their shoes on your head while you are rolling around. Know how to be a ballistic ground fighter get back up on your feet as quick as you can

The Multiple Opponent Factor:

- Most attackers will not attack unless they believe they have an advantage (or is psychotic)
- Most attackers will have some kind of back up (friends or weapons) to help them out if they find themselves in trouble
- If you fall into the trap that you are only fighting one person, you will become tunnel locked, and the next thing you will find out is someone is on your back
- Always be aware of the second or third opponent in a street fight
- MUST always be thinking multiples on the street

The Weapon Reality:

- There are more and more fights taking place where a weapon was brought to use before, during, or after the confrontation. Especially knives
- Always be aware and prepared for a weapon in a street fight at anytime

The Unwanted Friend Factor:

- most fights usually have friends and acquaintances looking on from both sides
- these friends will often attempt to separate combatants in an effort to stop the fight
- this is very dangerous to you due to the fact that as your friend is pulling you away, they are tying you up giving an advantage to your attacker
- this can take place before, during, and after a fight as well
- Although your friends may be trying to help you, unless on the same page tactically, they are in fact placing you at a disadvantage
-

The Offensive Mindset:

- more often than not, the combatant who strikes first and maintains the offensive mindset, usually win the fight
- in a street fight do not go defensive, attack the attack, go offensive, you deploy FIRST STRIKE and continue with a compound attack. If he gets the first strike in, you want to counterattack the aggressor so viciously that he realizes that now he is the one being attacked and not you
- This is not a cat and mouse game like you see in the movies, no fancy moves and then a theme song as you gaze at your fallen opponent; you have to attack like a banshee and keep on attacking until your safety is assured by the fact that your attacker has no interest in contacting you again

Knowledge and the understanding and application of that knowledge is power !!!!!!!

Strength and Honor

Darren Laur

Integrated Street Combatives

personalprotection@shaw.ca

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Contact

Darren & Beth Laur
Phone/Fax: 250 478 9119
Email: personalprotection@shaw.ca

Darren Laur is the head instructor of Personal Protection Systems, and a serving Law Enforcement Professional.

Darren has trained extensively in a variety of safety awareness and self protection strategies, and specializes in reality based application and instruction.

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