

## Shooting Tip: Gripping the Combat Handgun...Gripping the Combat Handgun...G

By Duane Thomas, Photo by Cameron Benz

Recently I had an article published on gripping a handgun that began, "It's all in the hands." I did not write that line, an editor inserted it. While that statement is cool and snappy, I would never have said that myself because it's not true. There's a lot more to shooting technique, all of it necessary to fire a handgun fast and well, than how you grip it. Having said that, your hands are the part of your body interacting most directly with the gun. Therefore, in order to get the gun acting the way we want in recoil, grip is very important.

In order to figure out the best way to grip the gun, let's begin with a clear understanding of what we want to accomplish, i.e. how we want the gun acting in recoil. Ideally we begin with the gun aimed-in perfectly, then when the gun fires and flips its muzzle we want the front of the gun to track consistently up and down, right back to the same spot. We monitor this is by watching front sight movement, thus serious shooters call how the gun moves in recoil "front sight tracking." If the front sight tracks consistently back to the same spot between shots, and we also manipulate the trigger



Duane demonstrating the straight thumbs grip on his Glock 17.

swiftly and in such a fashion it does not interfere with sight tracking, we can fire the gun as fast as it comes down out of recoil and still be accurate.

For this reason the vast majority of truly accomplished shooters have opted for some variation of the straight-thumbs grip developed by Brian Enos in the very early 1980s. Other techniques do have their

adherents, however none of those people are top shooters. All the best of the best go straight thumbs.

The only other technique with much of a following is thumb-over-thumb in which you wrap the gun in two fists. While there's a certain specious appeal to this in that it seems superficially a stronger approach than straight thumbs, let's continue bearing in mind what we want

our grip to accomplish: consistent sight tracking. In the thumb-over-thumb grip, the support hand thumb must cross over the master hand thumb. This prys the heel of the support hand away from the side of the gun, opening up a gap which allows the gun to twist in your hands under recoil, severely, negatively impacting sight tracking. By contrast, the straight-thumbs technique gets the heel of the sup-

## Shooting Tip: Beginning the Draw...Beginning the Draw...Beginning the Draw...

By Duane Thomas, Photo by Ed Leavitt

The process of doing a fast draw from the holster is WAY too complex to cover in an article of realistic length for *The Blue Press*. In this piece, rather, we are going to address only one facet of the draw: How to acquire first-hand contact to the gun in the holster. There are, to my knowledge, four ways to accomplish this.

*The scoop.* This refers to coming up under the gun butt with your middle through little fingers curled into a C-clamp, as your hand contacts the gun butt you simply pull through without slowing down at all, scooping the gun out of the holster without even taking the time to curl the thumb over the backstrap. After the gun is out of the holster and is being rotated up toward the target the thumb comes over onto the other side of the gun. When executed perfectly, the scoop is probably the ultimate speed technique. Unfortunately, it has a high disaster factor. It's easy to screw up, and when it fails it tends to fail spectacularly.

Because as the gun exits the holster, the shooter is really only holding it with three fingers, if the timing of getting the thumb up and over the backstrap is off, if hand position to start with is not absolutely perfect, it's not at all unknown for the gun to exit the

shooter's hand during the draw. The gun is moving up, the web of the hand isn't behind the gun so as it's yanked out of the holster it just keeps going in one direction – up – while the hand moves in another, forward, and the gun goes flying. One of our local shooters is famous for having this happen. I have gotten to watch him do his scoop draw at matches numerous times, and I have to admit it's a very pretty technique when it works. I have yet to be there when he's launched the gun across the range, but hope springs eternal in the human breast.

*Up-and-down.* The hand comes up over the grip and then is placed down onto the gun butt, with the first contact point between gun and hand being the web of the hand as it snugs down into the recurve of the grip tang. This is the most commonly used technique, and it has a lot to recommend it. For one thing, it's the simplest method, and there are people in the world who are very good at it. The problem I find is that, unless you put a real emphasis on placing the hand on the gun butt very lightly, there is a tendency to get a lot of what I call "dwell time" i.e. the hand rides on the gun for a significant period, actually in many cases driving the gun and holster downward on the body, before the hand can begin to move in the opposite direction to draw the gun.