**BD039**: Take a quicker look and little bit quicker action to say maybe we need to regulate redfish to one a day per person or you know, some sort of action instead of just allowing all of the community to talk about the decline and there’s zero action being done as far as on a public perspective. So yeah, I mean I would be interested to see at least some sort of action there.

**Interviewer**: Quicker action. But specifically for red drum, isn’t it?

**BD039**: Redfish right now, yeah. Well in flounder we saw the same thing. Flounder we went year after year after year after year saying how the flounders off, the flounders off, the flounders tougher, the flounder are nonexistent, and then it was like, then I mean we were five years, five to six years down the line before the state started saying there was something wrong. And they may have known there was something wrong the whole time and there may be some sort of… there may be something that I’m unaware of that they don't wanna make it seem as if there’s something wrong with the fishery but when there is something wrong with the fishery let’s like talk about it and see what we need to do.

**Interviewer**: Yeah let’s do something about it.

**BD039**: Not just stick our head in the sand.

**Interviewer**: Okay. Okay, I’m with you. So, economically speaking, are there any economic aspects that are going on in the industry that affect you? Like is the state helping you guys out or is making money specifically for you, like are you not making enough money to support your business or things like that, like economically what’s going on with the industry?

**BD039**: Economically, I’m doing okay. The business is going good, my business has grown so economically, Ugly Fishing, my business, has progressively done better and better every year I’ve been in business.

**Interviewer**: And is there any… like do you credit that to environmental conditions at all?

**BD039**: No. Well, I guess if everything in a whole was declining then I would say that I would probably be an anomaly that business could be doing better but I think as a whole, the fishery, you know has some ebbs and flows in it but the fishery over all is still relatively healthy, and my business continues to advance because I think of my efforts, what I do everywhere.

**Interviewer**: And did you have any like… how to ask this… did you have any business know how before you came into this industry, or is it coming naturally?

**BD039**: Uh, no. So part time fishing I didn’t really have any business knowledge. I learnt through a local landscape company that was a growing landscape company so I learned a tremendous amount of business, marketing, sales, all that that translated directly into… what I learned there is what I feel like I’ve been able to excel in business. It was definitely the foundation for me to be able to take off.

**Interviewer**: Okay. Now socially, what’s going on, like is there competition that’s bad for business or are you finding that there’s a social dynamic that you’re relying on for business or things like that, like is there anything going on like that you think about?

**BD039**: Uh, I mean the overall healthy economy is probably the largest thing that I’m trying to always navigate and trying to figure out. If certain demographics are being affected worse than others then they may not be able to be a potential customer. And then also, I mean something that’s really, really fresh and new kind of within the last probably eight or ten months is the interest rates going up on new boat purchases and used boat purchases. People that are potentially on the fence of buying a boat may actually become a good candidate to be a customer because they may weigh out the options of pay a boat purchase of thousands of dollars per year versus a couple of charters a year that may actually be way cheaper and they still get on the water the same amount of times.

**Interviewer**: Okay so the more expensive boats are, the more business you see?

**BD039**: Potentially, yeah.

**Interviewer**: Okay, but could it also be the other way around, like the less expensive boats are, you still get customers cause they want to see like…?

**BD039**: Yeah well that happens too.

**Interviewer**: Like where you go fishing.

**BD039**: So, I don’t know, I don’t know if I’d have the true numbers to go with that but there could be a… that may be a wash really. It could really be in the wash cause… The same person that I think would see value in hiring a guide and owning a boat could potentially be the same type of person that sees the value in hiring a guide and not owning a boat at the same time.

**Interviewer**: Right, right. Okay and then, with like, obviously the economy has not been as great the past couple of years as in the past, have you noticed a decline in your business at all because of that?

**BD039**: Uh, no, no. I would, well, I’ve probably seen a decline in more of the families, like family vacation type. Like, I’ve had families that were pretty steady for three or four years, and now that may be just a change… like the children, heck they may have grown up and moved out of the house, and now they’re not doing family vacations, or the kids may have moved from not playing youth sports to now playing youth sports, so there may be some dynamics there that I’ve seen some differences, but, overall it does feel like kind of the family trips are a little bit less than what I’ve seen in the past.

**Interviewer**: Right, okay. Family vacations. Okay. And then we talked about management decisions and there’s not really any management decisions that are limiting you right?

**BD039**: Not that I can think of, no.

**Interviewer**: Okay. Are there any… well this is sort of the same question but, policy-wise, are there any specific policies that maybe are affecting the system or your line of work? Not management but…

**BD039**: Uh-uh, not that I can think of, no.

**Interviewer**: And then are there any other environmental factors that we didn’t talk about within a healthy fishery, or structures, or water qualities, anything else that we didn’t talk about that affect your line of work?

**BD039**: I would say probably the amount of runoff, rain upstate and local causing short-term and long-term severe freshwater events that they really impact… and maybe not impact my customers, but definitely impact the way I have to fish and where I have to fish so there’s times where Mobile Bay may be almost entirely fresh from upstate flooding or just excessive runoff and stuff that would require me to trailer to the Dauphin Island or Bayou La Batre area and then also have to boat almost to Mississippi to try to find cleaner water and having really isolated clean water areas to try to fish, or less freshwaters to fish. And some of that, I combat that by targeting fish that are more freshwater tolerant but it does still challenge me on the daily when the bay is inundated with fresh water.

**Interviewer**: Okay. That’s interesting.

**BD039**: That’s probably one thing that I lose sleep over.

**Interviewer**: Really? Do you watch… like how do you keep track of that?

**BD039**: Watching the river levels. \_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_ lock and dam are probably the two key indicators as to how much freshwater we’re gonna have coming down and when those are going into flood stage, that’ll make me wring my hands thinking about what I’m gonna do in the coming weeks, I would say.

**Interviewer**: So do you have normally like your launches and your locations that you go to without a doubt, like almost every trip? Or do you…?

**BD039**: No, no, constantly adapting. Seasonality, water conditions, customer location, all those come into factor where I’m gonna launch.

**Interviewer**: Gotcha. So do you go to where your customers are sometimes?

**BD039**: So, in kind of a compromise-ial type selection, so customers that are staying at Orange Beach and Gulf Shores, I don’t necessarily fish the Orange Beach area, really I don’t fish it at all. But the Gulf Shores and Orange Beach customers I usually have them meet me at Weeks Bay so about a 30 minute travel for them and it's about 30 minutes from here for me to launch and so it’s a compromise location. If I don’t feel good about the fishing in that area for one reason or another and I need them to come further up the bay, then we’ll make that decision if it's something that doesn't deter a customer from wanting to stay on the boats.

**Interviewer**: Okay and then what else did you say? You said customer location, freshwater runoff, and said one more thing would determine your fishing location.

**BD039**: Just the seasonality of where the… fish migrations, fish patterns, and that sort of thing. Like I’m not gonna launch in Daphne in the spring if we’ve had a lot of freshwater coming down all winter long because the likelihood of me being able to target any amount of fish in along the Daphne… kind of within reasonable reach of Daphne is probably going to be pretty low probability, so I’m gonna go… I’d probably leave out of the Weeks Bay or Mississippi Sound areas to try to get into areas where I’m gonna have a better shot at getting more diversity. And that’s really my… at the end of the day, my target is trying to put myself as close to as much diversity and fish that I can. Where I’m not limited to say ‘okay we’re going speckled trout fishing and when the speckled trout don’t bite we don’t have other options’. I like to try to rely on other species to try to accommodate a bent rod.

**Interviewer**: Gotcha, okay. And then, like, in regards to all of these different things that you just mentioned, how do you… are you relying on social media for this information, do you sort of… like is it just your senses that you say like ‘oh seasonality, it’s that time of year, it’s time to switch’ or are you relying on news, or what?

**BD039**: On the seasonality is just experience and then probably networking.

**Interviewer**: Okay. How significantly are you relying on networking to determine your fishing locations?

**BD039**: Probably way less now than ever. I don’t know.

**Interviewer**: Cause you’ve established your own knowledge now?  
  
**BD039**: Yeah, I’m probably… I would say less than 20%. Probably closer to 10% so we’ll split the difference on 15%.

**Interviewer**: Well what’s that conversation, like are you calling Richard Rutland and saying like ‘Hey I’m taking guests out tomorrow, do you know a good site?’

**BD039**: No, it would be more like… my questions on that would be more like calling Richard because I think he’s maybe been in an area like the Mississippi sound, I feel like that’s gonna be a good set up, I haven’t been there in two weeks so I call him and like, ‘Hey I haven’t been there in two weeks. You got any advice on maybe kind of a pattern’ or… and maybe not necessarily a pattern but more of a general region, cause the Mississippi Sound, I kind of feel like is broken into Portersville, Grand Bay, and then Dauphin Island, and he may have some input that ‘Hey, Portersville has been terrible. I would avoid it.’ or ‘Grand Bay has been good.’ or vice versa. I’m looking way more for that kind of information than, ‘Hey, Cat Island is on fire.’ Like I don’t need… like I would actually prefer not to have that information. I would prefer to have just a little bit of general, kind of somewhere to shoot for. Like if I can look at where my tide levels are, and I have information that I kind of understand that I can look at and then call Richard and say… and he gives me the information of, ‘Hey, I’ve been hit in Grand Bay, it’s just not been coming together for me.’ then I would try to put together a float plan that would at least start me more so in Portersville Bay and then go from there and kind of react from that. But that’s kind of the networking information. And then there are times where like when we’re on Dixie Bar or something like that, we’re trying to hone in on a particular school of fish where we may be on the phone 15 times out of the course of the day so…

**Interviewer**: Trying to help each other out?

**BD039**: Yeah, like trying to immediately put each other on fish.

**Interviewer**: Okay, and are people calling you for the same thing? Like are people relying on you and your knowledge for their success?

**BD039**: Uh, I have some recreational anglers that definitely do. The guys, just friends of mine that maybe fish a dozen times a year. They call me and maybe want to know everything that’s happening so they can…

**Interviewer**: And you tell them?

**BD039**: Uh, some of them, yeah.

**Interviewer**: Okay. That’s something that I never, like, when someone calls Dylan and is like, ‘Hey, bud what’s a good spot that you’ve been fishing lately.’ Sometimes I’m amazed that he just tells them like, ‘Oh, I was fishing this spot yesterday and it was so good.’ You guys give away your secrets too easily.

**BD039**: Sometimes, I mean well, I know kind of what they’re gonna do with the information. Now, and I’ve learned that some guys will ask for information strictly to trade for other information.

**Interviewer**: And you’ll do that?

**BD039**: No, I try to avoid not to or I try to avoid that. Because, like, if I know… it used to happen a lot, like early in guiding. You would have… there was like kind of this, almost like a chess piece of information that would move around in like a trading, a real life trading of information where I could call a guy like, say, Chad Palmer. Chad was guiding at the time and I could tell him what I did and he could tell me what he did but then I would know that Chad was probably going to talk to three other people and he would share Patrick’s report over his own. And so then I would have to learn how much I could tell each one of these individuals because I know that once my fishing information went to them, how far that reach was gonna go into other guides. So, I’ve kind of alienated myself because there’s a lot of times where I find a school of fish and I try to… or a general area where I try to fish as long as possible without another boat showing up and if I can do that for five days… most of the time it’s hard to do it for more than about three days before somebody figures out what’s going on.

**Interviewer**: Okay. Do you just want spots that are not trafficked or do you want…?

**BD039**: A little bit on the traffic but fish are always moving so like in the sense of… a good example would be like Daphne pylons right here by the house. The Daphne pylons does not mean that the fish are gonna be on this one pier for a week. It means that they’re gonna probably be within a three-quarter mile stretch or a mile stretch of Daphne shoreline and the longer I can fish that with the fewer amount of boats as possible, the better experience I can give my customers, because if I go to spot A where we caught them yesterday and they’re not biting, then I got to spot B, potentially C, all within the same region and we catch them at C, but because there wasn’t a boat there, but if I come back three days later and there’s six boats there and I go to spot A, spot B, C, D, E are all covered up, then you kind of have to move locations all together. You don't have the option to just kind of meander around and fish your way through. Just covered up.

**Interviewer**: Yeah, just because there’s so many people. Okay. Okay. And then how often does boat traffic like affect you or limit your ability to have a successful customer satisfaction experience?

**BD039**: I’d probably say damn near all winter long, like probably…

**Interviewer**: More people out in winter than…?

**BD039**: Well, you’re fishing smaller areas, like say fishing Dog River or Fowl River and you have 30 boats on Fowl River and you start catching fish and boat traffic is coming by, whether that shuts the bite down or not, it kind of feels like it does when there’s a lot more boat activity, so that would be an example. Probably, I mean it could affect as much as 40 trips a year. And not that it’s like… I mean I’m never gonna blame anything, I just try to react and try to move to the next thing that maybe is productive and might be like, ‘Hey guys it's, you know, lot of boats coming through here, kind of small area shutting things down, so let’s make it move, so hang your rods up and go do something else.’ But, it could affect it from that point.

**Interviewer**: Why do you think that boat traffic shuts the bite down? Like just the noise and commotion or other people pulling up the fish that you would have otherwise got?

**BD039**: Maybe all of the above I guess.

**Interviewer**: Okay, okay.

**BD039**: And it happens on Dixie Bar too. I was out there the other day and we were catching… we would catch fish out of the school, we would drift off the school, we would take our pictures, we’d circle back, the school hadn’t moved, or very little, we’d drift through it, and we drifted through it six times, and then on about the sixth time, we had five or six boats converge on the school, and two or three of them hook up, and then we circle back around and the school is gone.

**Interviewer**: You don't have any like hypotheses as to why that is?

**BD039**: Well, my hypothesis is that when you hook a fish, or especially multiple fish, and then they all get kind of pulled in different directions, it breaks that school up. You’ll have smaller groups of fish go with that one that’s on the hook, and a group that goes… so, when you’re starting off… and we saw that personally. We had, like I said, we circled through five or six times, and each time, the school moved a little bit at a time and then also looking at the school on my side imaging, the school was getting smaller each time I went back up to it. So we were affecting the school, the larger school, kind of breaking it up into smaller pieces, and then if we were to have relaxed and kind of probably ate lunch and went back, I would imagine that school would have grouped back up for us. And then we found them later on that afternoon and they were on the surface and we were the only ones that were just kind of grabbing one off the edge and not like going through the center of the school. They stayed in the same spot, never moved. And then as soon as boats show up, it definitely affects… and then some people will approach a school of fish more aggressively with the engine and that just directly spooks the fish or moves them whatever. They react to the engine.

**Interviewer**: How does… Okay, so, I know you have a business and Taylor works for you… do you have three boats or just two?

**BD039**: Two boats running, this one and that one, and then I own another one that I don’t really guide out of.

**Interviewer**: Oh that’s just for personal use?

**BD039**: Mhm.

**Interviewer**: Does Taylor affect… obviously he helps your business and you can do two trips in one day. Are there any other, like… I don’t know how to say. Does having a second worker help you a little bit? Monumentally? And how so? Like, does having Taylor just help you manage your time better? Are you doubling your income by having a…?

**BD039**: No, we’re not… I would anticipate, if we’re on the trend that we’re on now, we could potentially be doubling income by this time next year. So financially, it’s a big move. Having an additional set of eyes and ears and lines in the water is a huge… I mean that’s a huge tool in itself, just to… where we’re able to cover more water. I mean at this point, the only negative that would come out of it would be if Taylor was getting negative reviews, if he didn’t do what he was asked to do, or if behaving on the water around fellow anglers, whether it’s customers or not, if there was some sort of behavior that would be negative to me or a negative reflection on me or my business. Those would be two things that would directly negatively impact my business.

**Interviewer**: How… on a scale of one to three, how successful is it for you to have Taylor as an employee? Like, does it help you monumentally or a little bit?

**BD039**: Right now I would say definitely a two. I mean it’d be right there in the middle, it’s not… I would say if I sold the boat and told Taylor he had to find his own thing, it’s not gonna be a huge loss cause I have like built up the business that I have. However, what I would like to be able to do in the coming years would actually be to reduce my workload a little bit more and put some focus into other kinda outreach things for my business and move some of that workload to Taylor and get him hired to max capacity.

**Interviewer**: And does your, does like release over twenty affect your business at all? Or does any of the outreach you do affect your business in a positive or negative way?

**BD039**: All of it’s been in a positive way, especially like the tagging program. When I introduced customers, of all types, to the tagging…

**Interviewer**: Talking about Tag Alabama, right?

**BD039**: Yeah. When I introduced people… and when I say ‘all types’ I’m very stereotypical saying that I have people that want to go fishin and don’t care what they catch, I have people that maybe wanna target a particular species and wanna harvest that fish, and some people also not really caring about what they catch but they want as much meat in the box, so you kinda have your meat-haulers, your catch a few of this and that, say have a few for dinner, and some people that could give a rip whether they keep fish, don’t keep fish, just wanna catch fish. So there’s three customers, and all three of them, there’s… really appreciate and enjoy the tagging process.

**Interviewer**: Really! Wow, okay.

**BD039**: Yup. Even the meat-haulers. Now some of them are a little reluctant, but if I kinda get that vibe that the meat is more important than some part of experience then we’ll try to achieve that limit of fish or reaching some sort of goal in how many fish they have before we start tagging fish, so the tagging may only happen towards the end of the trip but I’ve yet to have anybody say anything negative, always a positive.

**Interviewer**: Okay. So even for the meat guys, you’ll still tag a fish or two?

**BD039**: Well and my rule is I don't keep any speckled trout over the slot or redfish over the slot. We will keep redfish and specks in the slot but anything over the slot, the rule is we tag and release all of them. I don’t care if that’s the only fish they catch.

**Interviewer**: Okay. Always tag and release speckled trout over slot.

**BD039**: Yep, and the redfish over slot.

**Interviewer**: And do you get pushback from that?

**BD039**: A little, like very small amount. And it’s always gonna be from the quote unquote ‘meat-hauler’ stereotype.

**Interviewer**: And the opposite way, do people get more excited or have more respect for you and your business because you’re tagging fish? Or do you see that people return back to you or reach out to you because of Tag Alabama?

**BD039**: Yeah. I..I… 100% that is true because I’ll get a tag report from Dylan, screenshot it, send it to that customer who caught it, and I would say I probably get a booking 50% of the time.

**Interviewer**: I think Dylan told me that you told him that.

**BD039**: I mean, it’s… I’m never asking for a sale, I’m simply sending it to John – ‘John, hey remember that redfish you tagged…’

**Interviewer**: ‘Here’s the report’

**BD039**: ‘Here’s the report. It was recaptured.’ And sometimes a day later, sometimes hours later, I get a new booking. From that customer.

**Interviewer**: That’s awesome!

**BD039**: Or that customer just told someone, hell they might’ve been sitting there having lunch with somebody and got the report, told that person and they booked the trip.

**Interviewer**: Yeah and that person was like, ‘That’s so cool, I wanna go tag fish.’ Do you ever have people on the boat who, like, specifically say, ‘I wanna tag fish’ or…?

**BD039**: Yeah, yeah. Yeah, I have… more local people that are adopting that idea, I'll get more of that like, ‘Hey, I don’t wanna keep anything, I wanna tag everything.’

**Interviewer**: Are you relying on any regulars? Like do you have regular customers that you financially rely on?

**BD039**: Yeah. I mean I probably have, probably like 20% of my business I have that are just every year kind of rely on X amount trips anywhere from three to maybe even a dozen or more trips per year.

**Interviewer**: Okay. Cool. Alright! Do you have anything else? Any other factors? You gave me a lot of good stuff to work with.

**BD039**: Yeah, I enjoy… one of my favorite things is, I enjoy being a professional in the fishing industry and just sharing what I learn. Yeah, so, sharing what I learn and trying to… my goal right now and I’ve really enjoyed the tagging, but I’m also really trying to get onto a mission just trying to get people more engaged in fishing and targeting anything that swims, and not being quite as pigheaded about particular species, especially for those anglers that aren’t really good. Like, people that don’t really go out a lot, to go out with the mindset of they’re only gonna go target a particular species and they only catch one of that species or whatever, and like I’ll see these guys and girls at the boat ramp and you can tell they were a little disgusted or a little aggravated or upset with their day and possibly having all this laundry list of things that they’re gonna blame their bad fishing on and they didn’t really have like a good plan of trying to catch diversity. Like whenever my son and I go fishing, he likes to catch everything and he’s happiest when he’s catching anything and so that’s gonna be my next mission…

**Interviewer**: Is to just promote diverse catching?

**BD039**: Yeah, just promote like… yesterday we went out to Dixie Bar. We did not find any bull red, we didn’t find any jacks. I went to a nearshore rig, we were throwing these little diamond jigs and my customers were catching juvenile red snapper and spanish mackerel and bluefish and they were catching something on just about every cast. They were from the mountains of North Carolina and they appreciated every single thing that hit their… and then the whole time they were like, ‘well, if we can keep it, we’d love to take some. If we can’t, no big deal. If we go home with no fish, no big deal. If we go home with a lot of fish, it’s awesome.’ So those are my favorite types of fishing trips and really I think it could help the whole fishing community if more people were to embrace catching fish instead of speckled trout or redfish or…

**Interviewer**: Do you find yourself educating a lot?

**BD039**: \_\_?\_\_ ( unclear)

**Interviewer**: Okay, like you’re often educating your customers on like, ‘well we don’t need to be keeping ten red drum and this is…

**BD039**: Oh yeah, oh yeah. Yeah, constantly. And then I do fisher reports for all kinds of things whether podcasts or tv shows, Salt Strong network, and then like I said my local guys who need me to draw the X on the map to go catch a fish this weekend.

**Interviewer**: Why do you give them information? Like your guys that call you. Just part of the community thing?

**BD039**: I guess so, yeah. And it’s a pretty short list of people that I’ll give everything, all the information to. And some of them may be customers. Like I have a good customer…and I have kind of certain levels of what I give them. Sometimes I’ll give them specific depth ranges to be looking for, a particular zone. And then I have a couple of guys that just kinda been through with me through my childhood that I’m like, ‘Here’s where you need to go.’

**Interviewer**: Okay. And then, do you rely on the podcast or any of the fishing reports, like vice versa, are you relying on that for information as well? Or are you sort of giving and not receiving as much?

**BD039**: No, I listen to the podcast.

**Interviewer**: Okay. Does it help you?

**BD039**: A little bit, sometimes it’ll kinda… A lot of times I look for a little bit more of a reassurance that I’m not kinda leaving… I don't want to leave fish to find fish kind of thing. Like if I… say if Bobby or Richard or I guess Shane does some and stuff and I’ll listen and if it seems like they’re giving some clues that they’re really crushing it, like reading through the bullshit, but if it really sounds like they’re crushing it and I’ve been struggling, then I may extend like a phone call like, ‘Hey, what’s going on here. Are y’all really killing it or…’ you know and get a little bit… cut the bullshit out and get the real story and just try to… cause if I’m going out there and I’m struggling doing my thing for say three or four trips in a row, and I feel like I’m missing something then yeah, I’ll try to reach out and try to improve what I'm doing. Cause sometimes I may just be like really beating my head against the wall and I just think it’s kind of a seasonality thing and whereas somebody might be doing something way totally different than me and really having great success and not that I want to go and do what they are doing, but if I can incorporate… hell, it might be a bait type, like in the summertime, guys start switching to croakers and I may be a little bit behind and not switching to croakers, using croakers for bait, or maybe I've been using lures for too long into the spring and guys are switching to live shrimp, or whatever, stuff like that. Those kinds of \_\_?\_\_ are really what I’m looking for. So yeah, I use some information there.

**Interviewer**: Okay. So, I’m gonna go through a couple of these and I’m looking for how monumental, like on a scale of one to three, either positive or negative, the effects these have. So like a healthy economy, you mentioned that affects your business. Does it affect it positive one, two, or three, or negative one, two or three?

**BD039**: Positive three.

**Interviewer**: Positive three? What about a healthy fishery?

**BD039**: Probably a two, cause I can kind of fake the rest of it with entertainment.

**Interviewer**: Okay. So, entertainment… like entertaining customers for a healthy fishing business… you’d say one, two, or three?

**BD039**: Three.

**Interviewer**: Okay. Water quality?

**BD039**: Probably gonna be a three.

**Interviewer**: What about structures? Lighthouse (?), \_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_, how important are those?

**BD039**: Probably a one.

**Interviewer**: Is that the same for oyster reefs and grass beds?

**BD039**: I’d put them three because there’s just so much more real-life, natural things happening there.

**Interviewer**: Okay. What about coastal birds? Are you relying on coastal birds?

**BD039**: Yeah, I mean probably two, I’d say.

**Interviewer**: Can you explain that a little bit? Why are you relying on coastal birds?

**BD039**: Well, sometimes finding fish, finding bait fish to catch, finding bait fish that may be where the predator fish are, and then we all like to see a good bald eagle.

**Interviewer**: Yeah, that’s true. So that helps with your entertainment?

**BD039**: Yeah.

**Interviewer**: Marine mammals?

**BD039**: More entertainment, probably a one, a good one, like part of the entertainment, seeing a manatee, seeing a dolphin, I guess you could put sea turtles in… lumped in with the mammals.

**Interviewer**: Okay. What about Tag Alabama?

**BD039**: That’s a positive three. For entertainment, for learning, you know, just the learning the fish behaviors and movement. Yeah.

**Interviewer**: Fishery management?

**BD039**: Three.

**Interviewer**: Positive?

**BD039**: Yeah.

**Interviewer**: Except the…

**BD039**: The slower reaction I would say would be the negative three. I would love to see a little bit faster just kinda response to, ‘Hey look we acknowledge there’s something maybe going on, we wanna spend a little resources, dig a little deeper and see if we need to make a change for this year.’

**Interviewer**: How important is fishing location?

**BD039**: Fishing location, like, for catching fish?

**Interviewer**: Yeah. Or just for your business, like how important is your location? I know you can sort of control that so I guess it’s sorta hard to rate.

**BD039**: Yeah, I don’t know. Probably a one, cause I’m on the trail and I’m able to adapt to whatever I need to do there.

**Interviewer**: Okay. I think almost all of this I’ve rated. How important is seasonality?

**BD039**: It’s a big deal for me, I mean three, I’d say probably a three because I can break customers up and spread them out among different seasons and…?

**Interviewer**: Based on what they want to catch? Do you ever do that?

**BD039**: Yeah, what they want to catch or different tactics or yeah, all of that.

**Interviewer**: Okay. How much does freshwater runoff affect you?

**BD039**: It’s a huge… I’d say negative three, yeah.

**Interviewer**: What about tide levels?

**BD039**: Probably a negative one. I mean if we get through a stretch where we have excessively low water or excessively high water, it can eliminate certain fishing areas.

**Interviewer**: Okay. What about fish diversity?

**BD039**: Positive three. The more we have the better it is.

**Interviewer**: Okay. Does the customer’s location affect you positively or negatively?

**BD039**: Just because of where we’re sitting right here, if I have more customers located where I am, then kind of any requests of where I want to fish is not really an extreme request.

**Interviewer**: So you’re sort of neutral on that, huh?

**BD039**: Yeah, cause if there’s somebody in Orange Beach and I know we need to fish Grand Bay and Mississippi Sound, the odds are it’s not gonna be an easy fishing trip, easy request either for me to say, ‘Hey, I need you to either drive an hour and a half to almost two hours to where I wanna launch’, or a request of, ‘Hey, you’re gonna need to drive in a \_\_\_\_ and we’re still gonna have a thirty minute boat ride’, so. A lot of travel there.

**Interviewer**: Okay. How important are the fishing reports and the networking and things like that?

**BD039**: Positive one.

**Interviewer**: Okay. Okay, I think that’s everything. And then just, like, two more questions. What’s your highest level of education?

**BD039**: Two years college…so what is that… Associate’s in golf course management.

**Interviewer**: Really! I didn’t know you could do that! Golf course management.

**BD039**: Yeah. It was at, well now Coastal Community, but it was at Faulkner.

**Interviewer**: Oh, yeah. Yeah, yeah, yeah.

**BD039**: I think they still do it there.

**Interviewer**: Did you love golfing?  
  
**BD039**: No, it was a golf course management, so growing grass, doing the actual, you know, all the maintenance side of golf courses.

**Interviewer**: How come you decided you wanted to do that?

**BD039**: I got fired!

**Interviewer**: Oh!

**BD039**: So, I went through high school like in greenhouses and everything at high school and I just kinda fell in love with the green industry, and then, I was gonna go into landscaping and my buddy went and started working at a golf course and he was like, ‘Hey man, we work at a golf course and we can play all the free golf we want.’ So I went and got a job at a golf course and then switched my major from landscape management to golf course management, spent twelve years in golf course.

**Interviewer**: Did you really!

**BD039**: Yeah, worked all the way up to superintendent and then got fired and then got my captain’s license.

**Interviewer**: So would you still be doing that, like did you love it?  
  
**BD039**: I did.

**Interviewer**: How did you go from golf course to fishing?

**BD039**: I fished my whole life, ya know.

**Interviewer**: Okay, so when golf course was done you were like, ‘You know what, next best’.

**BD039**: Well, it was… I had four friends that I felt like were better superintendents than I was, were more experienced, had been in the business, and they all got fired around the same time I did, for various reasons. Like mine was because I had four of the golf greens were having trouble going into the winter, so they blamed the superintendent for having four greens that aren’t doing great.

**Interviewer**: Oh, okay. That’s kind of bogus.

**BD039**: And then, yeah. I compare being a golf course superintendent to being a SCC football coach. Like, you know, if you're not winning, you’re losing and you’re fired, and so.

**Interviewer**: That’s funny. Did you golf a lot?

**BD039**: No, the more I was there, the less I played. I enjoyed playing but I kinda went through this when I was younger, in my 20s, early 20s, I would fish, hunt, and golf. And golf kinda fit in wherever hunting and fishing wasn’t happening. And then I got to where, ‘You know what? If I want to get better at golf, I gotta slow down on fishing or hunting,’ And I was like… so I really slowed down on golfing.

**Interviewer**: Cause you said, ‘I’m not slowing down on hunting and fishing…so golfing’s out’.

**BD039**: Right. Yup. And then I fell in love with wintertime fishing.

**Interviewer**: Was that your favorite?

**BD039**: I enjoy it, yeah. I hate being cold but I love the style of fishing. So then I really started falling off on how much I hunted and started fishing more and then, yeah, so then when I got fired, I just got my captain’s license just because. My brother at the time was working like on a crew boat or something and I was like, ‘well maybe I’ll get a job there’ or whatever and then 2010 was the year of the oil spill, so then that whole thing… I was able to work for BP and basically make a year’s worth salary in about six weeks, I made a year’s salary.

**Interviewer**: Wait, doing what?

**BD039**: Doing a \_\_?\_\_ opportunity with the BP oil spill.

**Interviewer**: wow! Okay.

**BD039**: Yeah, I made like $72,000 in six weeks, yeah. So, I just kinda was like well I fished a little bit, worked a little bit, and then, I had a bunch of money in the bank when I went, finished out that year, and still uncertainty of what our fishery was gonna be like and I didn’t wanna…

**Interviewer**: After the oil spill, you mean?

**BD039**: Mhm. I didn’t feel comfortable saying, ‘You know what? I’m gonna pretend like there wasn’t an oil spill, I’m just gonna try to make this fishing thing work.’ And I found… you know, I’m just gonna start working for some jobs if there’s anything out there that would fit my needs and there’s a landscape company here in Daphne… they had an ad running for someone with plant health knowledge, grass growing ability, management experience, irrigation, all this stuff, and I was like well, looks like me right there, so I went and applied for the job and got the job and that was like where I learned the foundations of business, marketing, sales, all that stuff, so. Worked for me for six years, guided part time and finally got to a point where I was like, ‘I wanna have equity in what I’m doing’ and I was 35 at the time and I was like, ‘You know what? I’m gonna go and try to start a fishing business, like full on like focus on fishing, then I need to do it know.’

**Interviewer**: Was that sort of like an emotional decision? Were you like, ‘You know what, I love doing this, what am I doing not doing this full time?’

**BD039**: A little bit, yeah. And actually I had a… one of my regulars that had been with me for at least ten years now, that fished with me all through being part time and everything, I would take off work, I would take off the wednesday before, Thursday, Friday, and so I would be off for usually four or five days in a row, come back to work, and there was a lady that worked in our office, and she came in one day after I had ran that trip, she came in the office, she shut the door and she’s like, ‘Hey, take this advice from an old gray-haired lady, you need to go do what you love doing,’ and then it was like, I don’t know, a couple of weeks later, I had like a fishing trip with Richard where we had a group trip and we went, we ran the trip that morning and then I put the boat on the trailer, everybody was over kind of piling around and talking, shooting the bull or whatever, and I was like, ‘Alright, well I gotta get out of here, I gotta go to work, I’ve got some appointments scheduled this afternoon’ and Richard was like, ‘Man, fuck that real jobs stuff’ and anyways things started just kinda like, ‘Man you know what, I might need to try to do this’ so.

**Interviewer**: Was that risky? I mean was it scary?

**BD039**: A little bit, yeah.

**Interviewer**: I guess you were already a little bit established, so.

**BD039**: Yep, so I didn’t not have a giant book of work. I did not have a giant bank account. I had a boat that I was paying a note on. And then I was kinda like well, I’m already paying for a boat that I could be making more money on and then really started just shifting my mindset from a scarcity mindset to an abundance mindset of like what are the potential, what are the possibilities if I focus on fishing as my business vs. you know, I was working probably at minimum 50 hours a week with the landscaping company… doesn’t give you a lot of time to do much kind of like putting thought into what you could potentially do on your own, cause once I leave there, I go home and try to be a family guy and so, it’s like, ‘You know what, there’s no better time than now,’ and when I talked to my boss… we had a meeting around Thanksgiving and we had a sheet of like all the goals that we had set for the year and I hit like a 100 to 125% or better on all the goals and he asked me, ‘So like, what do you want to do’ and I was like, ‘I wanna go fishing’ so yeah, that was November of 16 and he said, ‘Alright well when are you gonna go fish?’ and I said, ‘well, I don’t know that I can just leave, you know, in the next couple weeks’, he said, ‘I’d appreciate if you could help me find your replacement’ so we agreed that March 1st of 17 would be my first day on my own. I had some sleepless nights leading up to it.

**Interviewer**: Just that being scary.

**BD039**: Just, yeah, just trying to… how’s is it all gonna work, how’s \_\_\_ getting paid..

**Interviewer**: Well, and working for yourself too, I mean that can be scary.

**BD039**: I had faith in myself… worry about work. How are the customers and this and that, and you know, not a real spiritual guy but praying on it and stuff like that and I had some opportunities… Like it was really strange that… I was listening to a lot of podcasts and stuff and I would have things just like on random or whatever and there would be these podcasts that would be like all kind of self help type situations, situational things, like, ‘Hey, if you’re looking to start up a new business, then here’s ten ways we’re gonna help you understand how to start up a new business’ and stuff that’s like, holy shit, eye opening thing after another and my mind was a sponge at that point. And having the stress of making that jump was… I think really made me just absorb a whole bunch of information in a short period of time. And I build all my… pretty much everything online myself, like watched Youtube videos on how to do this how to do that and that was really where I dissected my competition, like Richard and Bobby being my competition, I dissected how they were getting their business and I went for everything, low-hanging fruit, that they weren’t trying to get. Like I felt like if there were 100 opportunities to gain business of things that Richard Rutland and Bobby (last name) weren’t doing and I also asked those guys for a little bit of help and overflow business, I felt like that could be one path towards just completely gathering a bunch of customers that those two guys that were very successful were not even… they weren’t even trying to get those customers, those customers didn’t even know they existed.

**Interviewer**: Yeah, okay. You said the low-hanging fruit that Richard and Bobby weren’t going for… Are you talking about locations, or fish species, or?

**BD039**: No, like social media. Like, neither one of them were doing like anything social media.

**Interviewer**: Okay, so you filled in the gaps that they weren’t really going for?

**BD039**: Mhm. Hell, I was printing brochures and putting them in hotels and just reaching out to other fishing guides. But, first off, the easiest stuff was all the o-line presences, like having a Tripadvisor, having a Yelp account, having a Facebook, having an Instagram, Youtube, Twitter, all those things that were free and still are free that I was able to just build those business pages for and there was not a single Cold Blooded fishing or A Team fishing on any of those platforms, so I wasn’t… like I viewed those guys as friends but they’re also competitors in the same industry, and anything that I could see that would set myself apart or different than what they were offering and the customers they were getting, and I was like I’m not even interfering with their business.

**Interviewer**: Cause you’re finding like a completely different group of people. So how important was your online presence to your business?

**BD039**: Oh it was three for sure.

**Interviewer**: And then your competition… is that a negative?

**BD039**: The only negative would be the guys that don’t do a good job. Sometimes that can be a positive if they don’t do a good job.

**Interviewer**: And then you get their customers?

**BD039**: Yeah, so it goes both ways. So the way I look at it is if friggin’ Joe Blow goes out and just does a really half-assed job, doesn’t take care of the customers, this is there first time they’ve ever been to Gulf Shores or Dauphin Island, then they leave with an experience that didn’t have a good reflection of what Alabama had to offer.

**Interviewer**: Yeah, okay. And so that’s how it can negatively affect you, your company?

**BD039**: Yeah, but if someone has experienced and kind of understands the way things are or what the capabilities are around here and they have a shitty experience with a captain, then they are gonna look for a different captain the next time, or potentially look for a different captain next time and usually if they end up on my boat I don’t have to worry about them going anywhere.

**Interviewer**: Yeah, okay. Rewinding like ten minutes, would you say the oil spill had a positive impact on your fishing business, because that’s how you got your captain’s license and you started it all?

**BD039**: Well, I had my captain’s license before… I went through sea school prior to the oil spill, so that didn't affect it. Financially, a little bit.

**Interviewer**: Okay, positive?

**BD039**: Yeah, a little bit on the positive. But then the negative of what does it do to the fishery… overall, long-term it ended up being a positive impact because it also gave me a little anxiety of going full time into being a captain at that point and not being really business… I wasn't business ready, I didn't have the… so it forced me to prolong the fishing career.

**Interviewer**: Because you were scared like, ‘Oh that could happen on a whim, what if I was relying on that financially and that happened’?

**BD039**: Moreso not sure what was gonna happen on the short-term, are we gonna start having massive fish kills, are people not gonna come to Alabama coast to go fishing, what are those impacts gonna be. Because of those what-ifs, steered me towards a short-term career in a totally different industry which ended up having a positive, so. Anyway, so I guess a positive. Very weird. I’m probably one of the few that would say that.

**Interviewer**: Yeah, but that’s why we’re doing these maps. Okay, so the oil spill affected your business savviness which affected your fishing business. Okay. And, I love it! Two years college… what year were you born?

**BD039**: 80.

**Interviewer**: And, cool. So, in two weeks time, on November… hold on I gotta look at my calendar… I think it’s the 14th and the 15th, we’re doing a workshop and we’re offering specifically you, $250 a day just to show up. And you can come to one day or both days, but you’ll get $250 a day and breakfast and lunch will be provided. All the participants are stakeholders so I think Richard Rutland’s coming, Matthew Swiggums, you know, just a bunch of random people that you would know. So it’s November 15th and November 16th. Would you be interested in attending?

**BD039**: Do you know the times of that?

**Interviewer**: November 15th is ten to four and November 16th is nine to one.

**BD039**: I would not be able to attend.

**Interviewer**: Okay, no problem. I figured probably not. And then do you have anybody involved in this industry that you think would be interested in doing this? In talking and attending the workshop?

**BD039**: Just, specifically, all the social aspect of fishing?

**Interviewer**: Yeah, like do you have any other friends, like I’m going to speak with Skipper and Butch and we’ve already talked with Richard Rutland and like do you know anyone else in this community that would want to talk to us or would have the time. Bobby (last name) apparently wants to talk to us cause he’s got a lot of things to say and wants to be a part of the science. Like is there anybody like that that you can think of that maybe I haven’t thought of.

**BD039**: I mean it might be some of these guys that are just getting started like Taylor. That might be an interesting idea to look at some of these guys that have just recently gotten their license.

**Interviewer**: Just starting, yeah, see what they think about the science and management and everything. Okay, cool, alright.

**BD039**: You know, another, Noah Barker.

**Interviewer**: Yeah, I know him. That’s a good idea. How can I reach out to Noah Barker? Is he on social media? I’m sure Dylan’s friends with him. I’ve met him before.

**BD039**: Here this’s his number.