



ALL ABOUT THE BATON

With ASP's Millennium Straight Stick

By Clayton Dumas

Not every violent encounter faced by a police officer is a life or death situation where the use of deadly force can be justified. Police officers are trained to recognize where the force they are being met with falls on the so-called "Force Continuum" (registered trademark) and to react accordingly. This is not to say police officers are required to meet force with equal force, after all the good guys are always expected to win. What it means is that the police officer's responsibility is to meet force with that force which is reasonable and necessary, and will ensure that the officer safely and successfully takes the suspect into custody. An empty handed attack on a police officer in most cases should be answered with the use of chemical agents and/or an impact weapon. To this end most police officers are supplied with or at least allowed to carry mace or pepper spray and the police baton.

While officer-carried chemical agents are fairly new in law enforcement, the baton has been around for hundreds of years. Most people's picture of a historic police officer is that of a blue coated guardian of the peace walking a beat and twirling a "night stick" or "Billy club." In reality, every advancement in other police weaponry has ushered in an advancement in impact weapons as well. The so-called Billy club was replaced by the straight stick or baton, and later the straight stick was mostly replaced by the side handle baton, pioneered by such companies as Monadnock Lifetime Products Inc.

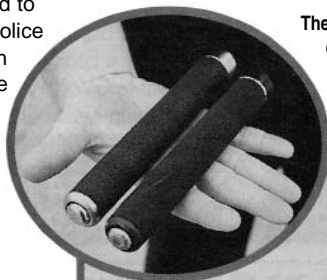
ON THE JOB

When I joined the force I left behind the straight stick I had been trained with in the academy. As quickly as I could be qualified with the Monadnock PR-24 side handle baton, I began carrying a collapsible PR-24. I put the PR-24 baton to good use on numerous occasions. In one incident I used it to knock a folding lockblade knife out of the hand of a drunk in a

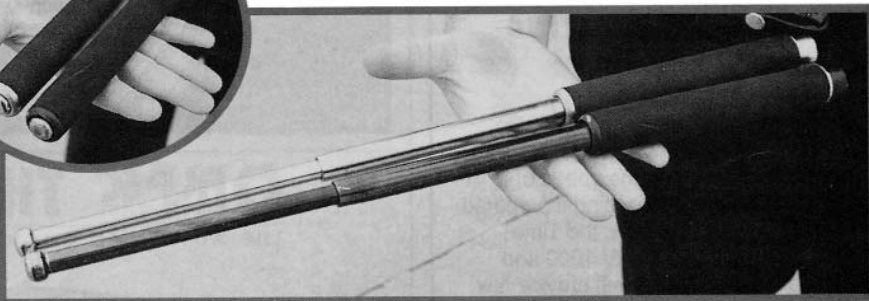
crowded pizza joint and took the drunk into custody without serious injury to him or me. In another incident I responded to the scene of a female who had locked herself inside of her car and was proceeding to slit her wrists in a suicide attempt. I used the PR-24 to punch out the side window, so other officers and I could extract her and safely end her self-destructive behavior. On numerous other

Special Enforcement and SWAT teams were some of the first officers in our department to receive ASP training and be qualified to carry it on duty.

And while the collapsible PR-24 had served me well, when I completed my assignment with SET and went back to regular patrol I kept the ASP baton on my duty belt as my impact weapon of choice. It too has been put into service to break



The 21" ASP baton extended, one featuring the electroless finish and the other in standard black. (Inset) The electroless and black ASP batons. The choice of finish should be the officer's preference and/or what's most suited to the climate and conditions the officer works in.



calls the PR-24 was used to restore or maintain order on the scene.

It was only when I went into my department's Special Enforcement Team that I gave up carrying the collapsible PR-24 in favor of the then just recently approved Armament Systems and Procedures, Inc. or ASP baton. The SET unit was intended to be a proactive patrol/investigations squad that would deal with gangs, drugs and other street crimes. The 21-inch collapsible ASP baton was more suited to this new assignment which had me going back and forth from uniform to plainclothes and undercover work, as well as cross training and deploying with SWAT. The smaller ASP worked well on the duty rig and was more compact and concealable when working in civilian attire. Along with these other advantages, it didn't take up valuable space on the duty belt or tactical vest when on assignment with SWAT. In fact, it was our SWAT team's desire to have the option of going to a baton if needed that initially got our department interested in the ASP. Our

auto glass and subdue suspects and has proved itself every bit as effective in completing these tasks. An uncooperative auto thief was extracted from a stolen vehicle and taken into custody when I broke the driver's side window with the 21-inch steel baton. I also felt adequately armed with the ASP baton while dealing with a small "riot" at a local high school. When an after-school activity turned into a general brawl and numerous fights broke out, our officers responded with ASPs drawn and the suspects were quickly subdued. Untold domestics and other fights have also been broken up with just the loud

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snap of the ASP baton being deployed after being drawn from its carrying case.

My department has now seen the many advantages of supplying its regular line officers with the ASP baton and has made it standard issue for all new recruits. The department still allows those senior officers who carried the straight stick or PR-24 to continue doing so, but many of them have also switched over to the ASP as well. Today, in my 150-plus man department it's very rare to see anything but the ASP baton on the duty belt of a working street cop.

One of the benefits of the ASP baton is that the training techniques taught with it allow for a number of different carry arrangements. I have seen officers carry the baton on the strong side in front of their gun, on the strong side behind their gun, on the weak side and even simply slipped into their waistband or duty belt behind their Sam Brown buckle. Where you carry the ASP baton is not as important as becoming familiar with your carry mode and training so that its position is "indexed" and you can quickly retrieve it from your duty rig when needed.

Almost all gun leather lines made for police work, as well as those who work in nylon or some other synthetic material, produce a carrying case for the ASP baton.



Bianchi AccuMold baton holder on officer's weak side behind his radio.

The standard ASP baton comes in four sizes. The more commonly

seen are the F16, F21 and F26, which are 16, 21 and 26 inches long respectively. The F31 is a whopping 31 inches long and is designed for special functions where the officer carrying it needs that extra reach. All (excluding the Airweight models) are manufactured of 4140 alloy steel and feature seamless tubular design. They come in a variety of finishes, including Gold, Electroless, Chrome and Black. There are two grip designs, one featuring replaceable foam grips and the other a molded-on rubber.

Generally speaking, the 16-inch model is used by plainclothes detectives or others concerned with ultra concealment. The 21-

and 26-inch models are most popular with patrol officers. I prefer the 21-inch model because it's easy to carry collapsed and when deployed, it is very maneuverable and well balanced to swing. Some officers prefer the 26-inch model for its reach but I've found that it places more stress on the wrist when used in some of the closed mode strikes.

BASIC & ADVANCED BATON

Speaking of strikes, Armament Systems and Procedures doesn't just manufacture the ASP baton, it has created a comprehensive course of instruction on the proper use of the ASP which includes three tiers, ABC, or ASP Basic Certification, AIC, or ASP Instructor Certification and ATC, or ASP Trainers Certification. The ASP Basic Certification course teaches the proper techniques for using the ASP baton, and includes instruction on the proper stance, drawing the baton and opening it as well as target areas and striking techniques. The ABC courses are usually taught "in house" by personnel within one's department who have gotten their ASP Instructor Certification by attending courses put on by certified ASP Trainers.

I'm sold on the ASP baton. It is both effective and convenient.

