**TRANSCRIBER NAME: Isaac Bengel**

**Date: 8/12/20**

**Participant #: 309**

**Length of the Interview: 22:24**

Interviewer (Code in Blue):

Participant (Code in black):

OK. OK. Is it ok if I record?

Yes.

Haha and your participation ID number?

Three zero nine.

Three Zero nine three, ok. OK. So easy questions first uh when uh when did you start your BUDS class? Were you?

Three three three.

You were Three nine.

Yes.

Ok And then is this your first experience going through BUDS?

Yes.

OK. So you made it through without any umm hahaha.

Yeha, no rolls.

Haha that's hard to do...Umm how many siblings do you have?

Two.

Two. So what sibling, brother sister?

I have an older brother and a younger sister.

And then um how many years apart?

Three all uh three years up and down.

OK. And then what's your kind of parent’s situation? Two parent household.

Yep, two parent household Married happily um yeah no issues.

For the whole time growing up.

Yep.

Ok. And what's your relationship with your parents like?

Very good. Strong.

Where are you from or?

I'm from Southern California.

Ok, San Diego? Or?

Orange County.

OK. Now are you. Well, I'll get to you know the results. And then did you move around a lot or always?

Always grown in the same place through my whole life.

Um any life changing events that happened in your life prior to coming to BUDS?

Well, what is considered a life changing event?

I mean, anything that I would think is kind of meaningful kind of shaped who you are.

I don't, I don't I don't think so.

So nothing stands out.

No.

You know uh, either great, great highs or great, great lows.

Uh, Yeah. I mean, I mean, I grew up playing sports.

Ok.

Um up to college, so I guess there were, you know, but I mean.

Ok.

I don’t consider.

I'll Ask you more about that in a minute. Um how about Anything that you think factored into your experience here at BUDS. I mean, cause not many people make it through without so much luck without rolling.

Uh I think I know that this is what I want to do and I prepared for it very well. I was very well prepared.

How did you prepare for it?

Um I ran a lot um I probably could've swam more more positive and more. But I didn't really have an issue swimming. Uh I read a lot of books. I talk to a lot of different people. I talked to a lot of people who had gone to BUDS all the way through and I feel like I just gathered as much information as they could. So my expectations were appropriate and stuff.

OK. Now did you um. How did you do? How did you know people that went to BUDS?

Um I had two friends that made it through BUDS.

OK.

Um And then just kind of through those networks, have some contact with other people.

OK,

And just go down the rabbit hole to kinda give you a picture of what its gonna be.

Yeah, ok

I was. I was never I was never surprised at BUDS.

OK. Because you've talked to so many people?

Yeah

Can you describe your personality a little bit? How do you think it might contributed to getting through BUDS.

Uh yes, so I'm very I think the various eyes I have a really good sense of humor um...I have a very close knit group of friends and we've also made it all the way through with me. So I think that helps a lot...

And they were here in this class? Or they were

Yes.

And you guys met here or?

At boot camp.

OK.

Yeah.

And so I know we talked a little bit because it went into this. But so what, you really made you want to become a SEAL?

Uhhh I read I read a lot of books when I was in like middle school, I'd say, and...you know, to be honest, first, it wasn't so much that I wanted to be a SEAL it was that I wanted to go to BUDS you know. I wanted to go to BUDS.

Really?

That was like, that was the challenge and as I kinda learned moreI kind of thought that that would be a good job and maybe even a profession I'd find fulfilling.

Now did you did anybody in your family military?

Uh yes, my brother was in the army.

OK. Is he still the army? or?

No.

Anybody else um you were around?

Grandparents were in the army in Korea, but it wasn't like I I do not come from a military whatsoever.

Ok Um what about um, and these are a little bit of questions but that they kind of help play and eventually. How is your family discipline? Was it strict family.

Yeah, my uh dad my dad was very strict about sports,.

Ok.

About uh preparation and training and all that stuff so I think that probably carried over well.

And when you say preparation, training, what do you mean by that?

Meaning that he was very, uh very big on like the process.

Ok.

And I had to...very similar, uh I don't know, very similar to the military in the sense that "Ok we're gonna started. We're going to do these drills. We're gonna do this simulation.

Got it.

We're going to do X. We're going, you know, practice outside of practice.

Yea.

And stuff like that.

Um what about uh discipline at home life? Was there uh time outs, spankings?

Uh so my brother was kind of a problem child I would say

Okay.

So I was just kind of quiet and just did what I was supposted to do cause I didn't want to give my parents more grief.

Yeah.

So I kind of just I always felt like an easy job, but like I just kind of did what I was supposed to do because I was like, you know, even if I did act out of line they probably wouldn't have it in them have it in them to, like, discipline me so.

Hahaha um what about any, I think I asked you but, uh, any moving around as a child or did you pretty much just stay in Orange County.

Yeah, I've lived in Orange County my whole life.

Um teenage years you said you talked, participated in sports. What sports?

So I played football and ran track.

Ok they're kind of different sports to a degrees what was kinda tough to both?

Okay, so my dad was really into me playing football.

Ok.

I was I was a pole vaulter in track. That's what I was about.

Ok.

And that's what I went to college for.

Ok. Did you kinda was it the one you preferred it more you so why?

I, to be honest I hated both, but I knew that track was a it was a means to an ends.

Ok.

That I would get into a good school and college playing football was (intelligible).

Um what about the last five years since prior coming to BUDS, what have you done?

So I uh graduated college in 2017. And then I worked in Phenix commercial real estate for about a year and a half.

Ok.

And then I joined the Navy.

Ok. So um even when you were doing commercial real estate, you know this was what.

Yes.

You were gonna do.

Yes.

So what made you kind of do that?

I needed I needed time to train.

Ok.

For BUDS so I wanted to give myself that opportunity. So, you know, in the meantime you need to have a job.

Hahaha You can't just support yourself.

Yeah hahaha yeah.

So uh tell me a little bit about anything when you did commerical realestate. Was it tough to you? Did it make life worse?

Uh, commercial real estate is very much like a good old boys kind of profession.

Yeah.

Um it's not like you just are there nine to five, its like its kinda like BUDS where.

Yeah.

It's kind of a culture.

Yep.

In addition to being you know like your occupation. But I wouldn't say that that was just like I would say that had a big effect on me making it through here.

Yeah.

It just was happen to be like that.

Yeah.

Like I specifically chose...

That for that.

Yes.

What about training? What type of training would you do?

Um I would run 4 miles every other day. I would swim 1500 meters on those off days. And then I would do some kind of leg workout every other day. So swimming and running would alternate. And then I would lift on the running days.

Ok um any uh mental and spiritual practice to prep you did?

So I um and so it's an additional to working commerical realestate I also worked at a restaurant. Um so I would work seven days a week. I would work easy seventy eighty, sometimes ninety hour weeks because I want to save a lot of money. And in addition to training. So I think that was the mental preparation where I would you know, I would go get in the office at 6 a.m. and then I would leave the restaurant at like 10 p.m. and then I would go work out for an hour or two hours.

Um what about impulsive, do you consider yourself and impulsive at all?

Sometimes yep.

Can you talk to me a little bit about that?

Sure um...uh so I bought a I bought a, now this is 2 or 3 years ago, I would say I am less impulsive now.

Yeah.

But like I bought a like used truck.

Mhmm.

It's a 1997 and sight unseen by from the state of Washington. And it just showed up because it was before I moved out. My parents were just like "Woah!, Like what's that all about?" I was like, oh, yeah. Um moved to Arizona. I'm kind of like an impulse. Like I'm from Orange County.

Yeah.

And went out there and I was like, I'm gonna go to (intelligible) Um, uh getting to work real estate was impulsive getting the restaurant job inside that was I would say impulsive like there wasn't like any I didn't have like, great reason to go do those jobs,.

Yeah.

Do those things specifically I just kind of signed up. So that's what I wanna do know uh and then when I joined the Navy, my parents saw that is very impulsive because they didn't know that I was they thought that I had kind of moved on that.

Yeah

And then they were like, "Woah OK".

Hahaha now you're doing this

Yeah.

What about tattoos? Do you have any tattoos?

OK. So, yeah, I don't have I don't have tattoos but.

Ok.

Me and my buddies uh joke that the guys with the coolest, you know most extravagant tattoos were the first ones to go.

Hahaha.

For some reason

Well there might be a reason we're asking that question hahaha. Yeah, I don't know. We kind of kind of curious because there may be something to do with that question. Um what about uh what do you think the most challenging part of BUDS was

Uh so on paper, the most challenging thing that I thought at BUDS is pistol qualification.

OK.

Um I didn't have any real problems with first phase I failed a swim, but all but one swim pair passed that swim or I'm sorry, all but one swim pair failed that swim. So everybody failed except for one pair. And then I passed everything on first time, the second phase and then third phase I almost went home for piston qual.

Ok.

I failed it twice. I then barely passed the third time. Um but I said the most difficult thing was Hell Week.

Yeah. So what about Hell Week sucks so much?

What's up?

What about it sucks so much?

I was just cold and tired and just don't want to do it.

Yeah.

Basic physiology. I still haven't found a world character.

Hahaha.

And like infinite infinite strength in cardiovascular endurance.

Yeah. Nobody does.

Yeah.

What about um for both of those. I mean, what pushed you to geth through when you failed with the swim qualification?

So a big motivator in BUDS is is uh a part for me at least is the fear of failure over want for success?

Mkk.

Because if you get rolled, you can lose all your friends. Especially with pistol, you literally you literally go home eight or nine days before you finish.

Yeah.

Which would suck. Um...so yeah, I'd say that's a big one. Losing your friends, I think was the worst thing and having to for me at least really go into the class, have to see, you know, it would be fun to meet a bunch of people, but like also you really, really bummed to see your friends go on.

Yeah.

And like graduated guys you're are like.

So you're still there.

Still in BUDS.

So what is the group component um was that a big motivator for you?

I think. Yeah, I think uh that might be one of the subconscious things. But I was like, I'm not...I don't understand what like I never like I was never going to quit. But it like it wasn't like that. You know, reality was I wasn't aware of that reality.

Yeah.

And I didn't think, you know, OK, like, this really starts right now like I don't have to be here. And I mean, I think a lot, yes. I think a big component say, well, my buddy still here so.

Yeah. Was there any like outward support um that help from kinda your group uh?

Uh I don't think there was ever a like any like, come on man like I'm like on my edge.

Yeah, yeah.

Like come back. No it wasn't like that. But by the way, they never trust that those guys 100 percent of the time, even if they you get brought back.

They know.

That they will. It was true when I've experienced it, too. No, I don't think so. I mean, I think it's just again, I think it's like unconscious.

Yeah.

Subconscious kind of the thing.

Just kind of knowing

Yeah.

There's people there. Um any specific uh practices that you utilize to help you push you through this hell week or any other challenging.

Uh segmentation. I think everything I mean, it's like cheesy as it sounds. I think everything that they just like the whole visualization, arousal control goal setting and so forth. I think that.

Yeah.

All that stuff was like, I don't I don't like to admit that. Like, that's like what really helps cause I think it's like, you know, you want move.

Yeah just do it.

And so forth. But no, that's a totally helps.

So talk to me a little bit about how you segmentation.

What's up?

How do you use segmentation?

Uh it's kinda of an abstract thing uh for me, with the island since its like, OK, we're going to wake up and we're going to run some more and you're gonna break your right. I think and I think even now, like I notice my brain doing this is like I used to, like, get really anxious about things to come, like, oh, my gosh, seven weeks like I've noticed now that I really just now I do it unconsciously. Where like I just my brain can only do so far forward.

Yeah.

Like in the future...But it wasn't I was always like it's like a number like you know BO and first phase it was like, you know, just like.

Cause you're thinking about.

You think you an infinite like amount of time. Today is an infinity of time. You're like, oh my gosh, what a week this and a month of this. It's why I don't do that anymore.

What do you think, um, is there a time where you had to make a difficult decision about or wonder if it is kind of like a moral decision or an ethical decision.

I think I think I think especially in first face, those decisions are played out in a long in like over a longer period of time rather than like.

Exactly.

And I like for example, I really like log PT or like you have a boat in your head and you can kind of get away with, like, not carrying your weight, and nobody will really know. and there was a lot of times where like I really had to consciously be like, really? Because that weight just gets transferred to your friend.

Yeah.

So those are like the kind of like the moral issues that I think that that's what really weighs on people. Like if they do quit or if people are quitting is that they like I its that they like I'm at my wit's end. It's just that I can't really carry my weight that much. I feel like I'm letting everyone down.

Um anytime you saw somebody else kind of make a make a bigger maybe a moral decision and you had to decide whether to.

I mean

Speak up about that.

Yeah I mean, so it's called ducking boat.

Ok.

But like when we're like when your friend's head isn't on the boat, that's when it might be. In my opinion, that's like a moral decision.

Yeah.

Cause like we got weight that gets transferred to the other people and that like knowingly doing it and you're just avoiding the temporary pain.

Yeah.

So it's like I'm I'm I'm uh forgoing the temporary pain and I'm gonna transfer it to you guys so I can live comfortably, you know what I mean?

Yeah.

So to mean that's a moral decision. But to see somebody steal something or I, I'd lie about something like you know, like I can't really remember I guess.

No it's more examples like that. Why do you think you were successful at BUDS.

Uh, it's weird to say that cause you go get your ass kicked the whole time, and like you kinda come out the other end and you're like "aaaaah" hahaha.

But you made it.

Yeah, uh yeah I think. Okay, so so the big one is my my body was prepared I think a lot of your guys go away because their bodies break i.e. shin splints and stress fractures. And that's because they just didn't run enough even though, like they're like mentally hard enough and strong enough to like make it. So like your body has to be able to do it.

Yeah.

And I have very good joint movement. I am very flexible. I have very good mobility. Both things I, I consciously worked on before I came um. Strong, I have strong legs strong back it's really important to have a strong core for like boats and logs was stuff that gets me like so many people. So we started out I think at BO with one hundred fifty five or so candidates.

Yeah.

And we finished Hell Week with 26 and it's not like almost like most of those guys didn't quit most of those guys got rolled or performance dropped.

Yeah.

With their bodies. And so that's about like right out of the gate as I think it's something, you know, a lot of people think of like the helmets on the ground are people that quit?

Yeah.

But I don't think that's like even the majority. Um, so, one, my my body was prepared. Uh I think I think pole vaulting since I hated it so much and football cause I hated it so much but I knew it was a means, well pole vault specifically, a means to an end it really scared me. I really hated doing it. But I think that doing that for several years, and like being in that headspace of like this comfort six months of BUDS became doable. Like I like I thought of it It's like one track season, six months. Uh, yeah.

Anything different about those that didn't make it. I mean, other than the ones, like, performance things.

Right.

But people that literally quit.

Yeah. You know, it is weird. The fleet returnees the guys that this is the second time that at BUDS were some of like, like physically we're like the best. Yeah. Like we're the highest performers period in like I thought. No question. You know, I, I don't I don't I don't know why they quit.

Yeah.

I think maybe that's the reason why I didn't. Because I yeah, I don't, I don't know.

Um, how did this experience change you as a person.

Uh it makes you definitely more humble. That's for sure. Because at any given point in my friend's and I talk about this all the time. So I did really well in second phase quote on quote like on paper

Yeah.

But by no means is going to predict future success in BUDS you know and like, because, like I of a sudden, third phase, like you know for the pistol like it's it's relatively easy. It's not like OC-8 or Hell Week.

Yeah.

Or It's like it's like this a huge numbers of fit, like it's just like, oh my gosh. All sudden I just. I can't shoot pistol.

Yeah.

And so all of my friends have the same stories. They excel in some areas and it just naturally inclined to do well in some things, and then like other things and then like they just like suck like random. And I think that's because the curriculum is so diverse and exacting that you're eventually gonna find your,and they told us that in BUDS, you're eventually going to find something you suck at.

Anything else you think I should ask you either helped or hurt at BUDS.

No, No

Well Perfect

Thank you.

Yep, congratulations

Thank you. Thank you.

**Interview Guide**

1. **Standard Interviewer Question (SIO): How many siblings do you have?**
   1. **SIO: What is the birth order?**
   2. **SIO: What is the gender of each sibling? (align with birth order)**
2. **SIO: If you think of your life experiences, what might you describe as your crucible or life shaping experiences?**
   1. **SIO: How did those experiences factor into your experience at BUD/S?**
   2. **SIO: How do you think your personality contributed to your progression through BUD/S?**
3. **SIO: Describe your background that led you to pursue becoming part of the SEAL community.** 
   1. **SIO: Tell me a little bit about your childhood. For example, how were you disciplined as a child? How would you describe your parents parenting style? (spanking, timeouts, withholding toys, etc.).**
   2. **SIO: Tell me about your teenage years? For example, did you move around? Did you participate in a team sport or an activity with a tight knit community? (ask what specifically that sport or activity was)**
   3. **SIO: What have you done in the last 5 years of your life (prior to BUD/S training)? Would you consider yourself impulsive? For example, do you have any tattoos?**
4. **SIO: What motivates you on a daily basis?**
5. **SIO: What was the most challenging component of BUD/S? (Holistic question) (Think about your hardest day or event at BUD/S)**
   1. **SIO: What motivated to push through? Did you feel like you were supported by the group?**
   2. **SIO: What practices (physical, mental, spiritual) did you utilize to push through the challenges?**
6. **SIO: When you made a difficult decision during training at BUD/S, what went through your mind as you made that decision?**
   1. **SIO: Can you provide an example?**
7. **SIO: Why do you think you were successful in completing BUD/S?**
   1. **SIO: Did you notice anything different about those that did not make it? If so, can you describe those differences?**
8. **SIO: BONUS QUESTION - How did this experience change you as a person?**