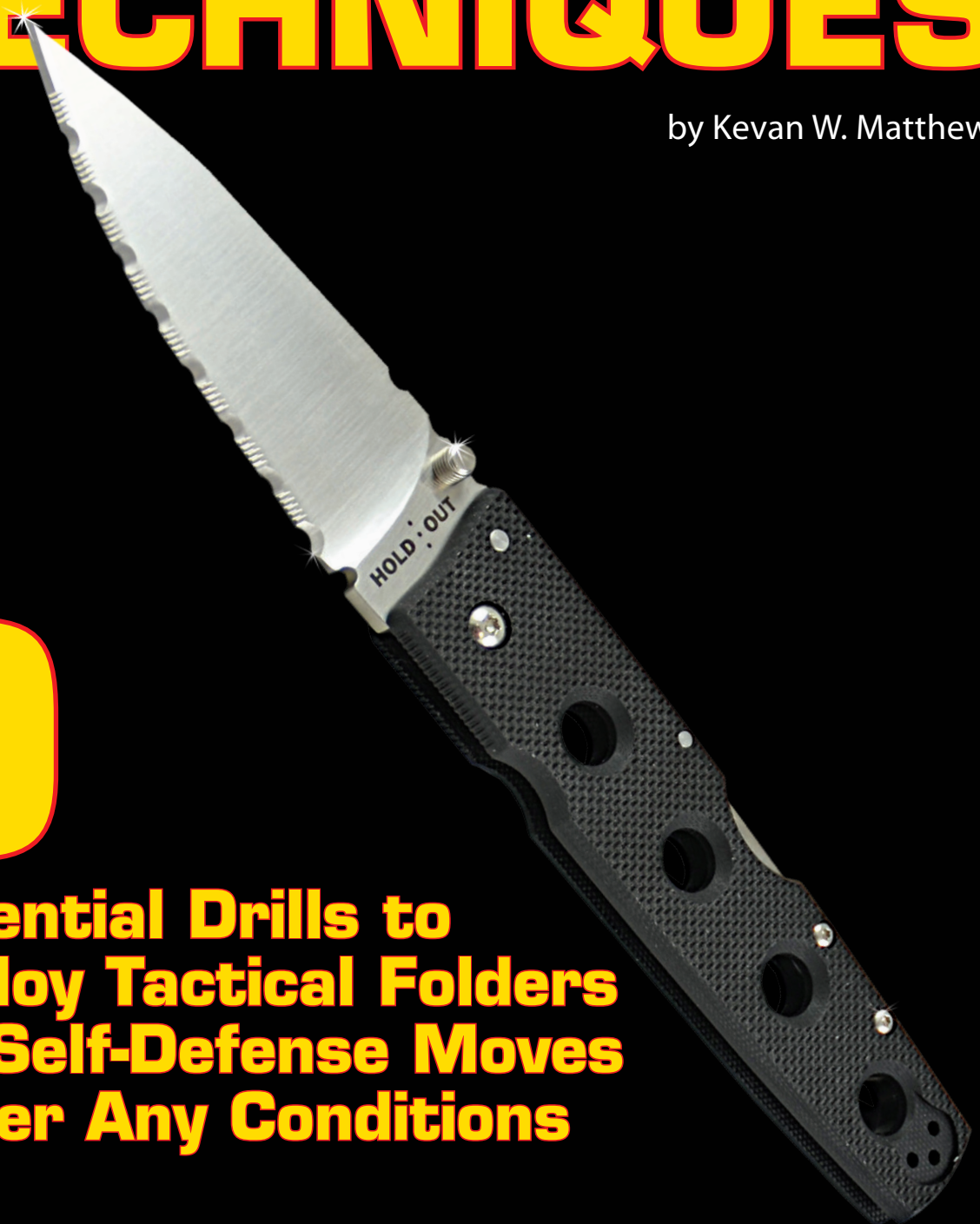


KNIFE- FIGHTING TECHNIQUES

by Kevan W. Matthews

9

**Essential Drills to
Deploy Tactical Folders
for Self-Defense Moves
Under Any Conditions**





Volumes have been written about the best ways to use a tactical folder in close-quarters combat because it's the glamorous part of knife fighting. Relatively little has been written about the best ways to deploy a knife under the stress that is always present in a lethal encounter. And that's a pity because to be proficient with a blade in any situation, you first have to surmount the obstacles that stand between you and the successful deployment of your weapon.

It's easy to believe that your knife will be available when you need it. It's easy to think that by exercising situational awareness and anticipating the threat, you will be able to silently take it out and open it and then engage the enemy. In a perfect world, that might be the case, but in the heat of battle, you can experience any number of setbacks:

- You may be ambushed.
- You may be forced to fight on the ground.
- You may be in a position in which your strong arm is occupied or injured.

- You may slip on snow or wet grass.
- You may experience a loss of dexterity because of the cold.
- You may extract your weapon but fail to acquire the necessary grip to deploy the blade completely.
- You may be exhausted.
- You may find that your clothing restricts your hand movement.
- You may be disarmed.

I call these factors "combat stress indicators," or CSIs. You can never really eliminate them. However, if you make your training resemble combat as much as possible, you can boost your ability to work through the challenges they pose.

This article will present nine stress-deployment drills designed to help you overcome the CSIs and deploy your knife under less-than-ideal conditions. In lieu of the adrenaline-induced stresses of combat, physical exercise will be used to bring about the dex-

Odds and Ends

Obviously, when you opt to carry a knife for self-defense, it's not enough to be a skillful technician. Many factors must be considered, not the least of which is the accessibility of the weapon when the heat is on. Most tactical knives are designed with a thumb stud or thumbhole to permit one-handed opening or a protrusion to permit kinetic opening. Be forewarned that such techniques are fine-motor skills and, therefore, will probably deteriorate under stress.

When deciding on a suitable backup knife to carry, you should think about how well you'll be able to conceal it, access it and deploy it. For example, if you're considering a neck knife, will it be carried on a nylon para-cord or does it come with a breakaway ball chain? What will you do if the chain breaks but the knife stays in its sheath? Have you trained to prevent the para-cord from being used against you as a garrote? Try to make your backup weapon as accessible as possible without helping the bad guy get his hands on it.

—K.M.

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Photos by Robert W. Young

terity loss and muscular fatigue you would experience during an actual encounter.

TIMED DEPLOYMENT DRILL

Your partner blows a whistle to signal you to begin and activates his stopwatch to time your reaction. You respond by extracting your knife and opening the blade. The clicking sound the locking mechanism makes when the blade is fully open signals your partner to stop the watch. With the clock providing the only CSI, a time of 1.6 seconds should not be difficult to achieve.

Terminology

Once you decide to carry a knife for self-defense, you should choose a location and position for the weapon and stick with it. Then practice deploying it with your right and left hands. The terms “strong side” and “weak side” are used to distinguish the side of the body on which you carry it. If it is on your right, your right side will be your strong side, and your left side will be your weak side. The terms are not meant to reflect your relative level of expertise with your right and left hands.

— K.M.

STANDING DEPLOYMENT DRILL

To introduce more stress, this drill has you beginning with the “10-count bodybuilder exercise.” Upon completion of one cycle of the exercise, your partner signals you to deploy your blade and records the time. Your goal is to complete two sets of 12 cycles of the movement, deploying the knife 12 times with each side. Observe how a time of 1.6 seconds becomes more difficult to attain as the stress increases.

PRONE DEPLOYMENT DRILL

Now you must perform after you complete a set of push-ups at 50 percent of your point of muscular failure. (For example, if you can do 100 push-ups but fail at 101, your threshold is 100. So for this drill, you would perform sets of 50.) Upon completion of the final rep, stay in the up position until your partner

Prone deployment drill: The practitioner performs a set of push-ups to fatigue his muscles, thus simulating the effects of adrenaline (1-3). He then remains in the up position as he extracts his knife from his pocket (4) and deploys the blade (5-6).

signals you to deploy your blade. Strive to keep your legs straight and support your body on the balls of your feet and one arm. Once you deploy your knife and your partner records the time, place the weapon on the ground and recover safely. Be sure to drill with your strong and weak sides. A good time to shoot for is two seconds.

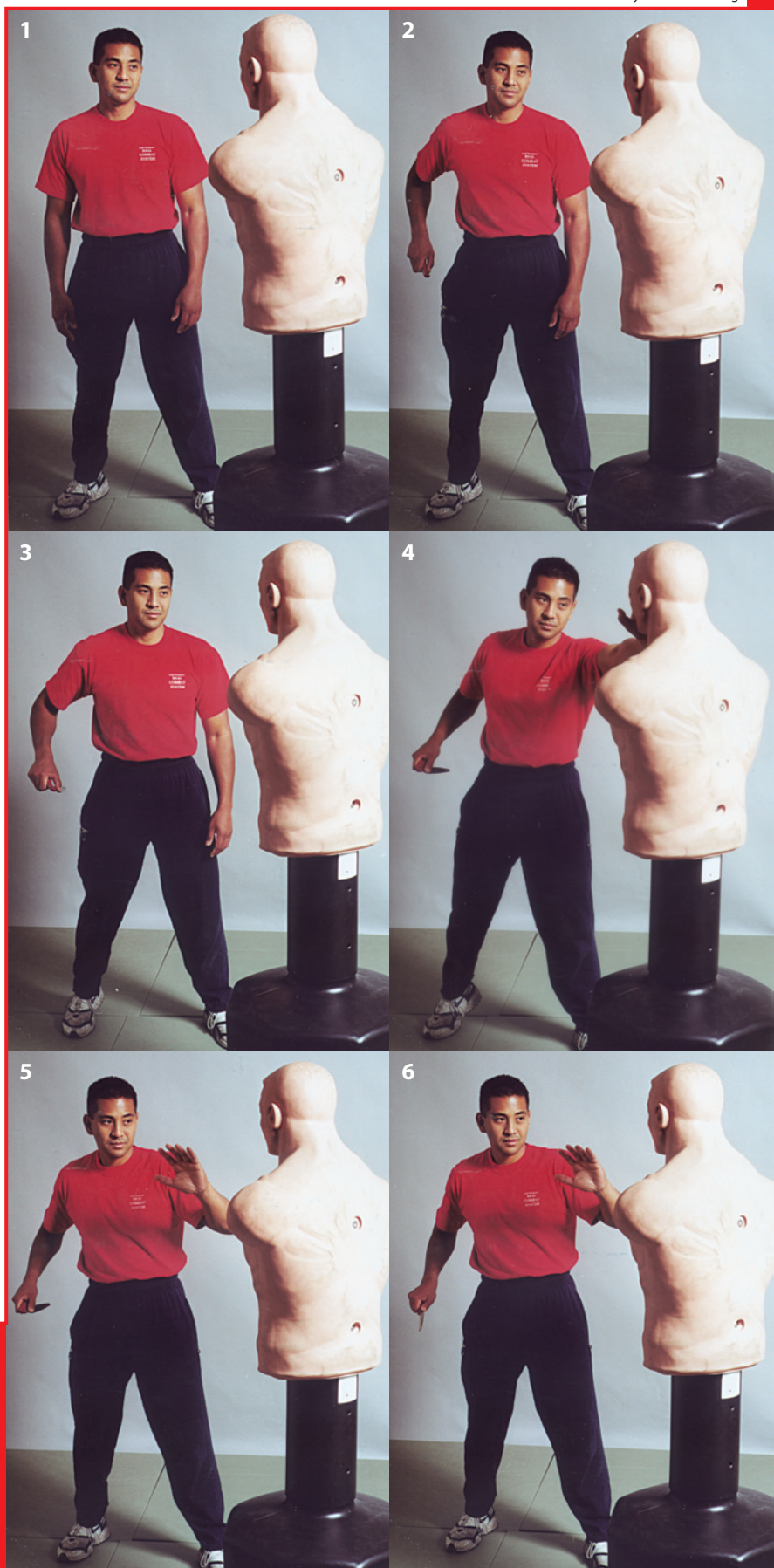
This drill is designed to simulate a tactical need to deploy your knife while engaged in a ground struggle in which you are compromised from behind. You can keep the drill fresh and discover new ways to add stress by varying the types of push-ups you perform. Try fingertip push-ups to stress your digits more and provide you with extreme dexterity loss.

MOVING-THREAT DRILL

Because sometimes you need more time to take out your weapon, you should practice putting distance between your attacker and yourself. To assist you, the moving-threat drill takes the prone deployment drill one step further in that it develops your ability to ready your weapon on the move, thus buying you a few extra seconds.

Instead of drawing your knife after the final push-up, upon hearing the whistle you spring from the up position and sprint across the room while doing it. The moment your blade is out, turn to face your partner and assume a ready position. Practice with your strong and weak sides.

Deployment-malfunction drill: When faced with an imminent attack (1), the practitioner reaches for his knife (2). He attempts to deploy the blade, but stress and perspiration cause him to fail (3). He then executes his preplanned empty-hand technique or combination (4) to buy time to attempt to open the blade again (5). With the knife now fully deployed, the practitioner can defend himself (6).





Deployment-of-backup drill: The partner (left) threatens the practitioner (1). The practitioner takes out his primary knife (2), and the partner seizes the weapon hand (3) and disarms him (4). Meanwhile, the practitioner deploys his backup weapon and prepares to counterattack (5). Note: This drill should not be interpreted as advocating the use of a knife against an unarmed assailant.

Photos by Sara Fogan

DEPLOYMENT-MALFUNCTION DRILL

This drill prepares you for the eventuality that your blade might partially open or fail to open at all. First, visualize what you would do if that happened in combat. When your partner gives you the signal, extract your weapon and deploy it as described in the timed deployment drill—but this time you will not be timed. Continue to kinetically deploy the blade until you experience a failure, then execute your preconceived striking or distraction technique. Immediately try to open the blade again. Your goal is to improve your ability to immediately recognize the problem and work through it.

DEPLOYMENT-OF-BACKUP DRILL

An extension of the deployment-malfunction drill, this exercise trains you to rely on your backup weapon in the event that your primary is lost. Start by taping the blade of your primary weapon closed for added safety. Then face your partner and extract the weapon. He attacks your weapon hand and disarms you. You must then deploy your backup. Stop as soon as it is opened.

GRAPPLING DEPLOYMENT DRILL

This drill teaches you how to exploit your opponent's weaknesses and deploy your weapon by creating an opportunity. You and your partner begin by facing each other on your hands and knees. When he makes physical contact, you must extract your weapon (with its blade taped closed for safety) while he tries to stop you. Practice with your strong and weak sides.



Arm-immobilization drill: The partner uses his right arm to choke the practitioner and his left arm to lock the practitioner's left arm behind his back (1). The practitioner must then ignore the choke or protect himself from its effects long enough to access his knife (2) and open it (3-4).

The 10-Count Bodybuilder Exercise

This grueling routine is composed of several compound movements, or exercises that involve the muscles of more than one joint. Begin by standing upright with your arms at your sides and ...

1. Perform the first half of a jumping jack: Jump up, spread your feet a little more than shoulder-width apart and clap your hands above your head.
2. Perform the second half and return to the starting position.
3. Squat down and place your palms on the ground just to the outside of your feet.
4. Thrust your feet straight back so you are in a push-up position.
5. Perform the first half of a push-up: Keeping your back straight, bend your arms at the elbows and lower your body until your chest touches the ground.
6. Perform the second half.
7. Swing your feet as far apart as possible.
8. Bring your feet back together so you are in a push-up position.
9. Return to the squat position.
10. Stand and return to the starting position.

— K.M.

Needed Gear

To practice these rapid-deployment drills effectively, you will need the following items:

- a primary knife
- a backup knife
- a training knife (optional)
- duct tape or medical adhesive tape (to secure the blade in a closed position)
- a whistle
- a stopwatch
- situational clothing (jeans, baggy pants, large sweat shirt or T-shirt, etc.)
- a training partner.

— K.M.



Many knife manufacturers sell a training version of their most popular tactical folders. Shown here is the Emerson CQC-7A-BT (top) and the identically sized CQC-7 Trainer (bottom).



If a training knife is not available, use a length of tape to secure the blade so it won't open during partner drills.

ARM-IMMOBILIZATION DEPLOYMENT DRILL

To develop your ability to extract and deploy your knife with your weak side while you are being choked and restrained, begin by facing away from your partner. He then places you in a choke hold while immobilizing one of your arms. Your goal is to take out your (taped) weapon before he can maximize his hold and force you to submit. The drill continues until you extract your weapon or he makes you tap.

THREAT-CLOSING DEPLOYMENT

The final drill forces you to think tactically. Face

Photos by Sara Fogan

your partner as he stands about 21 feet away. He closes the distance as quickly as he can while keeping track of the time with a stopwatch. You must deploy your (taped) knife while you step into a defensive posture. Your options include the following:

- stepping forward while deploying your blade
- stepping backward while deploying it
- attacking and deploying it
- distracting him and deploying it
- combining tactics and deploying it.

Your choice should not be based on your favorite technique but on your partner's actions. For example, if he takes one step and then stops after seeing your weapon, you probably will not want to chase him down with your knife. Or if you have a wall behind you, you will be forced away from certain options and toward others.

PRACTICE AND SURVIVE

Feel free to modify these drills to suit your tactical needs and challenge yourself in training. Then, if you ever lock eyes with an attacker, there will be no doubt in your mind. You will be resolute, your spirit will be indomitable and you will be trained for that moment. Your weapon will be more than just a decoration. ✘



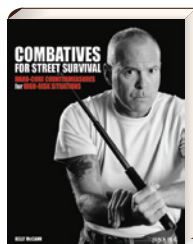
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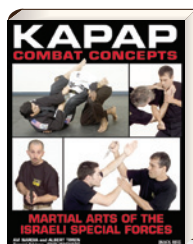
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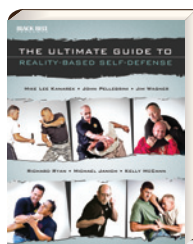
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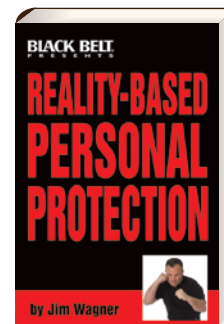
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