

The attack that bruised a PC's ego

I grimaced as the freezing wind formed a vice-like grip around my head and salt water filled my eyes. I was taking part in a training exercise with Essex Police as part of a new television series for Five. I was the 'man overboard', so the marine unit had dispatched two high-speed RIBs (rigid inflatable boats) to rescue me.

The exercise was conducted quickly; in those conditions a casualty loses consciousness in minutes. I've always respected the police, but have felt a certain detachment from them. The only way to understand the job was to spend four months immersed in it.

By **Natalie Pinkham**

It was thrilling, and it opened my eyes to the realities of the job. Time and again, I saw the potential dangers facing officers.

In one exercise I was asked to protect myself, with a baton, from an assailant played by an officer in a protective suit. I hit the one spot with a gap in the padding. It was only later, off camera, that I saw two bruises on his leg, revealing the damage a baton can do. In another scenario I was a car thief who had stolen a Lamborghini.

They caught me easily. I was more successful with the police's house-raiding equipment – hand-held battering rams. Although heavy, when swung properly, they can hit a door with the force of 400st.

People can take stupid risks when committing – or about to commit – crimes. But the police raise their level of response to just above and beyond each threat. To prove their point, I was told to charge, with a baseball bat, at three riot police. I swung the bat aggressively. The team intercepted and contained me. Every time I struggled, they exerted just a little more pressure.

Most of the time the station was

filled with the kind of banter you'd expect from a team of active young officers. But the mood was sombre one morning. There had been a fatality near the station involving a 13-year-old boy.

One minute officers are involved in a testosterone-fuelled arrest of armed robbers, the next they are telling strangers the news no parent should have to hear. Since filming the series my attitude to the police has changed. Now I can truly relate to them and their work.

Police Interceptors: Special Edition continues on Friday on Five at 8pm.



ON DUTY: Five's Natalie Pinkham