

FIGHTING THROUGH THE RING

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Shooters are a very judgmental group. Instructors are no different. In fact, it's part of our job. As the old saying goes, "You never get a second chance to make a first impression." The first moment the students gear up and head for the shooting range, the Instructors are watching. They are looking at various things like how do they handle their firearms? Are they following the four basic safety rules? Do they go to the safe area and pull the rifles out of the bags, perform a quick examination of the chamber area, engage the safety and instantly sling the rifle? Or do they simply open their case at the trunk of the car, pause for a second and look at the sling, trying to figure out how it works? Did they make some half-hearted attempt to sling their rifle and start walking towards the firing line still trying to figure out how to engage the safety without inspecting the chamber, all the while making a mockery of the laser rule? What about the actual rifle? Is it a quality product with brand name accessories that have earned a reputation for quality and durability? Or is it no name manufacturer who simply contracted with the manufacturer to have his company's name engraved on the receiver. Are the accessories appropriate for the anticipated fighting environment or does the rifle look like the side of a NASCAR stock car, with every conceivable accessory crammed into every last bit of rail space? Yes, we Instructors are a judgmental group and I am no different.

Among the many things I look for when making my initial evaluation of my prospective students is what type of sighting system is on the student's rifles. If the student chooses to use some type of optic, and most do, what are they using? Did they choose some type of magnified optic or did they go the electronic route? If they choose to use an electronic sight (i.e. - Aimpoint, EOTech, Trijicon, etc,) I tend to observe how, and more importantly where they mount the sight. So why is this important to me as an Instructor? Because it tells me whether or not the student has any experience Fighting Through the Ring.

Fighting Through the Ring is a method whereby the shooter positions the scope as far back as practically possible on the upper receiver. What does this accomplish? By positioning an electronic style scope with no magnification closer to the rear of the rifle, it brings the optic closer to the eye. This creates a larger field of view when looking through the scopes vision ring (or rectangle for you EOTech fans,) but why is a larger field of view better?

Consider the following scenario. A violent confrontation is about to occur. You are equipped with a rifle using an electronic style scope. 20 yards directly to your front is a 4-door sedan, parked perpendicular to you. There is one threat at the front of the vehicle and one threat at the rear of the vehicle. Both threats are in kneeling positions, choosing to use the front and rear bumpers of the vehicle for protection. Let's make the assumption that your threats are almost settled into their respective positions, but not quite. You are in a covered position and have the advantage of being set. To simplify

the scenario, both of these threats represent a clear deadly force threat and you are fully justified in using deadly force to engage both threats.

Lets breakdown the engagement process and see how the concept of Fighting Through the Ring plays out. Let's say our rifle is equipped with an Aimpoint red dot scope mounted in a LaRue Tactical mount and it is positioned about midway down the length of the rail between the front and rear sights (Fig. 1.) From our position of cover we start the engagement process on Bad Guy

Figure 1



(Picture courtesy of AR15.com)

(BG) #1 at the rear of the vehicle. We focus on the threat and mount the rifle. While continuing to focus on the threat we bring the rifle into our line of sight. We position the threat inside the scope reticule (hereafter referred to as the Ring.) Once our threat is inside the Ring, we acquire the red dot and make subtle corrections until the red dot is center mass on our threat. We engage with several rounds until our threat is neutralized. At this point we break our vision plane. We shift our eyes outside the Ring and scan for the next threat. We locate the threat and drive the rifle to BG#2, positioning him inside the Ring and repeat the above engagement process.

Now, let's examine the engagement process while Fighting Through the Ring. This time, we mount our Aimpoint red dot scope as far to the rear as possible, while still allowing room for a rear Back-Up Iron Sight (Fig. 2.) Once again we locate our threat, mount the rifle and position

Figure 2



(Picture courtesy of AR15.com)

the threat inside the ring. We acquire the red dot, make a slight correction to position the red dot center mass of our threat and engage our threat with several rounds until neutralized. It's at this point that utilizing our Fighting Through the Ring technique makes an impact. By positioning the scope closer to the shooter's eye, it has the effect of increasing the field of view. In the earlier example, having the scope positioned farther away from the eye has the effect of reducing the total field of view through the scope. As a result only one threat could be seen inside the scope at a time. The rearward positioned scope with its larger field of view allows the shooter to observe both threats at the same time inside the scope. Seeing the next threat inside the Ring allows the shooter to simply locate BG#2 inside the Ring, never having to possibly dismount the rifle, shift his vision outside of the scope, acquire the next threat, reposition the threat inside the Ring, shift his focus back into the Ring and re-engage the threat. This technique simply allows the shooter to drive the rifle at BG#2 and engage him quicker, while still keeping his vision inside the Ring. After all threats within the Ring are neutralized, then the shooter breaks his mount and begins the scan process to locate any other potential threats.

There is another old saying, "Speed kills." When it comes to refining your shooting technique, reducing engagement or dwell time and gaining speed is a main training priority. Techniques are constantly refined to trim off the excess movement; a process called "Trimming the fat." Streamlined techniques translate to less movement. Less movement translates to less time required to perform a given technique. Less time equals faster techniques. How much practice time is required to engrain a new, streamlined technique into the subconscious? Some experts say a thousand repetitions. Others say five thousand and some say many more. One thing is certain; it takes a lot of time, dedication, and practice. There are no shortcuts....or are there? What if, by simply repositioning your optic, you reduce your threat engagement times by 50%? Is that worth the time it takes to move the optic? What if it's only 40% or 30% or even 20%, is it still worth the slight effort? Only you can make that judgment, but the

answer seems pretty clear. Any reduction in threat engagement times that is gained without hours and hours of practice, by a simple repositioning of the optic is at least worth a try. Next time you go to the range, try Fighting Through the Ring and not around it.