



BLUF: NOT RECOMMENDED

Format

8 hours | 400 rounds | \$225 + \$15 Range Fee | Homestead Training

Instructor to Student Ratio

1:14 | Hilton Yam was the solo instructor

Personal Kit

Colt Combat Commander 9mm | Vickers Combat Wilson Duty Magazines | Speer Lawman 147 grain TMJ | Long's Shadow OWB holster and double mag carrier | Ares Gear belt | Oakley eye protection | Etymotic electronic ear buds | **ZERO STOPPAGES OR ISSUES**

Training Day

Class started with introductions, paperwork, safety brief, and kitting up. With 14 students and 1 instructor, this went quickly. Roughly half arrived with STI 2011's and half with 1911's.

Owner/instructor Hilton Yam is one of the most articulate, organized, precise, and mellow instructors I have ever met in 30 years of taking classes. He's easy to follow, accommodating, and extremely funny if you appreciate a dry sense of humor (as I do).

The purpose of this course is twofold: 1) to bring newer owners up to speed on all the nuances and product knowledge of the 1911/2011 platform; and 2) to develop gun handling and marksmanship fundamentals with this platform in mind. As such, this course was a balanced mix between lecture, show & tell, and shooting.

I'm going to be brutally honest here. I normally take copious notes during a course, but red flags started popping up for me early on, and as the day wore on I just didn't bother to keep taking notes.

The red flags started with small things beginning with "keep your thumb UNDER your safety when moving as long as your safety is on and there's no threat." I've been shooting and training on the 1911's since the early 1990's, including at some pretty 1911-centric schools such as Gunsite, Thunder Ranch, Chapman Academy, and Cumberland Tactics. I've never heard this, nor do I want to learn two different techniques in terms of where my thumb should reside. If the safety is on or off, my thumb resides on TOP of the safety.

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Another small red flag was during the STI portion of the lecture where he recommended replacing STI magazine springs 2 to 3 times a year. My contract instructor looked at me like “is he kidding? Who can afford to do that across their inventory?”

The bigger red flags arrived later when we started “testing our extractor.”

Before I enumerate what happened, let me state my Commander uses a Wilson Bullet Proof extractor that’s been tuned by my gunsmith. When my gunsmith asked me which direction I wanted to eject brass (he offered from 2:00 to 5:00), I requested 5:00 so brass would not hit others when on a firing line. Several thousand rounds later, I can tell you my gun extracts to the 5:00 100% of the time. Moreover, I’ve had zero stoppages or issues since day 1 with this gun.

There were 3 extractor tests Hilton wanted us to perform.

The first extractor test was simple and frankly I don’t even know why we did this since I would think any competent pistol can do this. We locked the slide back on an empty gun, inserted a full magazine, and hit the slide release with the intent of the gun easily loading the chamber and coming to rest at fully battery. As expected, no issue here.

The second extractor test was designed to test if the extractor is working consistently by evaluating the ejection pattern; i.e. does the pistol eject brass in the same direction and with the same force every time.

Of course, I already knew this answer for my pistol, but Hilton does this test with a twist: he has us load a round in the chamber, then remove the magazine, and then fire. This method poses multiple problems:

- First, there is no realistic Civilian scenario where I see firing one chambered round with no mag in the gun (and even if there was, the gun will fire fine, though extraction or ejection may be another issue, which it was).

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- Second, since there's no magazine in the gun to feed the next round after firing, we are essentially slamming the slide against an empty chamber which can damage a trigger job with enough events. Hilton did mention this, but said a few times is no big deal.
- Third, in order for the gun to cycle properly, the extractor would have to be loose which it's not supposed to be. As expected, my tightly fitted and tuned extractor experienced failures to eject (not to extract) every time, as did other 1911's with tuned extractors on the line. In contrast, the STI's passed this test just fine. My contract instructor examined his STI's extractor and it was loose.

In hindsight, I'm glad my gun failed this second test because my slide never did slam forward on an empty chamber.

The third extractor test again relied on a loose extractor. Like with the first test, we locked the slide back, inserted a full magazine, but then slowly hand lowered the slide forward until the breach face just began touching the topmost round's base, and then let the gun go forward into battery. Again, loose extractors allowed the slide to drop forward into battery, tightly fitted and tuned ones did not. Not sure what this third test proved.

Another red flag came later when we reviewed how to clear feedway stoppages such as a double feed or failure to extract.

The traditional method is: lock the slide, remove magazine, if necessary rack the slide to clear a stuck casing that failed to extract, load spare magazine, rack, and assess.

Hilton's method is: lock the slide, remove magazine, **DROP THE SLIDE ON AN EMPTY GUN USING THE SLIDE RELEASE**, load spare magazine, rack, and assess. I get this is an attempt at saving time, and it does, but not only can this damage the action, but if the casing is stuck in the chamber due to a failure to extract then we are giving the extractor only one re-attempt at grabbing the rim. No thank you.

The rest of the day was spent on live fire fundamentals training, but honestly there was nothing new, fresh, nuanced, or insightful. All clearly and competently explained and demonstrated, but wholly unsatisfied.

There was one cool and simple drill we did, however, that I really liked and have adapted into my own program. From 7 yards on an IPSC target, you fire 5 rounds to the body, reload from slide lock, 5 rounds to the head, in 8 seconds. Thus 10 rounds in 8 seconds or “10-8 Drill.”

Reflections

Personally, this was a very difficult review to write. I really respect and like Hilton Yam both personally and professionally. I enjoy his products such as his armorers tool, armorers block, his videos, etc. I think he’s doing a service to the 1911/2011 community by helping bring more folks into the fold. And on top of that, he’s local to me, and my other instructors have nothing but great things to say about him.

I also know this was only his second time teaching this particular course, and he commented the content changed from the first one, and will probably change somewhat for the next one. Based on this it’s perfectly possible the next course is very different.

For now, I have to tell my friends to pass unless they want to take this one day journey knowing they may not like some of what’s presented.