**TRANSCRIBER NAME: ENS Bondarowicz**

**Date: 1/25/2022**

**Participant #: 663**

Interviewer (Code in blue): Dr. Deirdre Dixon

Participant (Code in black): #663

**Dr. Dixon: Okay, this is Deirdre Dixon, from the University of Tampa on the 6th of January. And what was your number?**

**663: 663.**

**Dr. Dixon: And do you mind if we record?**

**663: No**

**Dr. Dixon: Okay, great. I’m gonna start out by asking what Phase did you leave in?**

**663: Phase 1.**

**Dr. Dixon: And how many weeks ago was that.**

**663: Eight.**

**Dr. Dixon: Eight weeks ago? Okay. Can you take a minute and tell me a little bit about your childhood? Like do you have any siblings, are your parents still together, did you move a lot? Where are you from?**

**663: Two older siblings. Parents, traditional family. Uh, they’re still married. Um, pretty standard rural class from Central Valley California.**

**Dr. Dixon: Okay. And did you play sports growing up?**

**663: I did. I played rugby and uh cross country.**

**Dr. Dixon: Cross country, okay great. If you had to describe your personality in three traits, what would you say?**

**663: Disciplined, introspective, and (long pause), driven.**

**Dr. Dixon: Okay. That's awesome. What did you do five years prior to this training and BUD/S?**

**663: I was working in biotech and competing in triathlon.**

**Dr. Dixon: Okay so… you went to high school, then you graduated, then you went right into biotech? Or?**

**663: I went to college, then biotech**

**Dr. Dixon: Where did you go to college?**

**663: San Diego State.**

**Dr. Dixon: Did you go, did you do any sports there.**

**663: Played rugby.**

**Dr. Dixon: Play rugby there. Okay, great. Then you went into biotech after graduation?**

**663: Yes.**

**Dr. Dixon: What was your degree in?**

**663: Biology.**

**Dr. Dixon: Okay. And how many years did you do that?**

**663: Five years.**

**Dr. Dixon: Five years? So your prior five years prior to BUD/S were all working it sounds like.**

**663: Yes.**

**Dr. Dixon: Great. Can you think of any experiences you have prior to starting BUD/S training that were life changing or kinda life altering?**

**663: I got a pretty severe knee injury in um, playing rugby. And then my girlfriend getting diagnosed with cancer.**

**Dr. Dixon: Wow, those are both okay. And the rugby issue was when you were in college?**

**663: Yes.**

**Dr. Dixon: Okay. And did you recover from that?**

**663: Yes.**

**Dr. Dixon: And then your girlfriend, with cancer? How did that resolve itself?**

**663: She was able to be treated through surgery.**

**Dr. Dixon: Okay. Great. So did either of those events impact your training at all. Do you think?**

**663: Yeah certainly.**

**Dr. Dixon: In what way?**

**663: Um, I had the surgery, there was a lot of recovery and um made me more mindful of, how to stay, be proactive about being healthy. And then the cancer and it made me, uh, more skilled at prioritizing time.**

**Dr. Dixon: Okay, those are great. Um, what led you to join the Navy? Sounds like you were on your road in the biotech field.**

**663: Yeah. I came here to train one day with my rugby team and I was really blown away by the ethos and um, the sorta goal oriented nature and I wanted to be a part of it.**

**Dr. Dixon: Okay, what would you say motivates you on a daily basis?**

**663: Um, a desire to be a disciplined person.**

**Dr. Dixon: Okay that works. And can you tell me about your experience at BUD/S.**

**663: It was, uh, pretty challenging. Uh yeah. Physically, you know, real, real grind?**

**Dr. Dixon: How many days did you make it in or…**

**663: I made it through midway through Hell Week.**

**Dr. Dixon: So was it any one specific part of your body that was bothering you or?**

**663: Yeah it actually, um, I started pooping myself a lot. And by the end, it was straight blood.**

**Dr. Dixon: Was it VGE that went, was it diagnosed as something?**

**663: I mean it wasn't diagnosed. I, I, yeah VGE is kinda a blanket term they give to anything. But I think it was E. Coli because I was on antibiotics for a while afterwards. But I mean, I never went to medical because it was never, I wasn’t uh, yeah.**

**Dr. Dixon: Okay. Um, was there any time you had to make a difficult decision in training at BUD/S and what went through your mind and can you give me an example?**

**663: Yeah, the decision to quit. It was difficult.**

**Dr. Dixon: So what were you weighing?**

**663: I mean it was obvious I wanted to continue. But my boat crew was suffering and screaming at me to quit. And at that point I was slowing them down a lot. And I just didn’t want to hold them back anymore.**

**Dr. Dixon: Is there anything you would have done differently knowing what you know now? Uh, during BUD/S**

**663: Uh yeah, regimented antibiotics. And uh been a little more limber and then uh bought into the Instructor Staff less.**

**Dr. Dixon: That's interesting, can you tell me more about that?**

**663: Yeah, there was a real desire to please the instructor staff. Especially by the guys who ended up getting through. It was a want to make them happy, and to make them happy, you eliminated the weak links on your boat crew. And, there was one dude, who he always called that weakness. He said you never turn on your classmates. And I wish I would have listened to him a little more cause I mean, one it ended up being me, but two, I ended up buying into it and you know, I just think it's shameful.**

**Dr. Dixon: Wow. That's powerful. So we’ve interviewed a lot of people that have made it through and I was really surprised, I’m not in the Navy or anything, and I was really surprised at the number of people who didn’t make it through the first time, left, went to the fleet, and then came back?**

**663: Yeah, thats something I’d really like to do.**

**Dr. Dixon: You’d like to do that?**

**663: Yes.**

**Dr. Dixon: Thats interesting. Okay, and how would you prepare differently.**

**663: So coming from a triathlon background, I thought it was all endurance. But its, its, supremely anaerobic but just for a long time. Because you hear long time and think aerobic capacity, VO2 max, but that’s not the case. Like the prime example is this thing called base tour that they do during Hell Week where you’re running around the amphibious base with a boat on your head and it takes I don’t know, it's between 10 and 15 miles, so it can take 2 to 4 hours, or 6 or whatever, um, so you think you need to be able to run a half marathon which is absolutely not the case. You need to be able to, its, it’s, constantly broken down into half mile segments, where you stop and then you’re punished for being last, so it’s all about sprinting, but with weight. So I did, and trained much more aerobically. So not weighted runs, not rucks, not boat on head, and then not uh, you know, shorter, higher efforts with rest. So I would definitely focus more on the anaerobic, sprinting.**

**Dr. Dixon: Okay. You’re the first person thats said that but now that you say it, it makes sense, right?**

**663: Yeah I mean it's not like that, it's not aerobic at all. The longest run, I mean you'll do an 11 or 12 mile run in Second Phase or Third, but even then, it's untimed. Everything, every evolution is very short. Except the punishments, you know. It's like 2 mile runs, 4 mile runs, ruck runs, that are at most maybe an hour. So its, it's a little deceiving. Cause you think, you know, you'll have like 16 hour days, or Hell Week that you’ve got to have this massive aerobic engine, but that's definitely not the case.**

**Dr. Dixon: Okay. What practices, mental, spiritual, physical, to push through any challenges that you faced.**

**663: Goal setting, mindfulness.**

**Dr. Dixon: And is that stuff you knew already before coming here?**

**663: Yes.**

**Dr. Dixon: Okay. So, give me an example of how you’d use mindfulness.**

**663: Not to be overwhelmed by the length and duration of something. Just, take it in small components, try to stay in the moment.**

**Dr. Dixon: Okay, that makes sense. So how do you think that this experience changed yo as a person.**

**663: Ah, definitely made me confront a lot of things because of the failure. I feel a lot more compassionate, less judgemental.**

**Dr. Dixon: Alright, thank you. And what events did you struggle with the most?**

**663: Um, quitting. And uh, boats on heads.**

**Dr. Dixon: Do you think your class liked you?**

**663: Yeah.**

**Dr. Dixon: Your boat crew?**

**663: Yeah.**

**Dr. Dixon: Do you think there was anything different about the guys that made it through?**

**663: Yeah. They were, um, physically at the top. And um, all very domineering personalities. And um, most of them were roll backs.**

**Dr. Dixon: So when you say domineering personalities, can you give me an example of that?**

**663: Take charge. It was a big game you played to form a boat crew. To form a height line. You um, you don’t just go in height order. Um, obviously you’re trying to get with the guys who are fit so you can get in a winning boat crew. So like the guys that really asserted themselves to be next to the fit guys, they all um, fit it very well. And then, um, guys who were kinda always the ones barking orders I guess.**

**Dr. Dixon: That’s helpful, thank you. And then, so, we’re writing these articles to hopefully help people who want to come to BUD/S. What do you wish you would have known? You talked a little bit about being fit differently, or what do I wish I would have asked you to help somebody or help yourself a year ago?**

**663: Um… I guess that's pretty much it.**

**Dr. Dixon: Okay I really thank you for doing this. I think it's really gonna help.**