

Greenside Training's Weaponize the Senses

AAR by Rick Topping

Class Dates- July 9 & 10 2016

Location: Tango Down Range in Highview, WV

Weather: Full sun, temperatures ranging from the low 70s in the early morning to the high 80s

Equipment: Velocity Systems Long Sleeve Boss Rugby Shirt, Vertx Phantom LT Pants, Ares Gear Aegis Belt, Raven Concealment Phantom Holster, Falke Socks, 5.11 Tactical Trainer 2.0 Low Shoes, Smith and Wesson M&P Full size pistol, Hornady Critical Defense Ammunition, Old School Camelbak Pack of some type, Rite in the Rain notebook, Rite in the rain pen (Pistol and accessories not needed for the class but they go everywhere with me so I included them).

Overview: Have you ever had a hard time getting started writing an AAR because you fear your words won't truly articulate the value of a class to the reader? That is exactly how I feel as I type this. Freddy Osuna is an amazing teacher and his class turned out to be some of the best training dollars I have ever spent. He stated during the class that he would change the way you see the world and though I can't speak for other students, I can honestly say that from my personal experience he was 100% on the money with that statement. After just these two days with Freddy things that I never would have noticed stand out in bright detail and give me information I never even considered was available. I actually used his training to follow animal tracks in the backyard of a house I was considering buying to a hole in the foundation wall that was occupied by several irate raccoons less than a week after the class. To put it another way, if god forbid either of my children even got lost in an environment that tracking is possible in, Freddy Osuna would be receiving an airline ticket from me just as fast as I could get it paid for.

TD1- After a brief introduction Freddy launched right into his course of instruction. He began by giving us a primer on primal learning, how and why we learn the way we do. He then went into some pretty deep physiological explanations of how the eyes of different species and humans work. He then demonstrated some of these principals in action by leading us through a few quick exercises to determine how far your personal peripheral vision stretches and which eye is your dominant eye. Throughout this whole lecture period he was dropping little gems like carrying liquid tears in your kit to help with eye fatigue and that amber tinted glasses help tracks stand out better to the eye. After a quick break (there are very few breaks in Freddy's classes and they are quick...be prepared to hustle) we moved on to an introduction to tracking mammals. Freddy stated that he believes that learning to track animals makes for a better mantracker and by the end of the class I could see why he believes this. He again went into the realm of physiology and laid out the differences between ungulates, bipeds, and quadrupeds amongst several other categories that tracks break down into. He then used molds of actual animal feet to make tracks for us to view. We would list of the characteristics of each track and then try to name the animal it belonged to based on his prior instruction. This exercise is where it first started to come together for me. When I looked at one of the animal tracks before Freddy's block of instruction I could barely even make out that a track was present. After Freddy broke down the individual parts of an animal track and what it could tell you, the same track suddenly leapt off the ground at me practically bursting with information. Did you know that you can tell the difference between a domestic and a wild

dog's track just by looking at it? Freddy can you show you how to do this and I bet you will get a little chuckle from him as everyone in the class sits there with a dumbfounded look after he shows you how simple it is.

Once we completed the mammal block of instruction we moved on to the mantracking portion of the class. Freddy again focused on the science of the human foot and how it moves. He then linked each part of this movement to a different part of a track. He also went into how to age a track based on the state of the track wall and how to determine if someone changed direction. He also covered the average stride of a human and how to see how they are moving based on their tracks. He finished the block of instruction by explaining how to distinguish a given track based on individual shoe characteristics and an overview of how to tell how old a given pair of footwear is. This came in hand during the next exercise we did, the "Elephant Drill". Freddy pulled two of the other students and set up 6 cones lined up in two lines of three. Freddy had the rest of the class go blind and then he and the two students each picked a cone and stood in front of it. They then careful stepped back behind the cone, walked around the spoor pit to the other line of cones and randomly stepped in front of one. It was the rest of the class's job to determine which set of tracks started at a given cone and where they ended up. To make matters more difficult for us, the two students happened to have the exact same shoes, in the exact same size, and purchased only a month apart. We were successful in identifying who went where by thinking back to Freddy's training and locating a tiny nick in the tread of one pair of boots that wasn't present in the other pair. When Freddy announced that we had correctly identified all three start and endpoints I felt a huge sense of accomplishment and wonder that I was able to pick out this tiny detail. This was TV show stuff that we were actually able to pull off in real life after a day of training.

We finished TD1 by practicing mantracking. We made some tracks in the tall grass and practiced identifying each footstep while Freddy went and made a track for us to follow. About 15 minutes later he was back and we started the track. We were getting along pretty well until the track let right into a stream. We knew Freddy was had gotten wet at some point because his pants were wet when he came back to start the track but none of us suspected that more than half the track we needed to follow was located in the stream. Freddy took the opportunity to give us a quick class on what to look for and then we were off again. We successfully followed his whole trackline and that ended TD1. Let me emphasize this: students were able to follow a track laid down by the end of day 1....without deliberate "courtesy spoor"....through a freaking stream. If I had not lived it I would not believe it. At this point I am pretty sure everyone was smoked physically from the crazy hot weather and West Virginia terrain but I know I was even more mentally exhausted from the huge volume of material Freddy covered.

TD2- As we settled in for day 2 Freddy let us know that we would be much lighter on instruction today and more heavily focused on exercise. Freddy gave us a quick primer on time/shadow effect or how the sun creates different shadows that can make tracks easier or harder to spot as the day goes on. He then explained the concept of LINDATA to us, which is the tracker equivalent of a SITREP. With this instruction concluded Freddy moved us to the graded exercises. Freddy had walked in a straight line and laid down a nail each time a foot hit the ground. It was our job to count the nails and this is not as easy as it sounds. Once you had your nail count we moved to a spoor pit that Freddy had outlined with weeds. Freddy had done some activity inside of that box and it was our job to determine what had happened and present a full report using the LINDATA format. Once we had our answers Freddy pulled each one of us off to the side and had us brief him. He scored our responses and then we moved on to what I think was the highlight of the course, the sensory lane. I won't say too much about this because

this AAR is already super long and I don't want to ruin this experience for future students. Suffice to say that Freddy had created clusters of things for you to smell, see, hear, and feel. He ran each student through the lane individually and scored you based on the things you pointed out, or failed to point out. I thought I had done well but once we were walked back through the lane I realized I had found barely half of the items. My performance cost me the coveted Alpha Wolf spot which is awarded to the highest scoring student in each course, but the knowledge I gained about my own capabilities and weaknesses outweighed my disappointment when I found out I had come in second.

We then finished the course by tracking Freddy again, but this time we worked as a team and used his index tracking method as if we were chasing a fugitive. We each took turns being the team leader, main tracker, and secondary trackers. Tracking as a team is a whole different world and could probably be a class just in itself. Freddy's system is awesome and allowed us to successfully track him for more than a mile. We had one hiccup along the way where we got stuck on a false trail, but Freddy quickly got us back on track and we successfully completed the culmination exercise. We then conducted a quick AAR and Freddy presented us with our Greenside Training patches. Far from a normal morale patch or a participation award, these patches are only handed out to the students that Freddy feels made the grade and met his high standards. I was honored to have made the grade and this patch now sits in a place of honor next to my Pat Rogers awarded Moose Cock patch.

Final Thoughts: I wish I was a better author because I cannot properly articulate how good this training was. Freddy is one of those rare individuals that can take a class of people that have never met each other and have them doing amazing things both individually and in a team in an amazingly short period of time. This class will help me become a better hunter and has obvious LEO and search and rescue applications but it is so much more than that. This class isn't called basic tracking or something like that because that's only the vehicle that Freddy uses to open up a world of detail to you that most people don't even know exists. I truly believe this training could be used to save lives and it should be a priority for anyone that is interested in how to use their senses on a deeper level. You do not have to be a shooter to take this class and I would implore anyone thinking about getting some training from Greenside to make the investment without fear, Freddy will amaze you and your money will be well spent.

A few quick notes:

- The course can be physically demanding, especially in the kind of heat we had to deal with but Freddy does a great job of making sure nobody is left behind. As I mentioned before Freddy has so much material to get through that there isn't a lot of down time. Bring lots of water (or Camelbak Elixir which I found to be very helpful) and be prepared to put some miles on your boots
- The Velocity Boss Rugby Shirt and the Vertx Phantom Pants were excellent choices. They kept me relatively cool and dry through the whole course despite the hot temperatures and the delightful walk through the stream on TD1.
- Bring extra socks in case Freddy decides to take your course through a water exercise. Also bring the standard bug spray and sunblock to class.
- ATACS camouflage is amazing. Even when I knew where to look I had a hard time spotting the item Freddy had put it on.

- Even though not required for the course I carried my M&P Pistol the whole time. Through the hills, the water, the sweating, squatting to look at tracks, and everything else Echo Valley threw at us the Ares Gear Belt and Raven Concealment holster combo was comfortable and performed flawlessly. It kept my pistol exactly where I wanted it with minimal shifting and no sagging at all. This belt and holster combo isn't just the best choice in my mind for urban concealed carry, but also a great choice for hiking, orienteering, and other more rural pursuits.
- Jimmy from F3 Tactical continues to be an amazing resource for the community. He worked with Freddy to make this course happen and I am eternally grateful that he took the time to turn me on to Greenside Training. There is no better gear store for quality kit, amazing customer service, and expert advice on kit and training.
- Freddy has a book "Index Tracking, Essential Guide to Trailing Man and Beast". It's a quick read and chock full of information. I recommend it for anyone interested in the art and science of tracking. Freddy is also coming out with a much larger book soon so keep your eyes peeled for that.
- Finally, thanks again to my fellow students and especially to Freddy for an unforgettable experience. It is a rare treat to find a master instructor of Freddy's quality and I look forward to every training opportunity with him that I can get. Thanks for taking the time to read this AAR and I can be reached for questions or comments on at sfsigo110@gmail.com