

Training is becoming more important than ever because police hardware is only half of the story; knowing how to use it properly is the other. There have been many lawsuits over “use of force” and “negligence.” Several important court decisions have established that police agencies are required to instruct their officers on how to use the tools and weapons they need for their jobs. To meet legal requirements, it’s important to document instruction, and to have a qualified instructor.

#### **WHAT IS CERTIFICATION?**

An instructor must not only be qualified, he must be “certified” to present an adequate legal defense in case of a lawsuit. Certification is training and documentation by the hardware manufacturer or other competent authority that the instructor is qualified to teach the skill. This authorizes the instructor to teach his students and to certify them in turn.

Progressive manufacturers understand that selling the hardware is only the first step, and that backing it up with adequate instruction must be part of the package. Several firearms manufacturers conduct schools. So do some makers of impact weapons, such as Armament Systems and Procedures, manufacturers of the A.S.P. Tactical Baton.

#### **HARDWARE**

The three section, collapsible, A.S.P. Tactical Baton comes in several lengths. The 16-inch model weighs 14 ounces and is mainly for plainclothes use. The longer 21-inch (15-ounce) and 26-inch (20-ounce) models are more suitable for uniformed carry. All are made of space-age steel and have either foam or textured steel handles. Opening the baton requires a quick swing or snap to release the sections.

The force of the snap engages the taper locks which keep the baton open. The baton collapses quickly when striking the tip on a hard surface, as the impact dis-

# MOVE YOUR A.S.P.

**by Tony Lesce**

engages the taper locks. The A.S.P. baton is portable and concealable, with a very low threat profile collapsed. It’s handy for foot pursuits when full-size batons strike against officers’ legs, and its small size when collapsed and in the belt scabbard makes it easy to carry and always available. Officers don’t forget it in their cars when out on calls. The A.S.P. baton is carried by FBI Agents and U.S. Postal Inspectors, as well as members of police agencies such as the Seattle and Milwaukee police departments and the Illinois State Police.

#### **BASIC USE CONCEPT**

The A.S.P. baton is an impact weapon. Nothing else. The method of use is based upon the “R.I.S.C. Management Baton System,” and designed to strike at motor nerve centers to disable an attacker. The basic principles of balance and body mechanics support the baton’s use. The techniques are

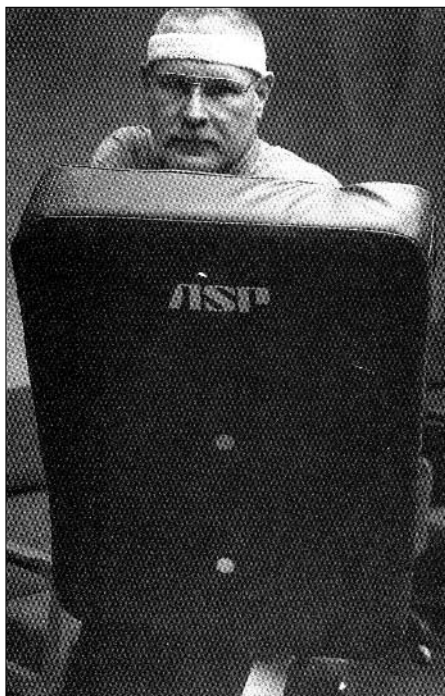
designed to work on the street, not just in classroom settings.

Baton effectiveness depends on creating “fluid shock” in the attacker’s bod, which works by causing dysfunction of nerves and muscle groups by hydrostatic shock from the baton blows. Fluid shock transfer is based on mass times velocity, divided by two, plus duration of impact.

When is baton use justified? The baton has a definite place in the “Use of Force Continuum” developed by Dr. Kevin Parsons, nationally known expert on the use of force. The baton ranks as an “intermediate” tool, for use when empty-handed techniques are court defensible. Armament Systems and Procedures backs them up with expert testimony when required.

#### **THE INSTRUCTOR’S COURSE**

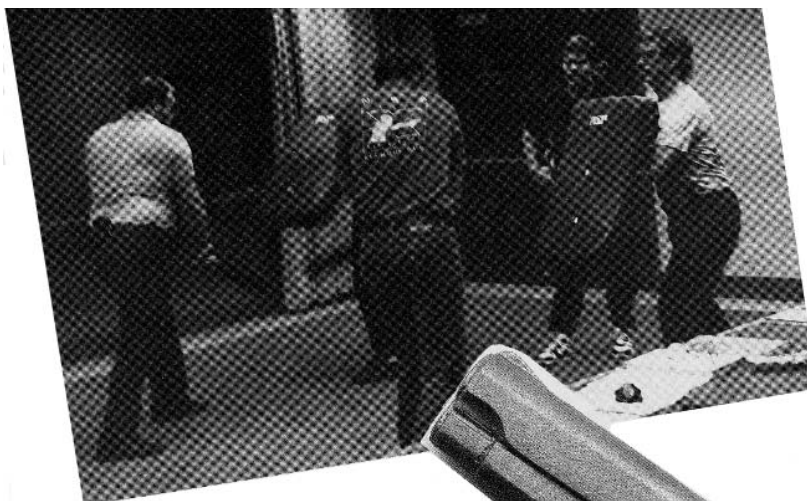
The A.S.P. Instructor’s Course lasts two days and teaches participants what they need to know to teach others. The class in Scottsdale, Arizona, was typical. Tim Powers, the national trainer, first laid out the theory for his



**The A.S.P. training bag, with my partner ready to receive my strikes. I had to be careful, because if I missed the bag, he'd have an opportunity to pay me back.**

class, explaining the factors that go into the use of force. He also pointed out that it's impossible to develop the required skill from only one class or reading the manual. It requires between 3,000 and 5,000 repetitions at "game speed" to develop the psychomotor reflexive skill with the baton.

Powers, an experienced police officer himself, explained the basics of stance and movement when facing suspects. He pointed out the cues that often precede an attack by an assaultive suspect, and showed how important it is to maintain balance during the encounter. With an eye toward practical aspects, he advised his students to document everything important about each use of force encounter: "If you didn't write it in your report, and it would have made you look good, it didn't happen." Another practical point Powers brought up, is that the officer should strike as hard as he can each time to disable the opponent as quickly as possible. If the officer doesn't strike hard, witnesses may report that he



**Practicing strikes against the bags. The first few were for form and the next at half speed. Finally, we did them with full power and speed.**

struck the offender repeatedly, giving the impression of excessive force.

Powers also pointed out that, although the baton is a low-lethal weapon, exigent circumstances sometimes require more forceful use. An example is the officer with a baton in hand who is suddenly faced with a deadly weapon. If the officer is too close to draw and fire, he has to strike at the weapon arm and disengage, creating distance between himself and the attacker.

The hands-on part of each session began with a warm-up, a series of loosening up and stretching exercises to prepare the students for hard exertion. Powers pointed out to his instructors-to-be that they may be legally liable if they conduct training without a warm-up and injury results. To get police officers to accept the need for warm-up, Powers cautions, instructors must not present it as aerobics or anything that doesn't have the proper "macho" image. The term Powers suggests is "tactical warm-up." This consists of running in place, a series of punches and jabs as in shadow-boxing, forearm swings, back-handed swings and several stretching exercises.

Powers then took the students through the basic stances and moves, as footwork is very



**Some practice required firearms. For safety, we used these non-functional cast replicas.**

important in this technique. Proper footwork controls distance, maintains balance and helps increase the power of a strike. The class went through several stances and practiced forward and backward "step and drag" moves, as well as "stepping through" techniques. Powers pared off the students and had them push and pull against each other in the "grappling position," with hands behind each other's necks and heads down, trying to push and pull each other off balance. This gave needed practice in maintaining what Powers call the "center."

Successfully maintaining the center requires placing the feet slightly more than shoulder-width apart, for both frontal and lateral balance. Bending the knees slightly helps lower the body's



**Full simulation practice required us to don shock reducing plastic pads to absorb the impacts.**

center of gravity, increasing stability, and keeping the head over center enhances balance. In this stance, the officer should remain relaxed until the moment comes to deliver a strike.

Maintaining the center is important for balance, and "decentralizing" an opponent helps bring him under control. Closely working with these concepts is positioning, which begins with the interview stance and continues through various defensive stances. Close attention to body mechanics is important for power generation, developing the momentum needed for an effective strike.

"Quick draw" of the baton is not important, according to Powers, as the officer must control the situation with his "reaction hand" while he draws with his "weapon hand." An advantage of this baton is that, in collapsed mode, it allows a low-profile draw, to guard against sudden escalation. This is especially useful in situations with great potential for violence, such as family fights, but which have not yet gone critical. The collapsed baton, held in the fist close to the chest, does not appear very threatening and won't contribute to the tension.

It's practical to carry the baton several ways. One is in the scabbard, on the reaction side of the belt, or the weapon side, slightly left of the body center-

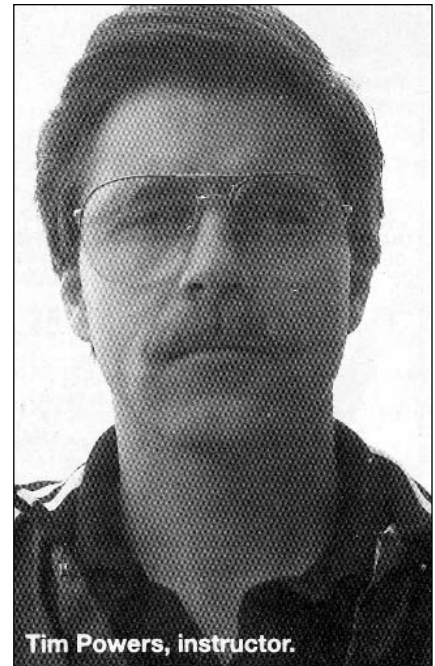
line. If on the reaction side, the weapon should be angled toward the center of the body to ease the draw. In plainclothes, it may also be in the back pocket.

Students learned the three baton positions: the "ready" stance, with the baton down behind the thigh; the "closed" position, with the baton closed in the fist next to the chest; and the "loaded" position, with the baton at almost shoulder height and the butt-cap pointing toward the target. In each position, the reaction hand is up to protect the face.

Learning the various strikes was in three phases: "Slow For Form," with students going for proper technique rather than speed, "Half Speed" and, finally, "Full Speed and Power." At the start of each phase, students worked to cadence count, such as "ANGLE, CROSS, READY," or ANGLE, CROSS, RELOAD." At the outset, close attention to form is necessary to develop the power of a strike. Ideally, the shoulders move with the arm, the hips rotate and the rear heel comes off the ground. This allows putting the entire body into a strike and maximizes the power developed.

Unlike other systems, with complicated strikes and moves, this system has only three strikes: ANGLE, CROSS and STRAIGHT, making it very easy to learn. The angle strike is a downward strike from the loaded position, diagonally at the attacker's forearm or thigh motor nerve centers. The cross strike is the follow-up to the downward strike, and is usually a backhand sweep to the arm. The straight strike is a forward thrust at the abdomen, using the reaction hand to guide the baton's tip.

An advantage unique to the collapsible baton is that a strike may begin with the baton closed. This makes it very difficult for the assailant to see it coming, and, especially, to judge the arc and point of impact. In an



**Tim Powers, instructor.**

angle strike, the baton extends during the swing, striking the attacker far beyond the arc of the weapon hand.

#### **DOUBLE-TAPPING**

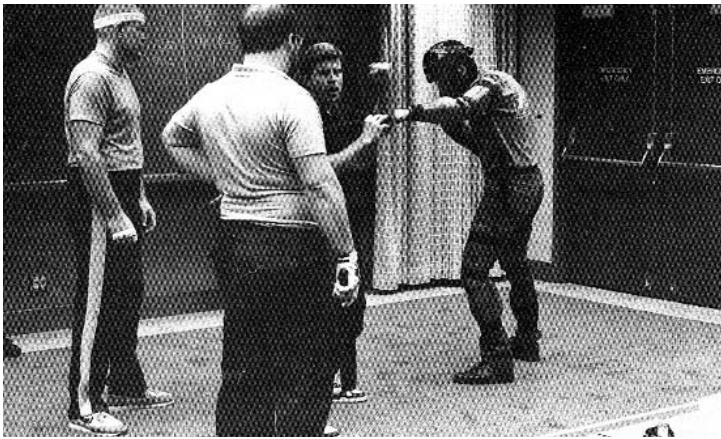
Experience has shown that the best technique for the baton is two strikes, each in an opposite direction, completing the swings and bringing the baton back to the ready or loaded position. To be consistent with police firearms training, Powers calls this the "double-tap."

A typical double-tap begins with the baton in the loaded position, tip resting on the right upper arm. The officer swings the baton down against the offender's forearm area and follows through, bringing the swing past his raised reaction arm and preparing for another swing. The second swing is one angled down to the attacker's thigh, and the officer finishes with the baton in the loaded position once more.

Another double-tap is a straight strike against the offender's abdomen, with a downward angled strike against the thigh following. The combination should put the offender down, enabling the officer to handcuff him.

#### **WORKING PARTNERS**

Swinging the baton at empty



Protective headgear, mouth guards and training batons padded with refrigeration insulation ensured that there would be no injuries. In fact, nobody got hurt.

air doesn't go very far in producing skilled users. Developing power and speed requires striking at a real target. For this, the class paired off, with one partner holding the A.S.P. training bag and the other practicing swings upon command. This requires close coordination, with the partner holding the bag bringing it around quickly to shield against first one strike and then another from the opposite direction.

The A.S.P. bag is a large concave padded bag, with two handles for close control. It evolved over the years into its present form, with grab handles to allow holding and positioning for practice between partners. The bag is covered with 20-pound Naugahyde and resists tears.

An incentive to pay attention to safety was Powers' directive that periodically partners would swap roles, and the bagman would get to practice strikes. "Payback" ensured that all were very careful with their aim.

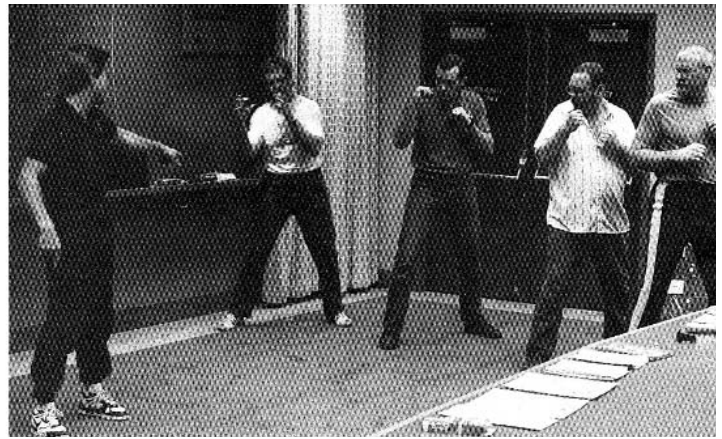


All pairs practiced the six combination double-taps under Powers' direct supervision. An essential element of pairing off was that each member of a pair observed and corrected his partner's stance, form or technique: important practice for the instructors-to-be.

A middle level simulation was the knife defense, consisting of a downward angled strike against the partner's training bag, followed by a cross-strike, letting go of the baton, disengaging and drawing the handgun. A knife can be very dangerous, according to Powers, because it doesn't jam or misfire, never runs out of ammunition and usually hits the intended target. An attacker with a knife can cross distances very quickly, and the old joke about "bringing a knife to a gunfight" isn't very funny when the attacker is close.

High-level simulations had the students inserting mouth guards and donning plastic arm and leg pads, as well as helmets. As with previous simulations, students paired off and practiced against punches and kicks. Because A.S.P. baton strikes are

**The A.S.P. Model T21, which measures eight inches collapsed and 21 inches extended. This baton has a textured metal grip.**



The tactical warm-up, beginning with jogging in place and punches. Various stretching exercises prepare the muscles and tendons for the session.

very powerful, Powers provided training batons, which are straight batons with refrigeration insulation for padding to spread the force of the blows. This was an extra safeguard against injury.

#### **SAFETY**

During A.S.P. training, it's very important to avoid injury. To promote safety, Powers followed several safety procedures, such as not having any functional firearms in class and having students wear shock-absorbent plastic pads during active simulations. During training bag sessions, partners used the A.S.P. bags to protect themselves from the full-power blows delivered. Safety precautions paid off well, as there was not a single injury from any cause during the two days. Powers stated that this is typical and that A.S.P. training does not usually result in student injuries.

#### **GRADUATION**

Graduation was very informal, students getting certificates, pins and gold instructor's batons. A wallet-size identification card certifies that the student is now qualified to instruct police officers in A.S.P. baton use.

Training is available from: Fitness Institute, Attn: Tim Powers, Route 4, Box 278A, New London, WI 54961. Phone (920) 982-7554.