



A New Reality

with a training knife. Anyone who sustains what would've been fatal injuries during the drill then has to perform penalties as punishment for getting 'killed'. Jim strikes a good balance between safety and intensity during such training via his use of safety equipment. Firstly, the hard-shell skater-style helmets protected our heads as we jostled and slammed each other into the concrete walls and floor. Jim explained that this was very important, as a prison guard in Canada had died from trauma he sustained from being slammed into a wall during cell-extraction exercises. Secondly, Jim insisted that we always wear eye-goggles during knife training to protect our 'baby blues' from being cut or stabbed with the training weapons. Thirdly, because we were going full speed and were using rigid training knives, it was important to wear a mouth-guard because any of the rigid training blades could easily knock out teeth.

Safety and the level of contact is something many people are concerned about when attending reality-based courses, but throughout the course I was extremely impressed with the levels of both safety and realism. Of course, there were some painful moments during the course — not least of which was when I volunteered to have law-enforcement-grade pepper-spray squirted directly into my open eyes. However, while that was extremely painful (Jim commented that mine was the longest list of profanities he's ever heard), it's not a normal part of the course (I volunteered) and Jim has a strict policy of avoiding long-term injuries.

Jim did say that our instructor course was more intense than usual and that he gauges the intensity depending on what he sees in the students. If students are very timid, he will reduce the intensity for them; if they are going at it a bit harder and having a good time, then he'll ramp things up, but will always have a limit as to how hard things should be. There's no point in knocking each other's heads off, as a concussion, or worse, can result in someone missing the rest of the course. Attendees are always told at the beginning that they can always opt out of any drills at any time should they not feel comfortable, but of course there is a minimum standard required to become certified as an instructor.

During the Crime Survival course we worked on the less palatable self-defence situations such as home-invasions, attacks with firearms, robberies and multiple-attacker situations. Once again, Jim threw us into the particular scenario, debriefed us, then taught us the RBPP way of doing things. He managed to film some of our multiple-attacker scenarios, which involved one person trying to make their way out of the

building while two others tried to stop them. The victim and attackers were allowed to use any methods they wanted to succeed in this scenario, while being mindful not to seriously injure each other. Punches, kicks, knees, elbows, submission-holds and takedowns were all fair game. Even eye-gouges were allowed, so long as they were executed in a controlled manner so as to avoid injury. As well as the helmets, mouth-guards and groin-protectors, we wore 16-ounce boxing gloves, which was great as the padded thumb allowed us to employ thumb-gouges with just enough pressure to make each other acknowledge the gouge without damaging our eyes.

Watching the video footage of our multiple-attacker scenarios, it would surprise most people to see how few clean strikes anyone managed to fire off, let alone land on target. As each of us weighed 95kg or more, just the sheer inertia of a combined 200kg coming at me with strikes and takedowns was enough to make things a struggle. The concrete floor made takedowns quite brutal and as such there was great incentive to stay on our feet (not to mention the obvious woes of going to the ground with multiple attackers).

We all found the best idea was, obviously, to outflank the attackers and try to have one attacker always obstructed by the other. To stun and run was optimal, but this was rarely achieved in such a confined space. When we did end up in clinching range (which always happened in the blink of an eye), I opted for a neck-tie or snap-down move (where you clasp your hands behind your opponent's head and yank it down to about your chest or waist-level, or take him right down), on the guy closest to me. I'd then use him as a barrier against the other attacker while I worked on getting out the door. The neck-tie was quite good because if I kept the attacker's head down low, it was very hard for him to launch any offensive moves. His takedown options were also limited because you could just ram his head to the floor (a great grappler may succeed in the takedown, but I doubt many great grapplers go around attacking people).

Suffice to say, I can't recommend this drill strongly enough. Try it, and film it if you can; it really is an eye-opener and your skills will improve significantly if you do it on a regular basis.

Overall, making my way to the United States to become a Reality-Based Personal Protection Instructor was one of the best decisions I ever made. It was great fun and it greatly improved my knowledge from both a student's and instructor's perspective. I can't wait to do it all again, when Jim comes Down Under to run RBPP instructor courses next summer. **BLITZ**