**Jack Sylvester:**

**Date: 16AUG**

**Participant #240:**

**Length of the Interview: 18:17**

Interviewer (Code in Blue):

Participant (Code in black):

Do I have your permission to record?

Yes,

OK. And if you would say your participant ID number.

240.

So when did you start BUD/S?

I started BUD/S...in lets see, I shipped out to boot camp April 1st. I believe BUD/S would have started somewhere early September.

What was your class?

339.

And now you’re in?

339.

So you started in 339, and you are in.

Yeah gold original.

The OG?

The OG.

Is this your first BUD/S experience?

Yes.

OK, so can we talk about your family, do you have brothers and sisters?

Yeah. One sister, she is about eighteen months younger than me….Mother, father.

So just the two of you and your sister. So you are the oldest, are your parents married, separated…

Married.

Ok, whole time?

Yeah married whole time.

Ok so so how many years.

Um….let's see like it's got to be going on 37, 38 now.

Wow.

Yeah, a long time.

And what's your relationship with them.

Awesome. Yeah. Awesome role models talk to them almost every day.

OK. And good relationship with your sister?

Yes.

Any life changing events that happened in your life prior BUD/S.

Prior to BUD/S….um...aside from just having kind of like the one off relative pass away, which was a grandparent, no, I haven't had anything that, that has been kind of life changing. I would say.

So losing a grandparent was hard?

Oh, yeah, it was hard. Yeah, I grew up with them, um...

Grandfather?

Grandfather, yeah...uh but no, nothing really was that life changing.

That's was that traumatic or natural causes?

Natural causes yeah.

Kind of expected, sad but expected?

Yeah exactly yup

Ok...Do you think that those experiences, any experiences that factor in your experience at BUD/S?

Um....as far as the life events, no, I don't think so.

High school? Junior college?

Yep. I went to high school and then played football in college,um...played local here.

I would say that was probably more just kind of being a lifelong athlete was more, I think, kind of the hinge point for, for coming to BUD/S and, and doing well here.

And what college did you play football for?

At the University of San Diego.

Is that it would be D....?

It would be D1AA..

Position?

Defensive end.

And how do you think your personality contributed to your progression at BUD/S?

Um…

Do you know what I mean when we say personality?

As far as character traits and…

Yeah. so exactly what traits, like introversion, extroversion, consciousness, uh openness, agreeableness, neuroticism.

Um...I would say I'm probably a little more introverted. As far as like being outspoken and being kind of like a leader. I’m sort of just like hitting the follow button for BUD/S and...and being coachable. Just kinda...do what I’m told...you know pass test gates. Um...yeah. Really not trying to do anything like really out of line or anything like that. Sort of...follow the natural progression. Phase to phase.

Um...sense of humor?

I think so. Yeah. Yeah, I think yeah I think, I think my friends would say so too.

But are you like the jokester in the group or you just…?

Definitely not the jokester. But, but the sense of humor is huge here. Yeah. You definitely need that.

Describe your background that led you to pursue becoming part of the SEAL community. So do you have any SEAL family, friends?

Sure, yeah, yeah. Um...so I was first introduced to the SEAL teams in high school. I have a buddy who's currently on a SEAL Team. Um...

Friend from high school?

Friend from high school yes. And then uh...went to college...uh played with a SEAL who had walked on our football team after his SEAL career was done. He was around 31, 32. Uh, yeah, it's pretty cool actually. Like ESPN did a whole story on him, so kind of got reintroduced back into the teams that way. And then just being in San Diego, you hear one off instances of like the SEAL teams and what they do and um...graduated from college, worked in accounting for a number of years before eventually deciding to, to join the teams. I sort of just missed that like team environment and the whole brotherhood aspect and meeting like a great group of guys. Like...it's definitely true that like you do this reason for the guys. I would say so. So they kind...overall that’s what led me back to BUD/S.

Ok so it does sound like...like some close contact, and then role models and mentors.

Yeah...definitely.

OK, so tell me about your childhood. We're looking here for discussion of your parents’ parenting style.

OK.

So like were you spanked? Was it free range parenting? Was it like would they take away your video games, car privileges or phone? Yeah, like how to discipline?

Yeah. Uh...so my family, my parents were pretty strict. Um...always went to school, came back, did my homework, check, would check my homework.

Do you remember being spanked?

Uh yeah. I was yup, i was yup, spanked. I would get the belt sometimes.

Spoon?

No, no spoon...but um yeah definitely that and I would say was probably equal on both sides, both mom and dad. But yeah strict yeah.

And then as you got older…?

They've chilled out a lot. Yeah. Yeah. Now it's kind of cool um...but yeah they're definitely way more relaxed and yeah. Just kind of hanging out.

And did you move around throughout your childhood or teenage years?

Nope. Born and raised in same town.

Same town?

Um...Stockton, California.

And same house?

Same house.

Same school, like you didn’t have to move around schools or anything?

Nope.

Tell me about your teenage years. You mentioned sports, so that was football through high school?

Yeah, teenage years I...are mostly characterized, I would say, by sports. Just I would...

Any sports besides football?

Yeah, football, basketball, track...baseball.

And these are team sports teams?

Team sports yeah.

Um...so you enjoy not just the actual sport on the field, but the group cohesion?

Oh, yeah. Yeah, all my best friends are...all played sports with me at some point, yeah.

So you...for the last five years before BUD/S how many years were you in the accounting career?

Uh...last five years. So...I graduated in 15 and then I worked in accounting from 16 to...uh...towards I think like the end of 2017. And then I moved back in with my parents and um trained until shipping out in twenty nineteen.

And then you train for two years.

Yeah.

And what did that training consist of?

Uh...it was mostly running, swimming. So I would wake up, I would go swim in the morning, um... run sort of around midday, and then the late day would have some sort of like stretching or weightlifting session. And I did that for the extent of about the time that I was home. Yeah.

Any...because it sounds so physical, any mental, spiritual exercises that you were doing during that time?

Uh...no...I've never really been one for religion. Uh... mental exercises, no, I never...never really did any like meditation or anything. I think just the only sort of like constant pressure, I guess I would feel is like, you know, hey, you're still living with your parents or like you're living with your parents. You got to, like, start making moves and get out. And so I think that was always kind of like, OK, when am I going to enlist and ship out and do all that? I had always known that I was going to come here, but you just kind of like getting the ball rolling as, as, as far as life progression probably the only really mental thing that I was dealing with.

So when you were playing football in college, did you ever work with sports psychologist or anybody who had that mental training, overlayed with your physical training. Did they do visualization exercises?

No, they had none of that. Yeah, I think as far as that stuff, it was it was more honed on, like actually just being in sports. I think like personally for me, I know I, I try to do a lot of that stuff subconsciously, but it's like I'm not really thinking about it. But I think we all kind of do that. But as far as training, specific training, no, I've never had that.

Would you consider yourself impulsive? For example do you have any tattoos you got on a whim?

Yeah. The tattoo question. No, I wouldn't, I wouldn't consider myself impulsive.

Speeding tickets?

Nope.

Any big purchases?

Mmm...aside from, like a laptop?

Yeah.

Or something like that?

See a car and buy it.

No. No, no, no.

You tend to be more analytical in your decision making?

Yeah. Yeah, sure. Definitely.

What was the most challenging part of BUD/S? So it could be a particular day, it could be water or logs?.

Yeah, I think for me it uh would have been second phase, OC-8 test. Because I went… uh to my third attempt on that. So that was probably the hardest part of BUD/S. Um...and then…

What was it that made it so challenging?

I think it was just I hadn't had the procedures down uh flat and so my first test was kind of rough. The second test went a lot better. Still failed that one. So then the third test, I finally got it. But um...yeah, more procedural based on that one. Um...on the island, just working all day, every day. That was a grind.

So what motivated you to push through that grind and to go back to that OC-8 test the third attempt?

Yeah.

Keep going?

Uh...I think I had just like...didn't want to leave my friends. I had come so far. Like, I've invested just a lot of time into this whole this, this whole pipeline. And I think the more I get into it, the more, you know, obviously the more skin that I'm putting in. And so at this point, it's like I'm sort of all in and it just kind of snowballs. You don't...you know, it's just like, why would I quit now? You know? Why would I leave to leave and...leave my buddies?

So when you say you, leave your friends, you were talking about friends that were here?

Yes.

Was there any thought of people that weren’t here? Friends or family outside of the situation?

Yeah. Yeah, I thought about my family a lot. Um...you know, feeling the shame of, like, telling my dad or my mom that like hey I quit or I got rolled or something happened. Um...yeah, that, that definitely weighed on me a bit.

Do you have any practices, physical, mental, spiritual, that you used to push through the challenges? So, again, like a prayer or a mantra or a visualization exercise. Some athletes will have a warm up routine.

Yeah.

Did you have anything that was…?

Uh, nothing like that. I remember, though, for, like specifically the OC-8 test, I would go back to my room and like write down, try to like recollect and rethink like, OK, what did I do that day? What did I do wrong? What do I need to do right? And just sort of like I could see something on paper and go, OK, just try to do that next time and um think about that like during the evolution. And like before OC-8 I was, I was on the pool that just going through kind of like, OK, remember the key points that you wrote down last night? Try to do those. If you do those, you're going to be successful, so.

So that is like a reflection and visulaization as well.

Yeah, yeah.

When you made a difficult decision during training at BUD/S, what went through your mind as you made that decision? And was there a decision that you really struggled with at BUD/S? fights, for example, running classmates out or turning in a cheating classmate?

Yeah. Um...mmm...I think like at least in like first phase, like the difficult decisions, I would say, are were more of like I don't, I don't want to quit and look like inferior to my buddies. But, like, I don't know...Yes, that's a, that’s a tough question. A difficult decision that I just try I just always try to think of myself like, don't quit. Um...this sucks right now, like you'll push through.

Yeah, so that's that's definitely like the decision to quit or not. I think we’re looking for a like a difficult decision relates to a situation.

OK.

So did you ever consider running a class out or did you ever encounter a classmate cheating or cutting corners that you felt that you confronted, um, like in the evals? Any sort of difficult conversations.

Yeah, I mean uh....No, I don't think so. I've never had to like...never ran a classmate out. But I mean, as far as, like, the evals, things like I don't think that they were too difficult to me just because, like, they're true. I always try to just be truthful in them. But um, as far as difficult decisions, no I can't really think of anything specifically that, that I had to do.

Why do you think that you were successful at BUD/S?

Uh, I would say that I had a great friend group who were all very motivated that were here for the same reasons. Um...And just trying to impress them and, and make it through the program with them helped me kind of find my inner strength like, oh, if my buddies can do it, I can do it. And um...I just had sort of like this, like, if I'm going to, you know, I put a lot of time into it. And so if I'm going to give this my everything, like there's no way that I'm going to ring the bell or if I get injured, I get injured. But there's no way that I'm going to leave the program voluntarily.

You’re all in.

Yeah.

OK, so what was different about those that didn't make it? Those guys that dropped? What did they lack?

Um...I don't know, it's tough because I don't know if they're like lacked. I mean, I met some really good guys, ended up quitting. I don't know if they, they lacked anything per se. I just think they maybe had thoughts of doing something else. They maybe if they had something, something else going on in their lives, that, they might have just thought this wasn't for them. It's, it's, it’s weird because I like, a lot of the. I think that there a lot better guys than me that quit.

Better in what way?

Physical, mentally stronger. I think in the, in the end, it's just kind of like a decision like do you want to keep going or do you want to do something else.

A decision?

I think so. Definitely

Has this experience changed you as a person?

Oh, yeah.

How?

Very humbling pipeline. Uh, it teaches you a lot about yourself in a way that, that I don't think that I would ever figure out. Like...there's always going to be somebody better than you. You can never, you can never not find work. You will always have something to do and you should always be improving. And I learned more in these six months at BUD/S than I did in my entire sports career. It’s like...you're always going to be humbled. There's always something to do. You know, it's just kind of like a microcosm of life itself. It's really interesting talking to my buddies all the time of, like, learn more in these six months I feel like I have almost the entirety of my entire life playing sports for sure.

Is there anything that we didn't ask or cover that you think would be relevant to this investigation and?

Um...No, I think that comes about, about everything. Yeah can’t really think of anything else.