



Buchholtz...the name is Karl Buchholtz 6/4/16 Match Analysis

Despite calls for storms, our match day was sunny, clear and hot in the 90s. The range looked suitably apocalyptic covered in wild grass and the undergrowth in the forest was waist high. The natural state of the range made spotting the undead on the course more challenging. Tom Wright, John Thompsett, Jebbs Jebulan and RO Lonnie Leake helped me set up the match on Friday. Tom saved the day with his tent after my plans for a military GP medium failed to materialize. Running a match of this complexity is impossible without the help of a lot of hard working people and much thanks also goes out to John Chenault, RO Dave Ackridge and Lonnie's young ward Austen Jenkins who joined us on match day along with Joey Labtis and Odessa who ran things top side registering and wrangling shooters to the starting point blindfolded. As usual, our shooters pitched in to reset targets and Roger Kavanah distinguished himself by doing it all day long. To support our sponsors, the staff wore Hi-Point and XS Sights hats and t-shirts.

Among our new shooters were Andy Ross (a country music artist who is proudly pro-2nd Amendment) and his fiancée and co-host Dede Day from the American Rebel TV show on Pursuit channel. They taped an episode of their show with us on Friday and Saturday and interviewed several shooters including Larry Datillo and Dave Bagola as well as filmed some drone footage of our shooters on the course.

Shooters were led down to the course blindfolded and took their place lying down on a cot in the tent with their rifles and all their pistol, shotgun and rifle ammo for the stages on them too begin. The RO took their empty pistol and pre-placed it on a table by the tent flap for them to search for and find once they "woke up". We placed a baseball bat on the cot and purposely had shooters sit down on it to make them aware of its presence and even hinted that "you never know when you might need a bat." Once the shooters were in starting position lying on the cot, they were instructed to keep their eyes closed, take off the blindfold, put on their ear and eye protection and wait for the RO's command to begin the course. This first stage actually began with an audio tape of moaning zombies and the RO shouting, "Get up! It sounds like they're right in here with you! Now would be a good time for a bat!"

When they opened their eyes, shooters saw two of my new ZSU melee zombies in the tent with them, the closest standing at the foot of the cot! To my surprise, some shooters just gave them a delicate love tap with the bat, hardly enough to bash their brains out much less cause them to fall and that cost them precious seconds going back to hit them again. Dede Day on the other hand hit them so hard she actually bent the steel support rod in their necks. That was no problem since these new melee zombies were designed to take lethal, skull smashing blows. Once the swinging was done, shooters had to sling their rifle, spot their pre-positioned empty pistol on a table by the tent flap, pick it up and load it on the RO's command. In practice, this was actually a pretty fluid and natural transition, the RO insuring that shooters kept their pistols

pointed safely down range and didn't shoot through the tent flap. Since shooters "woke up" in the tent, they were a little disoriented and didn't know which direction was downrange. Lonnie kept them safe.

When shooters lifted the tent fly they were confronted by what appeared to be a wall of zombies nearly shoulder to shoulder arching around them from left to right for about 15 feet and extending about 25 yards in depth. The closest one was on the left and within biting range at only 10 feet. That one needed to be shot first. In all there were sixteen targets for which shooters were allotted 50 rounds. Though I had expected shooters to fight from a stationary position at the tent fly and take the pistol part of the course as an increasingly difficult marksmanship challenge, some shooters chose to close the distance. Our main safety concern whenever shooters work their way through the target field is tripping. It is always of critical safety importance for shooters to keep their fingers out of the trigger guard when moving. Of secondary concern is that shooters sometimes end up oblique to their targets making them harder to drop, or bypass targets forcing them to backtrack through the many obstacles on the ground.

Each shooter had a total of ten minutes to complete the course, but they were not informed of this until they completed the melee and pistol stage at the tent. This was a natural pause in the action and the clock was stopped to explain to shooters what they saw and heard after fighting their way out of the tent through the wall of zombies. During the pause, the shooters also cleared and holstered their pistols and loaded and made ready their rifles for the next stage of the course.

On the rifle stage, shooters had only 30 rounds to attack the zombies at any distance they chose up to 10 yard and from any shooting position (prone, kneeling, etc.). They were told that they spotted and made eye contact with their prisoner across the field escaping into the woodline. In addition, 9 zombie targets were clearly visible in the field to their right front at ranges from 65 to 100 yards. The closest four at 65 yards were apparently closing in on a prone figure no more than 20 feet in front of them. The shooters were informed that the prone figure was their missing rookie partner and he was crawling toward their location, screaming for their help. Shooters were told that the four closest zombies would be upon the injured and crawling rookie in 30 seconds and needed to be killed in that timeframe to save his life. This was one of the most challenging bonus point criteria we have ever had. It almost required shooters to fire from where they stood, and those that made the bonus point did just that, usually dropping prone.

After dropping the closest quartet of undead, most shooters closed the distance to the remaining targets to make them easier to hit. The course was actually designed to draw the shooters in to the correct position to attack the rest of the more distant targets from the ideal frontal angle. Shooters were instructed by the RO to "check on the rookie" which required that they move forward. The grass on the open part of the range was pretty high and depending on where you stood, some targets were actually obscured from view by other zombies and the terrain. It was impossible to take them all from the prone position at the starting point. However, it was possible to see all the targets from the starting point if you stood up, and (to my surprise) some shooters tried standing off hand shots. The best rifle shot of the day was a standing off hand 102 yard brain shot by Larry Datillo.

The rifle stage was designed to allow shooters to make the decision how much time they were going to spend running versus shooting based on their marksmanship skill. Closing the distance made for easier shots, but it ate up time on the clock. Each shooter determined for themselves at what distance their marksmanship skills would allow them to drop the zombies. After the shooters dropped all the rifle targets or shot up the allotted ammo, the clock was stopped for them to clear their rifles and instruct them about the shotgun stage.

Upon completing the rifle stage, shooters were informed they would run to the woods edge where the prisoner was last seen and "discover" their empty shotgun. Their shotgun was waiting for them on table where it was pre-positioned at the start of the course and remained under the direct observation of the shotgun stage RO Dave Akridge. When shooters were ready, they were timed on their run (or walk) to the beginning of the shotgun stage, but the clock was stopped while they prepared and loaded their shotgun. We could have kept firearms transitions and

initial loading on the clock, but since our shooters' skill levels range from novice to expert, I decided it was in the interest of safety to not rush anyone. Most shooters choose to leave their rifles on the table rather than carry them slung during the shotgun course. When the shooter was ready, the RO restarted the clock.

The shotgun stage had ten zombies spread out on the left and right sides of a 50 yard trail through forest with thick, waist high, undergrowth. The visual distractions of all the trees and undergrowth, combined with the dimmed mottled light filtering through the forest canopy, made spotting all the zombies challenging. Naturally we did our best to conceal some behind and between trees to keep shooters on their toes. Distance ranged from 25" to 25 yards and no targets were visible at the start because a low hanging tree branch across the trail head obstructed the shooter's view of the course. Dave kept the shooters on the trail which was cleared of fallen branches to minimize tripping hazards. Upon completing the shotgun course, shooters were told that, "there was no sign of the prisoner who seemed to disappear without a trace."

In many ways, this was our most complex match to date and the one-and-done format that took each shooter through the whole course start-to-finish allowed us to run the match with a limited staff. This format also allows for scheduling shooters which makes it much easier on the participants traveling long distances. The downside of this course structure is it limits the number of shooters that can run through the match.

I was delighted to see so many new shooters at this match. In fact a new shooter (Jason Conley) won the match. I hope you all felt welcomed and that you will be back and help us "spread the ZSU contagion" by telling your friends. You don't have to join ZSU, but you'll save a bit of money on the matches if you do and I expect you will have fun with watching how you rank in the overall scheme of the contract zombie killing world. You also get the book, *Essays from the Dead Zone* which gives you a lot of background on this fictional world I've created for your entertainment. You get a cool ZK shoulder patch too. New shooters also bring new ideas which I always appreciate since it is challenging for me to keep the matches fresh. Credit for the nucleus of the idea for this match came from suggestions made by veteran ZK Frank Thomas. See you in August, when we'll be killing zombies on the roll. Yes, this match will have a truck mounted component so better practice your drive-by shooting gangstas!