

THE MARTIALIST: ISSUE 3.10 SUBSCRIBER

In Defense of Clip-Draw

By Phil Elmore

Experiencing the adrenaline and the motions of a real self-defense encounter, you will become a lobster-clawed, club-footed imbecile, drooling over yourself as you struggle and fail to accomplish the simplest of motor-skill-driven tasks. Trying and failing to draw your weapon under stress, you will flail helplessly at your beltline as rampaging hordes of barbarians and silent troops of black-clad ninja kill you, kill you again, bury you, dig you up, and kill you some more, all while dancing about you and laughing at the foolishness with which you did not prepare consistently to draw your self-defense tool under stress.



Photo by Phil Elmore

Okay, now that we've got the silliness out of the way, let's approach this realistically. There is a school of thought – a good one, in fact – that teaches the student of self-defense to train religiously with his or her weapon in a consistent and consistently *replicable* manner. As a result, any equipment that can in any way introduce variables in the carry or deployment of that weapon is *verböten* and should be

shunned, both privately and at the office Christmas party. Custom holsters that fit snugly and ride immobile on one's beltline are thus acceptable. Clip-equipped folding knives are generally acceptable, though adherents to this school of thought frown on them in general because of the difficulty in deploying a folding knife under stress – one presumes that the thumb stud or thumb hole on most of these is simply too tiny to find when one's limbs are coursing with adrenaline. Folders that practically open themselves ("Waved" folders like Emersons and converted Spydercos) are generally acceptable. *Firearms* equipped with clips, however, are consigned to the Ninth Circle of Hell, damned there by Acolytes of the Idiot-Proof Drawstroke as unreliable.

I was tempted simply to accept this myself, as it seemed reasonable enough. With holsters readily available (though clip-on holsters are similarly damned by the most ardent of acolytes of this particular religion), why *would* I carry my firearm as if it were an oversized folding knife?

For those of you who do not know, Clipdraw is an after-market product (available through www.clipdraw.com) that affixes a spring clip, like the pocket clip on a folding knife, directly to the frame of a firearm. For popular models the clip fits to the frame using mounting points like the grip screws (such as on 1911s) or some portion of the slide (such as on Glocks). For all other handguns the company offers universal models that affix to the frame using screws attached to a stick-on plate, the plate held in place with a strong industrial adhesive. The concept might sound a little dodgy, but it *does* work.

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Critics of the Clipdraw dismiss it as a very insecure way to carry a gun. They point to the ease with which the weapon could be dislodged (and thus go flying under even *moderate* activity, not to mention a car accident or a physical altercation) and the fact that the gun can accidentally wander in the waistband, changing its location and (presumably) interfering with a consistent draw.



Photo by Phil Elmore

Advocates of the consistent drawstroke – those folks who disdain clip-on holsters for the same reasons – argue further that the Clipdraw *by design* allows the weapon to shift or be moved in the waistband, causing problems when drawing it under stress.



Photo by Phil Elmore

I interpret this to mean that even if the Clipdraw held the gun firmly in the waistband with no chance it would be dislodged, this shifting is itself considered problematic enough to relegate the Clipdraw to the status of novelty item.

After careful consideration and long-term use of the Clipdraw on both small and medium-sized weapons, however, I have to disagree with critics of the concept.

First of all, while a gun or knife clipped to a pocket or waistband may indeed shift position during daily carry, these shifts are minor. Unless you've clipped your gun to the waistband of your gang-banger-baggy-pants, which spend a considerable amount of time drifting around your hips and thighs, the tension of your pants against your waist (particularly with a good belt in place, which I would recommend) is enough to hold the weapon firmly in position.



Photo by Phil Elmore

It may indeed shift, but it's not going to shift more than finger's width either way. Your muscle memory is a powerful thing, but I don't care how many hours you practice an appropriate locked-wrist drawstroke from the same position – you're never going to get your holster in

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precisely the same spot on your belt, with no variation whatsoever, every time you put it on. There will be small variations in how the weapon rides even in identical suits of clothing. When you draw a firearm, you *index* the weapon by feel precisely because you don't know without touching it *exactly* where it will be. Now, yes, you don't want to move the weapon around your belt line, from front to back to behind either hip – but if you always carry your weapon just behind your right hip, let's say, you'll locate and draw it just fine despite minor variations in precisely where it rides inside your waistband.

It's true that a weapon equipped with a pocket clip is not affixed to one's person as securely as is a weapon in a snugly fitting holster, especially if the holster has a retention device like a thumb break. Convenience and security will always be natural enemies; we all make concessions to one for the sake of the other, regardless of the directions in which we move. Expedience and convenience are siblings and the same liability applies.

It is very expedient and very convenient simply to shove a clip-draw equipped handgun in your waistband. You can draw it quickly and there are no other accessories to get in the way. The trade-off is that the weapon could come loose more easily than if it was in a secure holster, not to mention the fact that the finish of the weapon will suffer more quickly. (In a "working" carry gun, I can't imagine worrying about scuffing the finish. All of my hard-use daily carry gear is scuffed and ugly, but it works and that is all that matters.

Have you ever seen an "OSS string holster?" This is a simple loop of string or rope that is threaded over the belt or belt loop, on itself, creating a little lasso into which fits the barrel of a pistol. Lore has it that such a string rig was used by many a resistance fighter to conceal a pistol when a holster was unavailable (or when it might even be a liability when ditching the weapon.) There is nothing terribly secure about such a piece of string. It is simply expedient – and it works.

Properly fitted and positioned, preferably sitting behind a nice, snugly cinched belt, a clip-draw equipped weapon is as useful, as secure, and as accessible as a clip-equipped folding knife. I do not recommend that you rush out and equip all of your pistols with pocket clips, nor would I suggest you saw through all of the trigger guards to create do-it-yourself Wave conversions (an amusing joke I once saw Photo-shopped into reality). What I would recommend, however, is considering such options objectively and with an active mind, weighing the liabilities and the potential benefits for what they are rather than for what we might wish them to be.

The gun you have is always better than the gun you leave at home. A clip-equipped automatic or revolver tucked snugly in your waistband is far superior to one that could ride in an ultra-secure carry holster that is home in a drawer. Critics of the Clipdraw would say you should always wear the holster and there are no valid excuses for leaving either gun or holster behind. I would argue that there's no excuse for dismissing an option that *can* work.♠

RANDOM DEBATE TOPIC: "Violence has no constitutional sanction; and every government from the beginning has moved against it. But where grievances pile high and most of the elected spokesmen represent the Establishment, violence may be the only effective response."
– William O. Douglas