



A clever way to control rounds as you load them into a speedloader. Hold the speedloader between the fingers and capture the rounds in the palm.

grip safety, all of which can deactivate the gun with fatal consequences. With a revolver, a poor grip (which is a distinct possibility during the sub-optimal conditions of combat) is still a functional grip.

23. Less likely to AD. With a long 8-pound-plus trigger (albeit a smooth one), a revolver is much less likely to accidentally or negligently discharge than a SA semi. No matter how competent you are with your cocked-and-locked 1911, you are a bumbling idiot when roused from sleep, tired, startled, or with a couple beers under your belt.

24. Stopping power available in small package. The small revolvers in .38/.357 caliber are both highly concealable and deliver potent rounds. There is a reason that the J-frame size snubbies are the most popular back-up and pocket guns in service.

25. Safer after the incident. Responding officers won't accidentally fire your weapon when inspecting or bagging it. It happens. Really. Nor will you AD a hair trigger yourself in the confusion of the immediate aftermath.

So there you are: 25 excellent reasons to stick with or go back to the wheelgun. A crusty old anachronism? Not hardly! ●

For more information contact

Northeast Tactical Schools,
8 Kingsbury Lane, North Billerica,
MA 01862; 978-667-5591

Karl Sokol, Chestnut Mountain
Sports, P.O. Box 638, Dept CH,
West Rutland, VT 05777;
802-438-5732

S.T. Action Pro, P.O. Box 1330,
Dept CH, Sharpes, FL 32959;
888-966-0668; www.staction.com

■ TECHNIQUES & TACTICS

WHY REVOLVER BEATS AUTO

25 reasons the wheelgun's top gun!

By Ralph Mroz

Michael deBethencourt is a contrary man. A well-known knife instructor, he holds his knife "upside down" (tip forward, edge up). He prefers a stream or foam OC spray, while most instructors incline towards a fog pattern. And even during his tenure as a staff instructor at the SIGARMS Academy, he preferred the revolver as a defensive sidearm (and offered a course to that effect there). Now as the Director of Northeast Tactical Schools (a university-modeled school with 12 of the Northeast's best-known instructors on staff), he continues to offer his popular Defensive Revolver classes.

Michael usually carries a brace of revolvers in his front pockets (a 2-inch Colt Cobra on the right and a 2-inch S&W Model 12 on the left). As a right-hander, his reloads are carried in a speedloader on the right and a Bianchi speed strip on the left, because the left hand reload with the left hand is assumed to be one-handed, using the speed strip, due to an injured right hand. He proffers the most persuasive and extensive number of reasons for the revolver as a superior sidearm that I've encountered, and they are thoroughly convincing even to a long-time slick-slide plastic guy like me. I am now looking at my (Karl Sokol-tuned) K-frame with new appreciation, and I'm looking to build some new ones!

To set the stage, let us remember that for nearly a century (since 1911) and still in many places, smart, street-savvy pros relied on a revolver as their weapon of choice, and I can't recall any of them ever writing or noting that they felt under-armed as such. The only argument that can possibly be levied against the wheelgun is that it holds but six (or seven or eight) rounds. Well, the standard 1911 holds only eight, and the more compact versions less, and none of the .45/1911



A closer look at the guns. Nothing fancy—a Colt Cobra and a S&W Model 12.



Michael deBethencourt with a brace of his favorite carry guns.

bigots (I say that in the nicest way) ever seem to complain that they are under-armed compared to the 15+ round alternatives! And if we are talking about private citizen self-defense, which is what most of us are concerned about, then six rounds should be quite sufficient given that most encounters requiring social gunfire occur at less than five feet. Further, given the short windows of opportunity to survive at these close distances, John Farnam has correctly pointed out that you are more likely to run out of time than run out of rounds. With that in mind, what follows is Michael's list of reasons why the revolver is a superior sidearm:

1. Worlds safest live round indicator. That is, you do not have to dangerously fiddle with the gun (which is a fair description of a press check) to see if it's loaded. You can see if there are rounds in the cylinder, and if the cylinder is open, you can even feel them in darkness. All this with no un-natural gun manipulation or danger to your body parts.

2. Minimum maintenance. This is self-explanatory. Revolvers don't



Note the gap between the table and the revolver, which is missing with the semi. This gap can make it easier to pick up the revolver and get it into action.



Michael deBethencourt demonstrates a way to possibly get a round off if someone grabs your revolver and you are struggling for it. Let them continue to hold onto the cylinder while you rotate the frame 90 degrees around the cylinder while pulling the trigger.

require a lot of maintenance. They are easy to clean, and minimum maintenance is minimum potential abuse and mistake-making while stripping and re-assembling.

3. Superior reliability. Also self-explanatory. This advantage is widely acknowledged. Can't double feed, fail to extract, or fail to cycle. With fewer moving parts and a simpler mechanical operation, you have a weapon with fewer "Oops" and less "Oh s***" moments. Remember the rule: Things fail at the worst possible moment. Also remember that weather extremes will affect a semi's functioning—less so with a revolver.

4. Faster into action. Since the cylinder of the revolver causes the grip to sit out just a bit from the body when body-worn, it is easier to grasp in more circumstances than a self-loader that lies right up against your body. Likewise, when lying on a table, the revolver is easier to grasp for the same reason.

5. Ya seen one, ya seen 'em all. That is, training on any revolver is training on all revolvers, big or little, large caliber or small caliber, and any brand. The manual of arms is the same (or virtually so) and you are instantly familiar with the weapon, even if you've never seen it before.

6. Fewer shots necessary to prove reliability. You get a malfunction in a semi-auto, and it could be anything—the magazine, a spring, extractor, ejector, or any of the other dozens of parts or maybe the ammunition. The gun might work with the next trigger pull or



1 Michael deBethencourt's two-hand reloading technique. Put your strong thumb on the hammer and your strong index finger on the cylinder...



2 Put your support hand along the gun in a mirror image...



3 Depress cylinder release with support thumb and catch cylinder as it's open with the strong index finger...

with different ammunition—but who knows? With a revolver, if it goes bang the first time, it is 99.9% likely to go bang the next five times.

7. Ammunition choice. A revolver will "feed" and fire any ammunition in the correct caliber. It is not ammunition



4 Keeping the revolver in your strong hand, point the muzzle upwards, and eject the spent cases with the support palm...



5 Turn gun down and load with support hand, then closes the cylinder.

sensitive, as is a self-loader. Thus you can load to suit your situation. Self-defense loads for the street (possibly variable by season—e.g., frangible for the summer, controlled expansion for heavier clothing, etc.), game loads for the woods, light loads for training, injured hands/arms, or smaller shooters, heavier loads and specialty loads for—well, you get the idea. Versatile is the word here.

8. Misfires are reflexively corrected. Pull the trigger. Which is what you'd do instinctively anyway with any gun under stress. No gymnastics and Pidgin English instructions for a lengthy series of re-function maneuvers.

9. Always available to trusted others. Everyone knows how to shoot a revolver, point and pull. There's no emergency training time necessary

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(Lessee here, Bobby, this little lever is the decocker, you gonna have to push it down sometimes, and this gizmo is the slide release, which you gonna have to know how to operate. Good luck to ya, 'cause theys a commin fer us jes about now.)

10. Much easier for beginners. See above.

11. Loading is easier. You are loading the gun itself, not a separate appurtenance (the magazine). The loading of the revolver is far more instinctive than a semi. Also, you can't load a round in backwards; you can insert a magazine in backwards.

12. Easier to unload and make safe. Two steps versus whatever.

13. Easier to shoot. No DA/SA transition, no safeties to manipulate, no hair trigger to worry about, no limp wrist problems.

14. Less expensive. Revolvers are generally less expensive than semis, and many are available in good condition, used. This is good in itself, but it also means that you can more easily employ the "fire extinguisher" rule, and have guns posted at various spots about your residence, car, or business. This is hardly paranoid, and it has saved the life of several shopkeepers in some well-known incidents. And if you lose one to theft or have to surrender one for evidence, the loss is less.

15. Greater tactical versatility. Deadly force encounters usually occur at touching distance. Revolvers can make contact shots (which are instinctive under stress at close distances, and may be necessary in any case) without jamming. Indeed, part of Michael's course stresses contact shots and clever ways to utilize them at close distance.

16. Looks nicer. Revolvers are more jury-friendly. They look all-American. They don't look "mean." They don't have hair triggers. They look conservative. John Wayne and all the other Western heroes carried one. Joe Friday carried one. Bad guys in the movies carry "Death Blasters."

17. Grips are infinitely adjustable. There is a staggering variety of grips available for revolvers, and you can fit the gun to your hand.

18. Pocket fire. With a shrouded hammer (not just bobbed) you can shoot from a pocket. It's damned fast and it's saved lives!

19. Four season common carry. A revolver can be carried in the easiest pocket for the strong hand to reach in all four seasons. In a slacks or shorts front pocket in the warm weather, and



A good way to make a contact shot with a revolver: Place it against your assailant's chest or abdomen, with the muzzle pointing towards the groin.



1 DeBethencourt one-hand reloading. Hold gun with thumb on bottom of grip...



2 Using the thumb as a wedge, glide the grip under the belt...



3...securing it there.

a coat outer pocket otherwise. Also, pocket carry is socially acceptable in almost any setting and with almost any clothing style (even in tuxedos, for those formal dinners that so many of us must constantly attend).



4 Release the cylinder.



5 Load up using a speed strip.

20. Cheap practice. You can get .22 caliber revolvers for inexpensive practice, all the while honing your tactics and gun handling.

21. Points well. Most people agree that few guns instinctively "point" as well as a good revolver. And if yours doesn't, the pointability can be adjusted with different grips.

22. Can't fatally foul the grip. Get a poor grip on a semi-auto, and you can induce a malfunction, activate the magazine release, or fail to depress the