



# GM Tips

## CONVERSATIONS WITH USPSA'S TOP GUNS

Photo by Robin Taylor, USPSA Staff

**Michael Seeklander powering his way to seventh overall at the 2007 USPSA L-10 Nationals.**

around us, then pounded it home in driver's training.

If you think back about when you started shooting in local matches, who did you watch most closely? Was it the blazing fast big dawgs with their flashy uniforms? Humans have a great capacity to copy what we see. A series of fast

### **Programming Myself To Miss?**

By PJ BENSON WITH MIKE SEEKLANDER

There I was at the Open/L10 Nationals in June. I was on my last stage, stage 4. I knew I could shoot this stage well. I felt good when the buzzer went off and when I stopped shooting. I knew my last two shots on T6 were a little slow, but I felt good about my performance. Even my time was okay - 9.06 seconds. As I walked the targets with the RO I was still feeling good until we got to T3, my last target from the window. There it was: Alpha/Mike!

I had a huge miss.

Mike Seeklander and I spent some time recently discussing my miss on Stage 4 at the L10 Nationals.

### **I Trained Myself to Miss**

Mike, not so gently, suggested I trained myself to miss. I did not prepare properly and as a result I could not stop myself from missing under match conditions. Though it sounds strange, Mike tells me that I actually *programmed myself* to miss. My associations with USPSA shooting: speed, stress, movement, flashy uniforms – led me to failure.

According to Mike, learned behavior is what our conscious mind observes and records. Our learning experience is based on associations. For example, we associate a red stop sign with stopping the car. We learned this from our parents at an early age, reinforced it by watching cars

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shots by a top shooter was a trait we wished to acquire, so we copied as much as we could, “monkey see, monkey do” – without understanding the process.

Our subconscious mind recorded the parameters of the experience (GMs, flashy uniforms, stress, perceived need to excel, etc.) and recorded a “skill program” associated with that circumstance. Like a computer, when our subconscious again sees those circumstances it will activate that learned behavior, and execute that flawed, monkey-see monkey-do “skill program.”

### ***The Conscious and Subconscious Mind***

Lanny Bassham, in his book *With Winning in Mind*, states the subconscious mind is the source of your power to perform. The subconscious mind learns from the conscious mind, and actually takes over control when we’re in top form.

Seeklander says, “For every shot, our eyes see some relationship between

the front sight, rear sight and target. Our conscious mind interprets these visual stimuli and we decide to pull the trigger.” Our subconscious mind is acutely aware of this process and begins to program it into us as a skill program. Our subconscious mind runs that skill program every time our conscious mind has the association (visual stimuli) of front sight, rear sight, target = press the trigger.

Mike goes on to say, “Your subconscious mind works much faster and is more powerful than your conscious mind. In a match, your subconscious mind is running the stage.” So if your subconscious mind is running the stage using the wrong skill program (based on imperfect watching rather than perfect doing), it should be no surprise that you missed.

We first started learning when we saw that first GM shooting blazingly fast, and wanted to be like him. What we did not see is that the GM is not shooting fast but is really shooting for points. His subconscious mind is running a skill program (very quickly) that

says, “front sight, rear sight, target = press the trigger.” Because his subconscious mind is taking charge, he is shooting correctly AND fast.

### ***Road to Recovery – Learn the Right Way***

Everything we put into our subconscious mind will come back out. As a result, Mike is adamant about training correctly. You must do each aspect of your training program correctly, 100 out of 100 times. Never, ever end a training session on a bad note, missed target, or with incorrect mechanics. Your subconscious mind will remember your last moments of a training session vividly. Always end with a positive result!

Mike emphasizes, “Learn the firing cycle process and the importance of experiencing every part of it!”

By experiencing all parts of the process, the conscious mind teaches the subconscious mind what to look for. Specifically, Mike emphasized paying attention to the distinct pauses in the firing cycle. They must be ad-

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hered to! This may sound contradictory to shooting fast, but in reality it is not.

### Proper Firing Cycle

Mike's road to recovery plan for me is to follow the Proper Firing Cycle:

1. Drive the gun to the target
2. Pause – Verify the sight picture or focus
3. Press the trigger
4. Verify the gun direction during the shot
5. Pause – Keep the gun on target until the bullet has left the barrel
6. Repeat 100 times out of 100 attempts in every practice

This is where I ingrained the wrong program into my subconscious. Instead of demanding of myself 100 percent compliance with the proper firing cycle, I allowed a deviation in steps 2, 4 and 5 for the sake of speed. This is what caused my miss. As an experienced shooter, I need to remove the training scar of non-compliance with the proper shooting cycle. No short-

cuts are allowed, only absolute 100 percent compliance with the proper shooting cycle will result in a no-miss program.

Unless I change my subconscious “programming” through simulation and repetition, I can and will fail despite my best effort!

Mike emphasizes, “design a training program correctly from the start and you avoid having to fix training scars in the future.”

### Mike's Summary

#### New Shooters:

- Learn Control First — Speed will Follow
- Learn Proper Mechanics
- Learn the Proper Firing Cycle
- Build the Proper Skill Program – From conscious effort to unconscious execution

### Experienced Shooters:

- Accept you may have traveled down the wrong path
- Re-learn the proper mechanics
- Re-learn the Proper Firing Cycle
- Build a Proper Skill Program to replace the any bad programs (scars)



If you have any questions or suggestions, you can contact me at [pjben-son45@aol.com](mailto:pjben-son45@aol.com). You can contact Mike Seeklander at, [mike.seeklander@unit-edstateshootingacademy.com](mailto:mike.seeklander@unit-edstateshootingacademy.com) for more information about United States Shooting Academy and their training programs.



Photo by Robin Taylor and James Mangini

**Seeklander draws while backpedaling away from a target at the Missoula L-10 Nats.**



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