My first knife on the Wicked Edge

Posted by mark76 - 20 Jan 2012 17:18

Yesterday my Wicked Edge arrived. First impressions. The package was much smaller than I thought it would be. Unboxing: tightly packaged in hard plastic, high-tech looking, bright colors. It made my girlfriend think of Apple. “Made in China” on the box. Probably just to annoy Americans. It made me laugh out loud, since I (from Europe) know that “made in the USA” is important for many American knife nuts. I just care for quality.

I had already bought a separate base, a wooden cutting board. The instructions, which I had got by email, said 1-1/4” thick. My base was exactly 1” thick, so I thought I’d be all right. Wrong. 1-1/4” means one and a quarter inch, not one to one and a quarter inch. Which I found out when the screws for securing the WEPS stuck out too far. So I went to the store and bought a heavy and almost two inch thick butcher’s block. (This one: www.ikea.com/nl/nl/catalog/products/40082918/). This fit the screws nicely after I drilled the holes and countersinked them on the bottom of the base.

Today I sharpened my first knife on the WEPS, a cheap kitchen knife. I had sharpened it just before Christmas on my Sharpmaker at 20 degrees. Since then it had been used quite a lot and just for fun I filed it before sharpening. I wanted to reprofile the blade at 18 degrees.I inserted the knife in the WEPS vise, tightened the screws (not too much). slid the 100 grit diamond stones on the rods and started sharpening.

At first I had to get used to the system and limited the movements to up-and-down and circles. I couldn’t see myself doing the Clay-motion. I was quite clumsy and my left hand was even a lot clumsier than my right hand. But hey, that was the reason I never got on with wetstones and got the Wicked Edge.

I had been reading posts on this forum already and knew I had to keep going until a burr formed. That took a while. I felt the edge, did the trick with a cotton ball (drag it up the opposite edge; if a burr has formed, it snags on the edge), but even after 15 minutes on one side: no burr. Luckily I was prepared and I had gotten a jeweller’s loupe, which also appears in one of Clay’s videos. It magnifies 20 times and I could see that I had almost reached the edge. Just not quite yet. After 20 minutes a burr appeared! The cotton ball trick worked quite well, I couldn’t feel the burr with my fingers yet. (Unfortunately the trick works less well at higher grids.)

I did the other side of the knife on 100 grit as well, until I thought a burr appeared on the first side. Then on to the 200 grit stones. I took me a while, though not nearly as long as with the 100 grit stones, and after 10 minutes burrs started appearing. The knife undeniable felt a bit sharper already, although the bevel was quite scratched after the 200 grit stones.

I slid on the 400 grit stones and went on with sharpening. The sound was a lot better (less scratching) than of the 200 grit stones. My initial clumsiness wore off a little bit and I got more comfortable with the stones. I then found out the knife had gotten loose in the vise and I turned the screws a bit tighter. The knifewas quite long and I had to support the somewhat flexible tip with my hand in order to sharpen it. Only then I thought of the knife brace, which is part of the WE system and is intended for exactly this purpose... Unfortunately I had clamped in my knife the wrong way around for using this knife brace.

Then the 600 stones. During sharpening I found out the thumb screws of the sliding rods had loosened, so I tightened them really well. And finally I had my knife sharpened to what should be a factory edge.

Was it? Well, hardly. The knife did cut paper, but only barely. It was half-tearing. I wondered what I had done wrong when I remembered the pencil trick. I marked the entire edge of the blade with a pencil and inserted the knife in the vise again. (This time to correct way around, so I could use the knife brace.)

Back to the 100 grit stones again. It was immediately clear from the pencil markings that on the left side I had not reached the edge yet. So I started working on it again. (Which made me think how long it would take to reprofile S30V rather than this el cheapo steal. Maybe I will get an 80 grit stone sometime.) After some time I had removed all of the pencil ink and went on with the 200 grit stones, then 400 and then 600. In between I had to tighten the vise screws a bit tighter a few times, since the knife had the tendency to remove itself from the brace.

Paper cutting again. Already improved a lot, but still not up to the level of some of my pocket knives. The cuts were still somewhat ragged. And the edges still looked scratched, although not as bad as after the 200 grit stones.

Luckily I had also gotten the 800/1000 grit stones. First 800. What a sound! So smooth... Then the 1000 grit stones. Weird. A scratchy sound. I felt the stones and the 1000 grit stones felt a lot rougher than the 800 grit ones. Would somebody accidentally have switched them? I sharpened using both stones, and although the 1000 grit stone felt rougher, it did appear to leave a smoother edge. Most of the scratches on the bevel were now gone.

So on to the 1200/1600 ceramic stones. The difference with the diamond stones was clear: the ceramic ones are lighter and remove less material. Nevertheless they worked quite well and it didn’t take me ages to get a nicely polished edge without scratches. Even when I looked at the bevels through the loupe, I could hardly see any irregularities.

Mirror edge? Not quite. Stropping would probably have gotten me that, but I feel I need a bit more experience on the WE before I am going to use those easy-to-cut leathers.

Paper cutting again. This time the knife cut the paper without any problems or ragged cuts. I still think my Spyderco Paramilitary 2 or my Sebenza cut paper better, but they are made of S30V, not el cheapo stuff. And their bevels look better: absolute mirrors that have the same width over the entire length of the blade. The bevels on my kitchen knife are much wider towards the tip. I have read about that on this forum and I'll try to find the "sweet spot" of the knife I'll sharpen next. And I'll probably do some maths to understand how it works…

I'm really happy with my Wicked Edge! It performs as I hoped it would. And I'm glad I didn't try to sharpen my Sebenza as the first knife

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Re: My first knife on the Wicked Edge

Posted by JamesBell - 15 Dec 2012 23:09

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I agree with you - full progression is quite time consuming.

As for touch up, mine varies, if it is a kitchen knife I look at the remaining edge and take my best guess what grit to start at, knowing I am not after a razor edge, just a good edge. If it is like my EDC which is a small Sebenza 21 I never let it get that dull, most of the time starting with 1200 / 1600. Ceramic 5K / 10K Choseras then strop it out.

Do want to Thank You for sharing your 8 month observations. You brought out some good points !

James

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