

# STEALTH

## **SPLAT's own Invisible Man uncloaks the secrets behind woods-ball's most powerful tactical technique.**

by Rob "Tyger" Rubin Photography by Michael Neveux

Playing the paintball field is as important as playing the game of paintball. When you're playing in the woods, you have a lot more space to work with than you do in an arena. Plus, you have a lot more stuff that you can use as both hard and soft cover. What this means is that woods paintball can be a game of stealth and patience. Keep in mind that the first paintball game ever played was won by a guy who didn't fire a shot. He used stealth, taking opportunities when they presented themselves.

If I just lost you, do a little research and read about it. It's probably on the Internet somewhere.

In the past we've covered camouflage and the basics on how to use it. What we're going to do now is basically "Ninja 201," or "how not to be seen while you're stealing someone's flag." I'll talk about scenario games, but these basic techniques work in walk-on games at your local woody fields against the weekend warriors. In fact, that's a good place to practice. The fields are smaller, and the price of failure isn't as bad. Translation: You only get shot by three to five people instead of 50 or more.

First let's cover gear. You don't need to buy

anything else than you probably have right now. Really, you don't. Part of the stealth mentality is traveling light. Don't carry anything more than you need, if you can help it. If you only need four pods, that's all you should carry. If your air tank only has enough for three pods, only carry three. I know, "Duh." But sometimes, people need to be whacked with the "common-sense clue-by-four."

You should carry a watch you don't mind trashing. You should also have knee and elbow pads, a pair of decent gloves, and sensible shoes. Beyond that, you can do all these stunts in your old BDUs. Actually, I have. And if a big fat guy can do all this stuff, you can, too.

Camouflage has been discussed a lot before, and I don't think I need to get into post-mortem equine sadism to make the point. But if you're serious about stealth, you'll have a bin full of camouflage. I know I do. I can pick out a specific color scheme to match what the woods looks like that particular weekend. How do I know? I cheat. I live near a forest preserve, and what it looks like is about 90 percent true to every field in the area. If you don't happen to live near any trees, just use common sense. The colder it is, the less green

Special Thanks to SC Village in Corona, CA for use of their great fields. [www.scvillage.com](http://www.scvillage.com)  
Special Thanks to Hollywood Sports in Bellflower, CA for use of their great fields. [www.hollywoodsports.com](http://www.hollywoodsports.com)

**The master of stealth needs only his skills to survive on the field, and a good leaf to wipe his ass with.**

you'll see. Or just wear BDUs and hope for the best.

Now the fun part: the techniques. You can literally practice these in your house, if you don't mind looking like a goob in the privacy of your own home. A lot of stealth should be done by feel. It's why I used to play in tabi boots, because I could literally feel all the terrain underfoot. But after the stitches, I had a change of heart. Not to mention footwear.

So you're in the woods, you want to get over "there," and you want to do so without the other team seeing you. Sounds great. But let's answer a few questions first. How much time do you have to do this? Walk-on games are 10-20 minutes tops, but scenario games are 24 hours. Do you have a mission you need to accomplish by a certain time? Stealth isn't fast, and you need to be decent at time management.

Next question. How much of a threat are you looking at? Is the other team looking right at you,



Investing in different types of camo will benefit you in the long run.

or are you far enough away from them that you can get away with some movement first? Do they know where you are, or do they know where you might be? Can you fool them into thinking you're somewhere else? And how many of "them" are out there? Five? 30? A few hundred? The answers to that should dictate what you do.

Third question: What does the field ahead of you look like? Open terrain? A trail to their flag station? Thick weeds that would break any lawnmower in half? This may dictate your style of movement, and your path to your destination. Which brings up another question. Where are you going, exactly? "Over there" is good, "Over to that tree to set up" is better.

What I'm getting at is, you don't want to just dive into a bush and hope for the best. Take a moment to think things through. Consider what's

in front of you, what's behind you, what you're in, and then go for it. Some field knowledge goes a long way here, and "local knowledge" of that one foxhole that you can't see until you fall into it can play into your plans.

Once you have your plan, then you want to move. The goal of stealthy movement is to move around without the other team seeing you. OK, "Duh" again. But think about this a moment. You don't want the other team to see you moving, so move when they can't see you. It's possible to walk out in the open unseen.

During one large game I hid with a teammate and watched the opposing team run past us both to get our main base. Once they all passed us, they never turned around. Why should they? They thought they had gotten everyone behind them. So we walked up the trail, in plain view, and surrendered 30 or so people between the two of us. Literally, they never saw us coming because we came up behind their backs. They never heard



Having a wide variety of camo colors and designs is advantage enough.

us because we didn't shoot them. We used a mandatory surrender rule to take them out. Sure, it's not the "Ninja Stalk" you may be expecting. But it worked. They never saw us and we crippled their attack before we got taken out.

Most of the time, you're not this lucky. You have to work at moving toward an opponent who knows you're coming or is waiting for you to come. So now you need to work on some stealth techniques. It's not impossible to crawl up on someone who's watching for you, but it's easier to do it when you can fool them.

Let's take a minute to talk about your opponents. For the most part, they're normal paintball players. Average skill, but they're suckers for a shootout. They're playing paintball, they want to shoot at someone. And once they're shooting at someone, they have the "gun



blinders" on. They're focused in front of them, and they're not going to lose concentration on that guy who's shooting at them. Plus, their gun makes a lot more noise than you think, especially when it's right next to their ear.

So when you're moving, you want to be aware of the other guy's actions. If he's shooting at someone else on your team, move. He's not looking at you! If you sprint to another bunker, he'll see you. But if you are subtle and quiet, you can possibly move at a distance without being seen.

So how do you move? It depends on how much time you have to do it. There are two basic techniques: a stalk and a crawl. If you need to move kinda fast, stalk. If you can take some time, crawl. Both work, and they work well, but it's up to you to apply them at the right times.

Let's hit the stalk first. Stalking techniques are good when you need to cover a lot of terrain quickly but quietly. You stay on both feet for a stalk, and you can always go to ground if you need to. The technique is really simple, but it can take years to refine. You can try this yourself on a

**Dense, thick brush and jungle terrain present unique opportunities for exotic stealth tactics, such as the use of Ghillie suits. For a real rush, don't wear any pants underneath.**

**Do your homework. If you're going to be playing on urban fields with buildings, pick your camo accordingly to maximize effectiveness.**

smooth surface like concrete, and you'll see what I mean. Then move to the rougher terrain.

We're going to make this interactive. I want you to put the magazine down a moment and walk from one side of the room to the other like normal. I'd ask you to read the article while you do it, but I know some people can't walk and chew gum at the same time, and someone would hurt themselves. When you walk, notice how your heels "scuff" on the floor or almost scuff when you swing your foot forward. Most of the time we don't notice this. In the woods, when you scuff your foot you kick up dirt at best and kick up debris at worst. It's noisy. It's got to go.

Still up? Good. We're going to practice stalking now. First I want to show you a simple move. You're going to stand a little sideways to where you want to go. You're going to pick your back foot straight up, then swing it in front of the front foot. Now you're going to raise that foot higher than normal, and come at the ground from a high angle. Instead of "scuffing" your step, you're going to put your foot down heel first, with all the weight still on the stationary foot.





## Walk - Correct

GENTLY place your heel down, and roll onto the outside of your foot to the front of your foot as your weight redistributes. You should now be 50/50 on each foot. An alternative way to do this is to place your toe down first and roll your weight backwards to your heel in the same way.

Congratulations. You've just performed the basic technique. Now repeat with the back foot. What you'll find yourself doing is "rolling" from foot to foot instead of stepping. Don't swing your leg out as you do this; try to keep your legs in a straight line. You're going to be pushing yourself forward with your back foot instead of your front

**If you have to choose between walking and running when trying to move stealthily, always walk, as it will draw much less attention and not catch the eyes of opponents surveying the land for targets.**

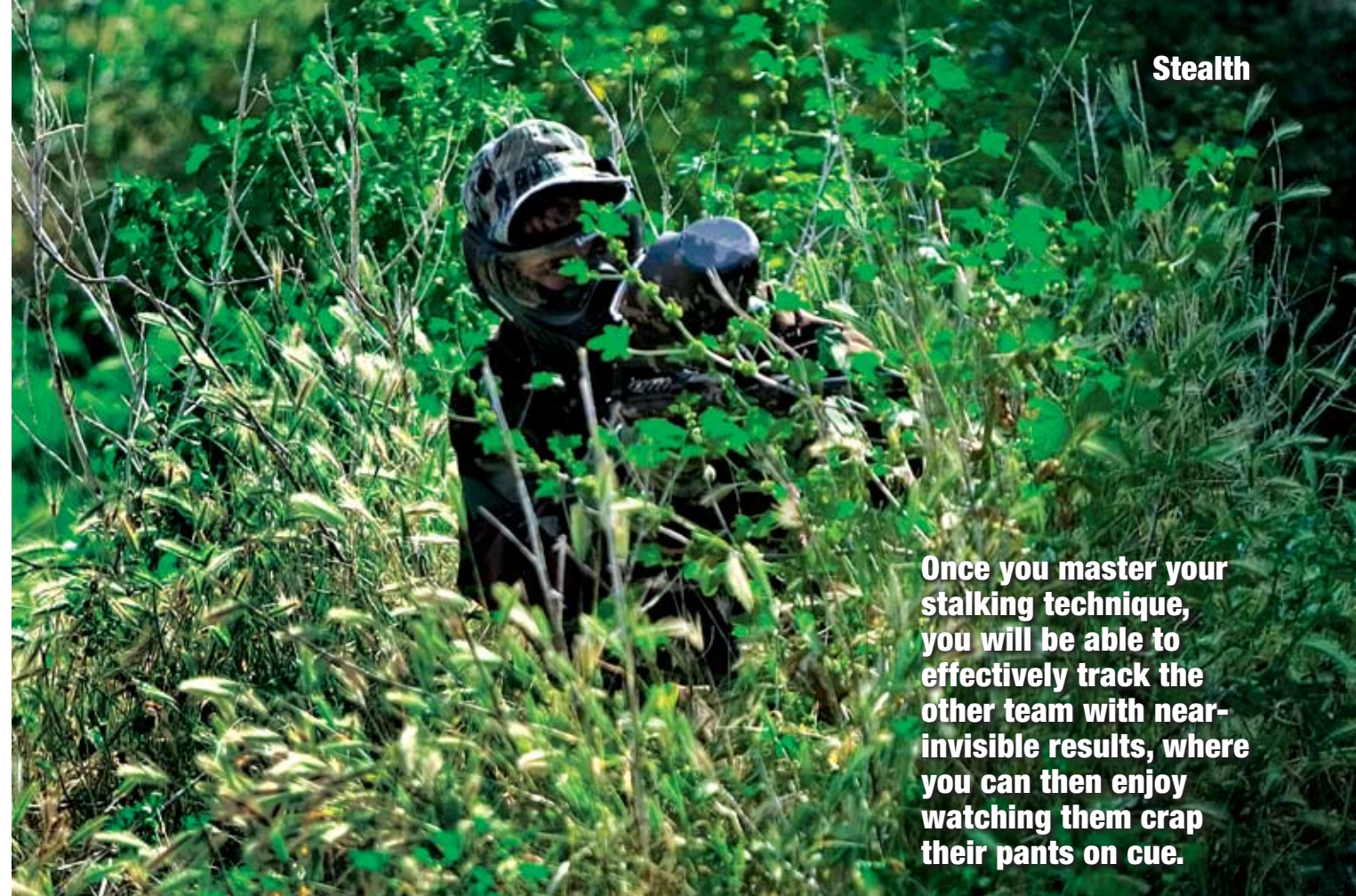
foot as your weight transfers from one to the other.

So why the silly walk? What you're doing is avoiding the scuff. Instead of dragging your foot along the forest floor, you're going to be placing your weight from the top down. This is quieter, you don't kick anything up, and if there's something like a twig under your foot you can move your foot before stepping down. You're not digging your foot into the ground as much as placing your foot gently on the dirt. It's not as fast, but it's a lot quieter.

You'll notice I didn't say anything about your arms. There's a reason. You're holding a paintgun in one hand, and odds are you're not interested in letting that go. Ideally, you want to be pointing the gun at whatever you're looking at. Realistically, you won't do that too often. But your dominant hand will be taken up with that weight. Your other hand should be free to place on trees or other objects to steady yourself. If you need to stop for some reason, it's handy to have the point of contact with something that's grounded and won't shift.



## Run - Incorrect



**Once you master your stalking technique, you will be able to effectively track the other team with near-invisible results, where you can then enjoy watching them crap their pants on cue.**

The other stealth technique is the crawl. Unlike a speedball snake crawl, you're dealing with uneven terrain. You may have to deal with rocks, tree roots, or other nasty things down there. This is where the knee and elbow pads come in handy. And, once again, you still have that paintgun in your hand. So any crawling you're going to do can not have the use of that one hand fully.

I try to use one of two techniques. The first one is a "Three Point Crawl," and it's what you'd

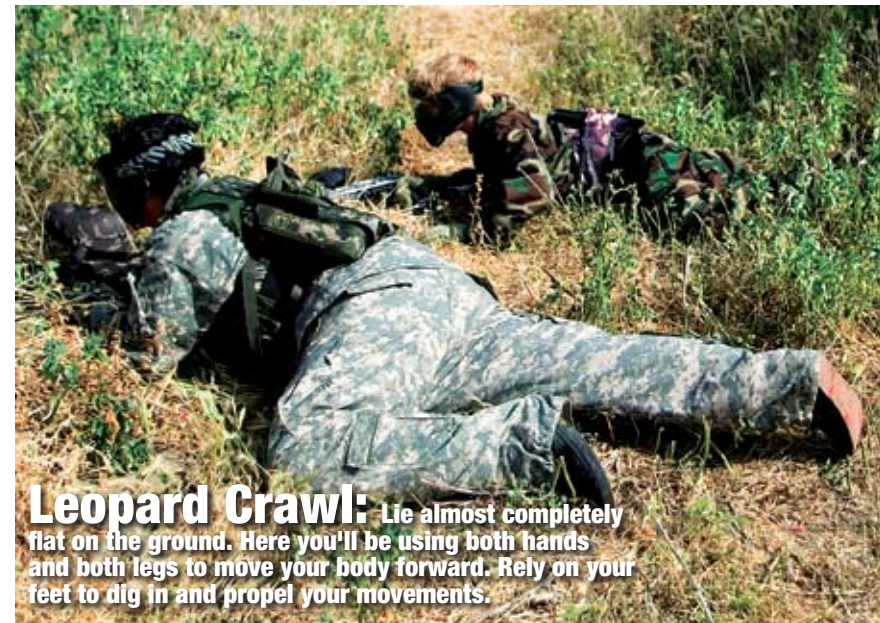
assume it was. Both knees on the ground and one hand on the ground. The other has the paintgun in it, you see. And you have to crawl

as fast as your body can take you. This is more of a speed crawl, and you can cover a lot of ground doing this.

The disadvantage is that it has a higher profile, and you could get shot in the backside when you're doing it. But if the cover is good, or you need to move fast, this is the way to do it.

On a safety note, try not to

crawl on an open palm if you can help it. Putting all your weight onto your open palm could blow your wrist out. It's not common, but why take



**Leopard Crawl:** Lie almost completely flat on the ground. Here you'll be using both hands and both legs to move your body forward. Rely on your feet to dig in and propel your movements.



**3-Point Crawl:** Place both knees and your free hand (the one not holding your marker) on the ground. This will allow you to speed crawl along more terrain. Just be wary of how high your body position is so as not to make you too much of a target.

the risk? I try to close my fist, and crawl using my knuckles instead of an open palm.

The other technique is a "Leopard Crawl." In this one you are almost flat to the ground. Points of contact are knees to feet, elbows to hands. You actually use your gun arm in this crawl as well, but not your hand. You get most of your power from your feet, digging in your feet then pushing off the ground to move forward. You're not using your arms for a lot of power, but you'll be keeping your belly off the ground with them. Don't drag your body; you're lifting and pushing yourself forward.

Downsides? It sucks your energy. It's not easy to do, and it burns energy quickly. Plus, you move a lot more slowly doing this move. What I end up doing is crawling 10 or 20 feet, taking a rest to get my bearings, then starting again. But it's about as flat to the ground as you can get while remaining three-dimensional.

Any way you crawl, you want to keep your paintgun in mind. Keep the barrel out of the dirt. Your equipment will thank you for that. If you want

to get flatter, rotate your wrist a bit so the gun lays flat on the ground and doesn't expose your hopper as much. If you can, keep the gun level to the ground as you crawl, so if you get surprised you can return fire and not just hit the ground.

One other thing about movement in general. If you see bad guys, stop moving. Seriously. They may not see you even if you're in what feels like the open if you're not moving. We're drawn to motion and colors, and if something looks like the background and isn't moving weird, our brains just don't register it. And besides, it's a Murphy's Law. Don't look important. They may be low on paint.

I also want to talk about the terrain you're moving in. Keep in mind that noise is your main enemy. Camouflage will generally work for you, but if you're breaking twigs the whole time you're moving, you're defeating the purpose. What you're moving on will more often than not be the thing that makes more noise than you do.

Packed dirt is the best terrain. It's like cement

## Stealth



**It might seem far-fetched; but remaining motionless while quite literally out in the open can provide just enough concealment while you plan your next move.**

in that it doesn't make a lot of noise when you walk on it. Very rarely you'll find short forest grass too, and that's incredible stuff. More often than not, however, dirt and grass are covered with a layer of dead leaves. Dead leaves rustle a lot when you move them. This is why your walking technique has your feet coming straight down, as it minimizes the noise your footfall makes.

The worst stuff to move in is gravel. It crunches the entire time you're moving. Rocks and pebbles are close behind that. Mud isn't the greatest either, as it makes a sucking sound when you lift your foot out of it. Standing water, however, isn't so bad if you move through it slowly. Dealing with the mosquitoes, however, is another story.

Most of playing the stealth game is knowing what to do and when to do it. That's your part. Every situation is unique and different, and it will call for a different way to do things. I can't teach you to improvise; I can only teach you the skills to improvise with. And like any other skill or technique in the game, it only gets better with practice. You might look like a goob stalking around your house, but when you hit the field they'll never see you coming. ✨

# 68 CALIBER

**NO DROP TEST NEEDED**

**OUR NEWS BREAKS ALL THE TIME**

**Product Reviews, Business News, Event Coverage. All Paintball, All The Time.**

**Official Home Of:**

**E-Money Action Sports Show**

**FB Radio Show**

**WWW.68CALIBER.COM**

**To Submit News and Press Releases  
or to obtain advertising rates,  
Email Dale@68caliber.com**