**TRANSCRIBER NAME: Brad Alexander**

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**Participant #: 263**

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Interviewer (Code in Blue): Dixon

Participant (Code in black):

**Interview Guide**

**When did you start BUD/S? Is this your first class or were you rolled?**

I checked into the command June 28th. I started BO in August with 339. So I’ve been with this class the entire time. I have not been rolled. Yeah we started August… early August I don’t know the date.

**Wow, okay. So I am going to ask you some background questions because they are trying to find out what makes people stay through here**

Yeah

**So what about your siblings? How many siblings do you have? What’s the birth order?**

I have a little brother, I am the youngest.. I mean he’s the youngest, I am the oldest. There’s one sibling. Uhm, we’re not pretty similar. He swims at Georgia Tech and he’s a computer science major.

**Okay, and were your parents married, divorced, or separated?**

My parents were married until the 8th grade then they got divorced.

**And what life changing events happened in your life prior to BUD/S? Whatever you determine are life changing events?**

I mean I just think I had… I don’t think there was one life changing event like… I just went to school and uhh at school I was walking off there were guys uhh I went to Virginia Tech there was a strong Army base there and they were like not an actual base but there is a strong Army program there. So they just had like a lot of mentors that kind of like helped me prepare for this.

**So, are you ROTC or…?**

Yeah I was ROTC, it was more just like a group of friends and we would train together. And uhh, like were like still really close today and some are here in this pipeline and uhm similar pipelines in the Army. I wouldn’t say that was a life changing event but that definitely impacted who I was

**And how did that experience help you with what you’re going through here?**

I mean A, when you’re just looking at BUD/S you’re not just like hey I wanna make it through BUD/S it's like hey let's go to BUD/S and crush it and it was never a question like am I going to quit. It was like how well you can do on an evolution ya know like people come in with the mindset I don’t need to quit and I think the mindset I learned there is we were always trying to beat each other and compete. So like I just looked at the rest of my class with competition and its like hey I am going to try to beat you guys. Never once was like I don’t want to do this. Ya know to an extent when you’re like hey hit the surf like that sucks but you’re never like oh I am going to quit. It is now a competition, like this surf hit is now a competition, this dive is now a competition, this shooting range is now a competition. That helped me because I have always been a very competitive person so I was just like trying to win and beat everyone else.

**And do you think your personality helped with your progression through BUD/S and win you said you were very competitive?**

I think so, uhm, uhh… I am not really sure. I mean yeah I guess.

**Now describe your background that led to you wanting to be a SEAL? Do you have any family or friends in the military? Or was it your ROTC experience?**

Uhm, definitely, so my cousin went to the Naval Academy, he’s a pilot in the Marine Corps, he’s a test pilot. So I kinda wanted a career in the military and he’s a pilot uhm, so I thought I wanted to be a pilot and then I remember reading about this and to me the coolest thing about the Teams is the individual is very important but its the team that matters most, ya know. It doesn’t matter how uhh… amazing an individual is like they will not accomplish the mission by themselves like the only way its possible if you sacrifice everything for the team and the team can accomplish the mission. To me, that’s what drew me, like it doesn’t matter how good you are theres always someone better than you. To me that’s where I wanted to be, like just always… You’re never the smartest guy in the room in any subject and that’s what drew me here uhh… And I also think like special operations, I went the officer route, so I think applying special operations to the battlefield is awesome you know it’s just like very creative and thinking outside the box, its like you know superior numbers are gonna when the battle and thats just not true at all there is just so many factors that come into play and I think on the officer side thats just really cool and like yeah we don’t get too shoot as much and were not snipers or breachers, its a whole different MOS and thinking about that and reading about it and like different problem sets you know like commanders and senior enlisted solve and created vietnam and WW2 with the OSS and now yeah pre and post 9/11 thats kind of the career path I wanted to be apart of.

**Okay, so you graduated ROTC from Virginia Tech?**

Mhm

**Tell me a little bit about your childhood, how were you disciplined, did your parents spank you, did they give you timeouts, with hold toys, what was the norm?**

Uhm… my mom used to make me run hills when I was bad and beat our butts I guess. Uhm… it was more like, man its been a while, uhh.. I think I got timeouts but like I was a very avid reader so I don’t remember that working. They were like go to your room and I was like okay whatever ya know so I was like okay uhh… I got in school I would get in trouble. In middle school I was in trouble a lot. Not for like, I’d just talk out of terms and whatever uhh… I definitely think in like middle school I had like problems with authority I guess but then in high school I was like really squared away and like I kinda found this. I swam at a very competitive level too so when like that ramped up I really didn’t have like discipline or behavioral issues cause like your swimming like two times a day, we were doing 12 practices a week you know that was my life, uhm.

**Did you move around a lot in your childhood years?**

Uhm… no, I grew up in North Carolina. So my dad worked, he was in the military but he was like gone during the week, it was pretty much just like my mom for the most part raising us. Uhm.. he just like traveled a lot for his job he was like home on the weekends. He was gone Monday through Thursday just about every week from like 5th grade, like till, he still does that.

**Did you swim at Virginia Tech?**

Mhm

**And what have you done in the last few years of your like prior to BUD/S, did you come straight from ROTC into BUD/S?**

Mhm, yeah. So I think what helped to was like so I grew up white water kayaking and rock climbing a lot. And uh… I can white water paddle at a very high, pretty high level, uhm, and I think that had a huge impact on my success here cause like growing up you understand like, it humbles you a lot. To me it’s like you have to stay composed you have to calm cause like the river will kill you. So I think growing up and also like rock climbing and being like understanding that you can’t make mistakes or if you do you’re gonna make them early on and not when it matters, I think that had a, I think the combination of swimming, rock climbing, and white water kayaking made me very comfortable in the water you know, and especially when like pool comp came around it’s just like what happens when you paddle, you get thrown under until the river lets go of you, uhm.

**Would you consider yourself impulsive? Like do you have any tattoos or anything?**

I have a tattoo. Uhm, at the time in college I thought it was cool but I will probably get rid of it down the road. Uhm, but I wouldn’t say I am impulsive… I think I think through decisions and if I make an impulsive decision, I understand like, you know alright if that was a mistake I will eat it and learn from it.

**What do you think was the hardest part about BUD/S? Think through your hardest day and what got you through that?**

So I had like two, in my head, really hard days. The first one was in second phase, I failed an O-course and I have never, that’s the only event in BUD/S that I failed and uhm I was like a top runner in the O-course, so that was like very humbling, I went from like the second faster guy in the class and all of a sudden like randomly failing an O-course. Uhm and that was just like humbling, I was like holy shit like obviously I don’t fail O-courses but it just doesn’t matter BUD/S doesn’t care, it just like humbles you no matter what you know it will keep your ego in check you never know like around the corner you just like, keeping that in check. You know the other and next I worked on it and got faster on the O-course. Every single time I went to run it, it went from like a calm evolution where I was like oh I am just chilling this morning to like alright it’s game time you know so uhm that was a hard day and then probably my other hardest day was on the island when uhm… I pride myself in like planning ahead uhh I think that’s one of my strengths and being able to think things through and think a couple steps ahead to like see mistakes that i could make personally and also that our class can make just to keep things rolling smoothly. I also pride myself on doing everything I can to prepare for an evolution that will make me successful you know, basically combatting the known knows that I know could go wrong. When were doing a demolition exercise and I totally jacked it up uhm… like did the tape job wrong and it wasn’t a very good tape job like it was poor attention to detail their which I pride myself on, I didn’t have enough tape with me so I was trying to fix the tape job with the tap I had uhm because of that I guess I got flustered and made a couple more mistakes setting it up and uhm and that was hard because all it took was me paying more attention in the end brief and I was worried about something else like I was worried about my collateral instead of focusing on the evolution. So again you know it kind of re-humbled me uh… that definitely like… that sucked uh… but other than that idk like

**But what practices did you like did you have a mental or spiritual practice did you use to help push through when you had those unexpected things to happen, like what made you so you didn’t panic when you didn’t have enough tape or whatever?**

Like in the grand scheme of things it’s like… so when I went through I was just like blank that sucks I guess I was just like I gotta fix this you know, I don’t have like an emotional reaction. I don’t ever like as much as my close friends like I don’t think I have a low emotional intelligence but it’s just like okay fix the problem, you know getting amped up and worked up about it, at the end of the day I could have an emotional breakdown and 30 seconds later once I come down from that I am still stuck with the same decision so you might as well just ignore that and fix the problem and move onto the next problem set. So I am very good at staying calm uhm… and like I can keep myself in check while like you know, I am pretty good at keeping my emotions in check.

**Okay, so when you had a difficult decision that you had to make either for yourself or for the team that you were going through, what went through your mind and was there any one decision that you really struggled with?**

So I don’t… In my peer evals that I got back I can make really hard decisions I am not trying to like I mean my names not on this so I’m not trying to like I mean it doesn’t matter, I can make hard decisions and it's just like what’s best for the team and I pride myself in like it's ingrained into me as an officer you have to like make hard decisions that's what you get paid to do so like I never had a dilemma making a hard decision so I was like here's a decision now what's the best outcome for the team, going back to what I said earlier the individual, yeah they matter but like not really. If this decision is going to hurt like three dudes which usually a hard decision does like sorry guys you know like and honestly those three guys at BUD/S and this isn’t in terms of leadership, it's usually for guys who messed up like if they forgot gear oh you know I don’t want to have to run back up to the range to go get it and maybe it’s like maybe we can get it later and use a truck and it’s like no dude go run up there you know, if I have to go with you, fine let’s go get it so like the whole class doesn’t get in trouble.

**If you had to boil down your success at BUD/S, you are one of the few people who didn’t get rolled or dropped or anything, what was the one thing that made you successful do you think?**

On paper I am not someone who sticks out but that's something to me that fires me up and it's just like not in a bad way, I would love nothing more than to beat someone who on paper looks like a stud and has been handheld their entire life you know someone who went to the ivy league or the naval academy, you know someone who their entire life has been told how great they are. It's like alright let's go into a dark place and get wet and sandy for a week and let's see if you can make hard decisions not for yourself. I think what it boils down to is will power and like I think the biggest thing is like one of my mentors like he kind of does the same thing for the Army. He used to be the CO at Army’s special forces selection and now he does PhD work for the Army on like, he did a study on what is resiliency and how do you make that in special operations soldiers We would have conversations about this and to me I remember when I was applying to me the guys I train to with are like he was leading the conversation cause he knew where my head was at and I was like yeah man I don’t want to let the guys down you wanna perform and he was like exactly and that’s what we find, hopefully you make it, and this was like three years go, and guys that have done well in this community they are more worried about letting their teammates down and the team down over their own personal comfort and personal success and I think that something that drives me the most 100 percent was like especially when our hell week was secured with such little guys and like yeah our class is bigger now, you don’t want to leave those guys you know. Pre hellweek it was like a lot of competition and like I just wanna win and like before I came here we was like every evolution when your at BUD/S that will power that you have, if you don’t have that will power to win at BUD/S how are you gonna have the will power to win in the battlefield. He was like I promise you no matter how tired you are at BUD/S it will be a joke compared to fighting like on the battlefield. And to me every time I got tired underneath a boat or underneath a log I just thought of like about one day I will be leading in combat and its like I need to push myself as hard as I can so when we win may everyone come home.

**So did you notice anything about the people who quit or had left?**

They just like were not aggressive to be honest they just like weren’t aggressive and they just had this helpless attitude. Besides I don’t really feel bad for the guys that quit, they honestly needed to go there was like two officers who made like impulsive decisions they were top physical performers and I think it was hard for them because I think that the instructor got in their head and was like hey you guys are failing your boat crew and your boat crew is failing because of you which wasn’t true it’s just like they made an impulsive decision, at the end of the day its just like I go back to making the hard call cause okay if theyre making an impulsive call and that instructor can get in their head then like do they not have the resiliency to be here, I am just an O-1 so I don’t get paid to make those calls, but obviously the pipeline works and I guess there like alright then theyre not supposed to be here. I can still be their friends but you want the best guys next to you.

**So how would you say this has changed you as a person? Anything?**

Uhm yeah definitely like slowed down more uhm… not make anything on impulse, slow down, take a breather and look at all my options. Very attentive to detail uhm know when it’s time to go and bring the heat but its controlled aggression you’re not just ever like outta control, I think the way they like explained to us, its like 80 percent you know, you;re moving fast and moving aggressively but in no way are you outta control. So I think that's what I have also learned is like out on the island, is that when you got a team uhm the most important thing is to stay positive no matter what you know its like that something I regretted I wasn’t always like a positive guy but I think from a leadership standpoint you have to use positive reinforcement because everyone here is so self critical of themselves so like whatever I say to a guy I know its not going to make him feel worse than what he is feeling inside because like I do the same thing, uhm… the second thing that I learned, like the biggest take away uhm… I don’t know I think thats it.