**TRANSCRIBER NAME: Isaac Bengel**

**Date: 8/12/20**

**Participant #: 359**

**Length of the Interview: 18:19**

Interviewer (Code in Blue):

Participant (Code in black):

So, uh.

Yes, it's OK to record me. I'm participant number 359

359, OK. Trying to figure out the best way, to set this up.

Yeah, no worries.

Sorry, I'm on East Coast time and like, what time is it? hahaha.

Yeah.

It's not 10 o'clock haha.

Hahaha yeah.

Awful enough haha. So easy questions to start with. When did you start um BUDS? Where you with three three nine?

I was with 337 so.

Ok.

So it was uh May of last year.

Ok, so May of 2019?

Yes.

And had you ever tried to do BUDS prior to that?

Nope.

This is your first.

First time.

First time. OK. And then where are you kind of coming from?

Um from Boston.

Ok.

Uhh and I went to Tufts University.

Ok.

I played college sports there.

Ok.

Uh is that what you mean by that?

Yeah. Yeah. So. So were you. Did you do OCS?

Yes, I'm an officer.

OK.

I went to OCS

OK, and is this kind of your your first things you did OCS then you came straight To BUDS.

Yes.

Ok, so easy questions to start with. How many siblings do you have?

A younger sister.

A younger sister, Ok. how much younger?

Um she is two and a half years older.

OK. And then what was your kind of parents parental situation growing up? Two parent households.

Two parent household.

During the whole time growing up.

Yep.

And your first...see you answered my question and got me even asking.

There ya go, that's good

Um and how's your relationship with your parents?

Good, really good.

And has it always been that way.

Yes. Very much so um growing up we were in Massachussetts.

Ok.

There were times where my parents were like just focus on (intelligible)?

Yeah. OK.

That was for a couple years.

Yeah.

I had a great relationship with my parents. I consider my upbringing normal but I think but I think to most people it's not normal.

Yeah. Yeah. Do you think what kind of years of your childhood was she sick.

Um she was basically sick until my 13th birthday.

OK.

The first 13 years of my life.

Yeah.

That was a lot for her.

Yeah.

Going through that but yeah, also like it changed the dynamic going through that.

Yeah absolutely it changes the dynamic.

Absolutely.

At home and everything.

Absolutely.

Do you think that kind of situation shaped kind of your viewpoint on life? When you are.

Honestly probably but it's hard to say because I I thought it was normal.

Yeah.

I thought it was like everyone's life but it wasn't so yes, yes ma'am but I don't know.

Yeah. No. Makes sense. That's a good answer. What kind of life changing experiences or events happened your life prior to coming to BUDS.

Um nothing crazy.

Yeah.

I had a very normal upbringing in life but I mean life changing could be considered college I went to private high school.

Yeah.

I was considered successful. I won national championships and state championships I think that to me was life changing and I was on some great teams as well.

Yeah.

I consider to be life changing as well.

What sport was that again?

I played football and lacrosse in college.

Ok.

And growing up.

Ok, so and so you played them both in college.

Yes.

That's great. That's not that common right?

No.

Hahaha That's kind of intense.

Yeah it was fun though.

Now, tell me a little bit about kind of your experience being on sports. Like what what what's great about it? What wasn't great about it?

Uh I love the team team aspects I love winning. I like the competitiveness and the common goals everyone on that team is working together for a common goal.

Yeah.

Things you don't like about it? Um I think it's like anything like if you have uh (intelligible), you learn a lot.

Yeah.

You have bad people on the team you need to get rid of them and you have to figure out how to get that team to be successful without being distracted.

Yeah.

I feel like all of it is positive if I'm being honest, I don't find many negatives.

How did kind of your experiences, whether in sports or whether they were just growing up, contributed to your experience here at BUDS?

Um, I think I was able to draw a lot from a lot of drills from lacross in college and in football in college.

Yeah.

(intelligible) To BUDS. And nothing seemed to me like , Ok I always have something to fall back on.

Yeah.

And uh, previous experience or draw from like if I made some mistakes, I could just think back to lacrosse ok this is what we did in this situation. This is how it should be. I think it could be very helpful.

Yeah. Do you have a specific example for all that?

Sure. Like something that we used to say in lacrosse was like one more. So that can stem from anything from being one more rep in the weight to one more rep in practice to just focus on the next game and I used that in Hell Week all the time to be like hey I'm just going to do one more push up or.

Yeah.

Or one more bed check and it was something I didn't need to do it, but it was just like wanting to remind myself.

Yeah.

Remind me of my buddies back home and it just made things not be as bad.

Makes sense, what about your personality? How do you think it contributes to progression for BUDS.

Yeah. I think uh I can take a lot.

Yeah.

And uh adapt and will to change and my ego is not too big going to get in the way of anyone. I think that was really helpful. And I think ultimately I got to be able to laugh in the face of adversity or pain and just use humor all the time.

How would you describe your personality in general?

I'm an outgoing, caring person. And a leader

So what in your background led you to want to pursue SEALs?

Um honestly I just knew I wanted to do it. I wanted to be a firefighter in the community until I was like five and this was pre 9/11. I was like yeah this is what I want to do.

Any like family members, military, anything like.

My dad was a helicopter pilot.

Ok. Was he active duty growing up?

Yes, yes. Or no, sorry he was active duty before.

Before?

Yeah.

OK. Did you move around a lot when you were younger?

No, I was always in Boston.

Ok, What about, I know this kind of seems strange, but they build into all of this how about as a child? How are you disciplined? What was discipline like?

I parents were really strict, they ran a tight household. Not as bad as helicopter, but they were just around me.

Yeah.

Depending on what you did, you'd have to like write an apology or do pushups or something that.

So in general, with, like, discipline, was there a spanking or was it more like, OK, push ups or timeout or.

Um, more like timeout or take something away?

Ok.

Restriction.

We asked about it and moved around a lot as a child. So did you always live in Boston? Never kind of.

Yeah I was in the Boston area.

Now but you did say you spent some time with your cousins growing up when your sister was sick. Was that the same area?

Yeah. So we lived in different towns at the time but because I'd go over there so much more we ultimately moved to their town.

OK.

So it became like an even shorter commute.

Yeah. And then how was that living? Like, how long did you live with them or was it just short burst of time?

Um, it varied like sometimes I wake up in my house and then I'd wake up in their.

Yeah.

Or I'd start to go to bed in my house then go to their house but sometimes it would be like a week or more.

Yeah.

But to me it was a normal.

Yeah.

I just thought it was what people did.

Hahaha just part of life. It's amazing what child is like. Oh like how you know you don't really realize those things.

No, you don't, it seems normal.

But it is, um. What about teenage years? So you talk about you participated in sports. Um anything else that you did besides sports?

Um I was. I was always a part of student council.

OK.

Or like anything with leadership rolls.

And um so with sports, I mean how you talked again a little bit about how you think it played in to being here. But um, anything else that kind of you see a link between the sports that you played being here like any other contributors.

Um I think education levels.

Yeah.

I think that the majority of the dudes here have a college degree. I mean obviously have like four or five, 18 to 20 year olds.

Yeah.

] And one of them his dad is a SEAL also, I think just by virtue of want to read his chances of being successful in htis program are a lot higher.

Yeah.

And the other three or four dudes are just really tough.

Yeah.

So I think education, if you want successful you need to be educated.

What do you think it is about education that lets you to be successful?

That's a good question. I think it's more like perspective on what you're doing.

Yeah.

And you can kind of you don't think about selfishly about yourself but you can also think of others. And I think you can just take a little bit more

So what did you do in the last five years to kind of prior to becoming coming to BUDS.

Um once I graduated from college, I took a little time off and I worked.

Ok. What? What did you work?

I worked for the Kraft Group. I was doing data analytics.

OK. Interesting.

Yeah. Very normal, I, I uh, very hard for me. It wasn't my first choice.

Is that like a desk job? Right.

Desk job.

OK. Interesting.

It's the New England Patriots, essentially.

Ok and so was that kind of like your plan or were you always thinking SEALs?

No, I knew I wanted to do this. I took that job and I talked to the CO, and said hey, look, I'm going to come to BUDS.

Yeah.

It's more of a matter of time. I'd really like to work and get some experience just doing something else in the meantime.

Yeah.

He was like sure, come on board. He like put me in this role. He's like I know you don't have any experience doing this more challenging for you, but like I figure it out you'll be fine.

Yeah. How long do you do that?

I think it was like 10 months.

Ok.

It was a little bit of time

Ok, and then training wise, I mean, were you physically training what types of training were you doing outside?

I was working out like three times a day I work. I'd workout at lunch. And then I would go in the afternoons and work out again.

Mkk.

With my friends for like three, four hours. But in the mornings, my commute was like an hour and a half each way.

Ok.

It was really bad. So in the morninng I couldn't really do much

I got I got that commute right now.

Yeah seriously.

Haha. So would you consider yourself impulsive at all?

No. I mean, I'm definitely like I get excited when I make decisions.

Yeah.

I say like let's go. Maybe I don't formulate a plan all the time, like beforehand. Like a comprehensive plan.

Yeah.

And maybe I like to figure things out on the fly sometimes, but other than that I think big decsions through a good amount.

Ok. What about do you have any tattoos or anything like speed, lots of speeding tickets. Anything that would indicate. I know we have these strange questions thrown in there.

I figured that question was coming.

How does that fit? Hahaha. What about what do you think the most challenging component of BUDS was?

Um personally or what do I think in general.

Personally.

I failed pool comp my first time.

Ok.

And it was challenging because I thought I was comfortable in the water.

Yeah.

But I had to get into like another level of comfortability and for me that was just relaxing. I feel like in this program you're taught to really very upright, very hard, but and that instances like hey you just need to relax, like hey you're completely fine just calm down and that's hard for me to like just chill out.

So was there anything you did specifically to kinc of try to calm your mind, learn to relax.

I used visualization.

Ok.

Uh Mags teaches us here like visualization arousal control uh goal setting, self talk and I just used all of those tools.

Yeah.

That we learned.

What. What kind of motivated you to push through that that challenge? When you failed pool comp.

I hated failing and I was embarrassed.

Yeah.

More so embarrassed.

So that was it. Because you said you came in three seven.

I got rolled medically.

OK. Um and did you feel like you were supported by the group when you failed pool comp?

Oh, definitely.

Yeah.

Yeah well, all they dudes are really helpful and encouraging. How can we help you? Sounds cool to see.

Ok. Um we talked a little bit about kind of some of the practices you did. But anything else like whether it's physical, mental, spiritual that you think helped push you through challenges?

Um yeah. One thing you can practice the diving on the grinder. They call it dirt diving.

Yeah.

They have like PVC pipes, tanks you can use. Any time you can walk through stuff like that.

Yeah.

You're getting dry runs it was really helpful even like with pistol qual or rifle qual or practicing that trigger pull was really helpful on the island.

Um what about was there a time you had to make a difficult decision during training here?

Um, I mean, again, that was all training.

Yeah.

So I think anything too too challenging that we had to face certainly its organized chaos but I wouldn't say anything too too crazy

Was there any, like, cheating that you observed or like a classmate something? you kinda had to.

Yeah, there was a kid in my original class after Hell Week we decided he couldn't get up on the obsticals.

Yeah.

And he decided to go around. And then worded in that he passed but everone in the class saw.

Yeah.

He was a really well liked kid, a really good performer and we eventually turned him in.

Yeah.

And said hey cheater. And they eventually dropped him.

What. What kind of helped make that decision as a group? Was it somebody really pushing the.

For me it was a no brainer, he had to go.

Yeah.

I was like hey he's a scumbag I don't want him. But like other guys were like no, he's done really well we should keep him it was like a one time mistake. But it was more so challenging arguing that against different peoples moral ethics.

Um what about. Why do you think you were successful completing BUDS?

Uh I think I was just really dug in and focused on it but I think there's a good amount of luck that's also involved. I think I had, like other people would say that I'm am lucky cause I had two rolls.

Yeah.

I had a med roll and a performance issue. Other guys just go, right though it.

Yeah.

If you can do it right away on one shot like that's a good roulette game.

Yeah.

That means you're healthy.

Yeah.

Rolling to a roll.

It wasn't freezing cold like it's been recently.

Yes, exactly.

Anything that you think is different about you? The fact that you got through it, and people haven't gone through it.

think I don't know how you can quantify it. I think, you know prior coming to BUDS whether or not you're going to be successful.

And why, what what do you think it is.

I just knew growing up. I was. I knew I was going to graduate and I knew. It was never an issue. It was more so like do I really wanted to do this.

Ok.

Do I want to subject myself to all of this misery and do I want this to be my lifestyle. That was the question.

Got it.

It wasn't oh I'm wondering if I can make it through, and I don't mean to sound cocky or anything, but I think everyone in this room knew that. That they knew that they were gonna make it through.

There's a there's a level of confidence.

Absolutely.

Um, how has this changed you as a person?

Um, I think it gives you confidence.

Yeah.

But it's also like your opportunities and potentials untapped. You're never in question. You can literally do anything that you want. Which is cool. Like I've been compared to my other friends and they're like, I think you have superpowers.

Hahaha you're not the first person that says that.

Oh really.

Yeah, it's interesting, you know, but I think that's a good thing I don't think it's a bad thing cause you kinda need it for what you're going to do.

Oh absolutely.

You kinda have to have that mindset. So uh anything else I should have asked that might contribute to our study.

I include uh well I don't know if it would help but what I would ask if like guys think that they've made like knew they were going to make it through.

Yeah.

I think that would be very interesting. I think the guys of asked on the handful are like yeah I didn't really know if I'm going to make it going into Hell Week.

That are still here today.

Yes, but I think that ulitmately that everyone knew that they were gonna make it through.

Yeah.

That would be the only question.

Ok, great. OK, well, I'm finished. I'm gonna collect your card.