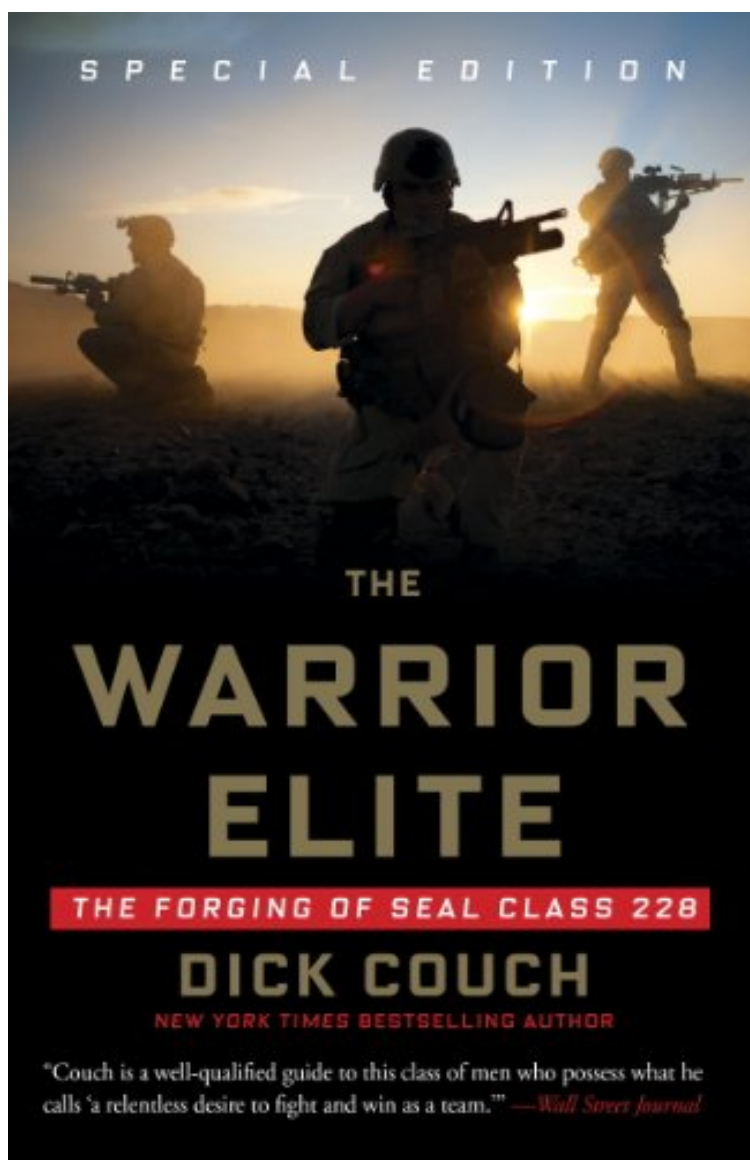


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The Warrior Elite: The Forging of SEAL Class 228



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Description :

Prsentation de l'diteurWith a postscript describing SEAL efforts in Afghanistan, The Warrior Elite takes you into the toughest, longest, and most relentless military training in the world.What does it take to become a Navy SEAL? What makes talented, intelligent young men volunteer for physical punishment, cold water, and days without sleep? In The Warrior Elite, former Navy SEAL Dick Couch documents the process that transforms young men into warriors. SEAL training is the distillation of the human spirit, a tradition-bound ordeal that seeks to find men with character, courage, and the burning desire to win at all costs, men who

would rather die than quit. From the Trade Paperback edition. Extrait The Beginning Monday, 4 October 1999. A fine mist hangs over the Naval Amphibious Base on Coronado as a cool marine air layer steals in from the Pacific, extinguishing the stars. The lights along Guadalcanal Road are a harsh, haloed yellow. The base is quiet. Behind a chain-link fence with diagonal privacy slats, Class 228 waits anxiously, seated on the concrete pool deck. The new BUD/S trainees wear only canvas UDT swim trunks. They are compressed into tight rows, chests to backs, in bobsled fashion to conserve body heat. The large clock on the cinder-block wall reads 5:00 a.m.-0500, or zero five hundred, in military jargon. They are wet from a recent shower. Neat rows of duffel bags that contain the students' uniforms, boots, and training gear separate each human file. The pool-officially called the combat training tank, or CTT-has already been prepared for the first evolution.

The students had arrived thirty minutes earlier to roll and stow the pool covers and string the lane markers. "Feet!" yells the class leader. "FEET!" The voices of nearly a hundred young men answer in unison as they scramble into ranks. "In-struct-tor Ree-no!" intones the class leader. "HOOYAH, INSTRUCTOR REE-NO!" the class responds in full roar. The first day of training has begun for Class 228. It's pitch black except for the building lights that cut into the mist and the underwater pool lights that illuminate a blue mirror surface. The members of Basic Underwater Demolition/SEAL Class 228 stand at attention in fourteen files, each file forming a boat crew of seven BUD/S trainees. Instructor Reno Alberto, Class 228's proctor for the two-week BUD/S Indoctrination Course, surveys the pool. Apparently satisfied the CTT is ready, he turns and regards Class 228 for a long moment. "Drop," he says quietly. "DROP!" 228 echoes as the class melts to the deck, each student scrambling to claim a vacant piece of concrete. They wait, arms extended, holding their bodies in a rigid, leaning-rest position. "Push 'em out." "Push-ups!" yells the class leader. "PUSH-UPS!" responds 228. "Down!" "ONE!" "Down!" "TWO!" Class 228 loudly counts out twenty push-ups, then returns to the leaning rest. "In-struct-tor Ree-no," calls the class leader. "HOOYAH, INSTRUCTOR REE-NO!" the students yell in unison. Reno stands off to one side, arms folded, apparently uninterested in the mass of students leaning on their outstretched arms. "Push 'em out," he commands softly. "Push-ups!" "PUSH-UPS!" After two more rounds of this, Reno leaves them in the leaning rest for close to five minutes. By now the students are twisting and thrusting their buttocks into the air in an effort to relieve the burning in their arms. "Recover," he says in the same measured voice. "FEET!" the class responds, this time with less zeal. "Give me a report, Mister Gallagher." Lieutenant (junior grade) William Gallagher takes the class muster board from Machinist Mate First Class Robert Carreola, 228's leading petty officer, or LPO.

Gallagher and Carreola are the class leader and class leading petty officer, respectively, as they are the senior officer and senior enlisted trainee in Class 228. Carreola is five-ten, but he appears shorter-partly because he has a broad, highly developed upper body and partly because his lieutenant is six-two. Bill Gallagher is a slim, serious young man with a shy smile. He came to the Naval Academy from northern Virginia, recruited to play lacrosse for Navy. Gallagher has wanted to be a Navy SEAL since 1982, when his father gave him an article from Parade magazine with pictures of SEALs and BUD/S training. He was seven years old. Bill Gallagher was unable to come to BUD/S from Annapolis, so he went directly from the Academy to the fleet. Now, as a qualified surface warfare officer with two years at sea, he stands at the head of Class 228. His goal is still to become a Navy SEAL. Bob Carreola has been in the Navy for eleven years; this is his second try at BUD/S. He is thirty-one years old with more than a decade of service in naval aviation squadrons. His goal is also to be a Navy SEAL. "Instructor, Class Two-two-eight is formed; ninety-eight men assigned, ninety-five men present. I have one man on watch and two men at medical for sick call." "Ninety-five men present, Lieutenant?" "Hooyah, Instructor Reno." "That's wrong, sir. Drop and push 'em out. You too, Carreola." While Gallagher and Carreola begin pushing concrete, Reno turns to the class. "The rest of you, seats." "SEATS!" bellows Class 228 as the young men hit the concrete. They return to their compressed boat-crew files. They will sit like this often in the days and weeks ahead, hugging the man in front of them to stay warm.

Gallagher and Carreola finish their push-ups and chant, "Hooyah, Instructor Reno!" "Push 'em out," Reno replies. This is not the last time that Lieutenant Gallagher and Petty Officer Carreola will personally pay for the sins of the class. One of the boat-crew leaders failed to report to Gallagher that one of his men was UA, or an unauthorized absence. This oversight caused Gallagher to give a bad muster; the actual number of men on the pool deck this morning is ninety-four. When one man in the class screws up, sometimes the whole class pays the tab. Sometimes a single boat crew pays or just the class leaders. But someone always pays. "Now listen up," Reno says, turning to the class, finally raising his voice. He glances at his watch; it's 0510. "This is bullshit. You guys better get it together . . . now! Things are going to start to get difficult around here. We know most of you won't be here in another two months, but if you don't start pulling as a

team, none of you will be here! It's a simple muster, gentlemen. If you can't get that done, what are you going to do when you get into First Phase and things really become difficult?" The class listens silently. Gallagher and Carreola continue to push concrete. Reno regards the files of young men seated on the pool deck, then turns to the two sweating trainees. "Recover." They scramble up and take their places at the head of their boat crews. "This morning, gentlemen, we're going to take the basic screening test. You all passed this test at your last command or you wouldn't be here. If you can't pass it again this morning, you'll be back in the fleet just as soon as we can get you there. Understood?" "HOOYAH, INSTRUCTOR RENO!" .

.BUD/S training is conducted in three distinct phases. First Phase is the conditioning phase, followed by Second Phase-diving-and Third Phase-weapons and tactics. In order to prepare them for the rigors of First Phase, the trainees must first complete the two-week Indoctrination Course. Here they will learn the rules and conventions of BUD/S training. They will learn how to conduct themselves at the pool, how to run the obstacle course, and how to maneuver small boats through the surf. They will also learn the complex set of procedures and protocols needed in First Phase and the rest of BUD/S training-customs they must observe if they hope to survive this rite of passage. During this indoctrination period, they also begin to learn about SEAL culture and begin to absorb the ethos of this warrior class. In these first few minutes of the

Indoctrination Course, Class 228 has already learned something about accountability and leadership. An officer or petty officer must always account for his men. SEALs have died in combat, but never has one been left behind. The Indoctrination Course, or Indoc, also helps the trainees to physically prepare for First Phase. Some members of Class 228 have been at BUD/S for a few days, a few for as long as two months. Eight are rollbacks from a previous class-men recently injured in training who are beginning again with Class 228.

These two weeks of pretraining are designed to physically and mentally bring the class together. This is a very important time. Most of the students have prepared for this individually. Now they will live and train as a class-as a team. One hundred fourteen souls were originally assigned, or had orders, to BUD/S Class 228.

Most are relatively new to the Phil E. Bucklew Naval Special Warfare Center, Coronado, California, where BUD/S is conducted. Twelve members of 228, like Bob Carreola, are here for a second time. If a student quits, he must return to fleet duty for at least eighteen months before he can return for another try-if he demonstrated potential on his first attempt and was recommended for a second try. Class 228 had 114 men who thought they wanted to become Navy SEALs. But only 98 are on the roster on the first day of indoctrination.

A few of the no-shows were sailors who were unhappy with their ship or duty station. They were fit enough to pass the BUD/S screening exam and accepted the orders to BUD/S as a way to make a change. Others found the relatively modest conditioning swims and runs before Indoc more than they bargained for. And there are always a few who, upon their arrival at BUD/S, are simply intimidated. When they see what SEAL trainees are asked to do, they quit before they begin. So the attrition began even before

Class 228 started its first official day of training. Any student at BUD/S, at any time, can DOR-drop on request. All he has to do is say, "I quit." Those assigned to Class 228 who quit prior to the beginning of Indoc will be reassigned back to the fleet. Today, Class 228 has to earn the privilege of continuing with the Indoctrination Course. Each trainee must again pass the BUD/S screening test: 1. A five-hundred-yard swim using the breast- or sidestroke in twelve minutes, thirty seconds 2. A minimum of forty-two push-ups in two minutes 3. A minimum of fifty sit-ups in two minutes 4. A minimum of six dead-hang pull-ups 5. A mile-and-a-half run in eleven minutes, thirty seconds wearing boots and long pants All but one in Class 228 passes the screening test. This buys the trainees a ticket to proceed with their training for two more weeks. A few of the men are close to the minimums, but most handle the run and the swim with at least a minute to spare. Eighty push-ups, a hundred sit-ups, and fifteen pull-ups are not uncommon. There are those in the teams and among

the instructor staff who think the screening minimums are too low-that the bar should be higher for those entering BUD/S. This test is not a perfect predictor for who will succeed and who will fail. In the demanding days ahead, a few of those who struggled to pass the screening test will make it to graduation. Those are the ones who arrived at BUD/S with a soft body and a strong spirit. Some of the more physically gifted will find that they have no stomach for the punishment that lies ahead, and they will quit as soon as they become tired and cold. They will be timed and tested during Indoc, but only two things can remove a student from the two-week Indoctrination Course: a DOR or failing a comprehensive psychological evaluation given to each new arrival. Only one member of Class 228 fails the psych exam. After the screening test, the men of Class 228 gather their gear from the pool deck and hustle off to chow. Following their morning meal, they will run in formation across the Naval Amphibious Base to the Special Warfare Center located on the ocean side of Highway 75, which bisects the base. The Amphibious Base is the host facility for the West Coast SEAL

teams and other Naval Special Warfare commands, as well as the Naval Special Warfare Center. Coronado is a near-island that sits in the center of San Diego Bay, connected at its southernmost tip to the mainland by way of a narrow, eight-mile-long sand spit called the Silver Strand. The Naval Amphibious Base is located on the northern portion of this narrow strand, just south of the village of Coronado. The north end of Coronado proper is occupied by the massive North Island Naval Air Station. Known as NAS North Island, this facility is a major maintenance, training, and repair depot for the naval air arm of the Pacific Fleet.

Aircraft Carrier Number One, the USS Langley, moored at North Island in 1924 and pioneered naval aviation in the Pacific. Today, North Island is home for two West Coast-based aircraft carriers. The Naval Amphibious Base, built on reclaimed land in 1943, is a relative newcomer. Nestled between NAS North Island and the much smaller Naval Amphibious Base on the Silver Strand is the idyllic resort community of Coronado. "Idyllic" is an understatement; Coronado is a neat, manicured residential setting of expensive homes with broad, white-sand beaches on the Pacific side and the San Diego skyline on the bay side.

Anchoring the western end of Orange Avenue, a palm-lined main boulevard of eateries, boutiques, and art galleries, is the famous Hotel del Coronado. This historic hotel has been a favorite of presidents, royalty, and movie stars for over a century. When it was built in 1887, it was the largest resort hotel in the world. Today it stands as an elegant architectural monument to the grace and splendor of a past era. Just south of the Hotel del (as it's sometimes called), between the hotel and the Amphibious Base, is a series of modern, high-rise beach condominiums. These stark, concrete towers, punctuated by pools, gardens, and verandas, couldn't be more dissimilar to the graceful wooden curves and red-pinnacled roofs of the historic and charming Hotel del Coronado. Further south, the contrast increases. Less than three hundred yards from the concrete condo towers on this gorgeous strip of white-sand beach, the U.S. Navy conducts the toughest military training in the free world. . . .

Revue de presse "The Warrior Elite is the first book that captures how the SEAL spirit is tempered. It reveals all the grit, sweat, mud, and blood of BUD/S training -- real-time, down and dirty. This is a must-read if you want to know what becoming a virtual warrior is all about." -- Governor Jesse Ventura, BUD/S Class 58 "A wonderful, thought-provoking book by Dick Couch and a quick study of human personalities; his conclusions are optimistic and uplifting." -- Vice Admiral James Stockdale (USN. Ret.) Recipient of the Congressional Medal of Honor. "The Warrior Elite offers superb insight into the making of a Navy SEAL. Dick Couch takes the reader through the incredible challenges of basic training and into the minds of these unique warriors who comprise our nation's highly selective fighting force. Having served extensively with Dick in combat as junior officers in Vietnam, I now understand the "how's and why's" of his profession and the SEALs' commitment to mission. The Warrior Elite captures the essence of a Navy SEAL -- the indomitable will to win and steadfast commitment to team." -- Robert J. Natter, Admiral, U.S. Navy, Commander in Chief, U.S. Atlantic Fleet "An authentic voice that spells out what it takes to become a SEAL--the sheer grit to overcome all obstacles. America is lucky that it continues to attract such men as these to serve." -- Theodore Roosevelt IV, Class 36 From the Hardcover edition.