



## PREFACE

Kory Knowles, a Navy Seal and creator of *The Seal Quest*, talks about what it takes to be one of the Elite. This comprehensive interview delves into the training and workouts of Basic Underwater Demolition/SEAL, or **BUD/S** team members. Kory also tells us about heart, spirituality and determination. You don't want to miss this one!

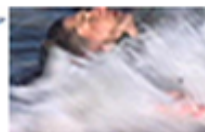
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Jim Smith "Smitty", CSCS, CFT, USAW

The Diesel Crew

# THE SEAL QUEST

Ultimate BUD/S Preparation



Your Integrity is your destiny!



## **Diesel Interview: IT2(SEAL) Kory Knowles, CHEK II, CFT**

Creator of *The Seal Quest*

### **Q1**

**Tell us a little about yourself. What is your background? Education? Where you grew up? What sports you participated in? What is your current job/position?**

Right now I am the SEAL Mentor at NRD Miami and owner of The SEAL Quest. My passion is to develop the next generation of SEALs and warriors to go fight this war on terror. I was born in Wichita, Kansas and then soon after moved to St Pete, Florida where I grew up. I played soccer, wrestled, ran a lot of 5 and 10K races, but mostly I was a gym rat. I actually wrote about my road to becoming a SEAL here: <http://www.TheSealQuest.com/KorysStory.htm>.

I am on a Quest. The reason my website has the name [TheSealQuest.com](http://www.TheSealQuest.com) is because of my experience. Actually Kale (my brother) came up with the name because he remembers the journey I was on. I became a SEAL not because I had a desire to be a great warrior or kill as many people as I could get my sites

on. I became a SEAL because it was the only thing in my life that made since and I was drawn to it. I didn't choose to be a SEAL this journey chose me. It was the natural progression and expression of who I am as a man. I love adventure but I'm not a senseless thrill seeker. I love a challenge and I was at a point in my life to make my mark. I was an eagle ready to test my wings. I was ready to soar. I have an unquenchable desire to excel and reach for my limits in life.



I started my SEAL journey in July of 1988 and I have not lost my way. I have realized my dreams and found myself along the way. I have achieved what only a handful of men can say they have accomplished in life. I have peace. Yes I know you were thinking that being a SEAL was the pinnacle of my life, but for me it was only the springboard. I have God and my faith. I have my beautiful wife and my adorable kids. I have my family close by here in Florida. But when all is said and done for me being a SEAL is not my identity. My identity is in Jesus Christ. That is truly the greatest accomplishment of my life. At this point in my life and from my current vantage point of looking backwards from experience and through my trials instead of looking forwards with anticipation, being a SEAL for me was one of several key defining points in my life. Becoming a SEAL was not the end of my journey. I still am not there yet. I am very proud of my accomplishments in my life and have a lot of very fond memories. I have to add that being a husband, Dad; among others have had as much weight in defining who I am.

I want to put this into perspective. Whether a person makes it through BUD/S or not does not define them. The manner in which you play the game and travel your journey does define you. My journey is unique to me. No one can relive my experiences or take my journey. I don't place a higher value on a person based on society's value of accomplishments. Be the best at whatever you do and learn

to be content with where you are in life and what you have accomplished. If you aren't okay with who you are now you won't be okay with who you are as a SEAL. We operate out of our programs and habits we have forged over our entire lives. It has been said that the true definition of insanity is to do the same things over and over expecting a different response or reaction. If you have been living your life with your current programming and you are not getting what you want out of life then you need to change your programs and habits. Your programs are your attitudes and thinking that are automatic to specific stimulus. The great thing is that you get to decide what to think and how you are going to respond. I continually change my thinking, attitudes, and habits. I will always set new goals and continue to dream. I will forever strive to grow and expand my limits. I love the dance of life and I wouldn't have wanted to miss it for anything. Looking back I smile and I feel for you guys. You will make your way and when you feel the lights are going dim on your dreams just think of how you will feel once you have accomplished your current quest. Life is truly a series of quests. If you lose the passion you lose life.



I always recommend writing down how becoming a SEAL will make you feel. You need to have those thoughts and feelings burned into your soul. You are going to need them on instant recall during HELL WEEK. In the cold of the night when you feel all is lost and your reasoning slips to doubt and you start to chip away at your resolve with self defeating thoughts you are going to need to remind yourself of your quest and how it will make you feel to conquer it. You make it through BUD/S with your heart because your mind will deceive you. You have to feel it. Just thinking about being a SEAL and getting through BUD/S will not cut it and is an absolute waste of time. If you can get your goals and dreams and turn them into a burning passion that wells up in your soul then you can get through

BUD/S. It is the kind of feeling you get when you watch a soldier getting buried at the National Cemetery. It is the feeling you get in your gut when you listen to the National Anthem before a ball game. I feel it in my bones. If you can't physically feel it then I don't think you have it.

You have a responsibility to be true to who you are. I have been true to myself. My whole point here is that in life you are on a Quest and only you know what is right for you. Conquer yourself and the rest is history. Life is too short to look back so make your mark.

## Q2

### Why are you unique?

I don't feel unique. I just try to pave a path of success for our young aspiring future Navy SEAL, SWCC, EOD and DIVERS. I no longer operate so I man the teams with the most qualified individuals I can. I have been a SEAL Operator, SEAL Instructor, SEAL Recruiter and now I am a SEAL Mentor so I feel I can bridge the gap between dreaming about being a SEAL and the reality of getting pinned and off to fight the global war on terror.



## Q3

### What kind of man does it take to be a SEAL?

Other than meeting the enlistment criteria for the Navy and earning a SEAL contract; I think it takes someone that has committed themselves to this challenge. I think the only way you can become a Navy SEAL, assuming you are physically, intellectually, and mentally capable, is to believe you can with all your

heart. Just like "The Little Engine that Could" you have to think you can and never lose focus on that. If you can get to BUD/S you can get through it.

## Q4

**You mentioned in our initial communication that those who have done non-conventional training in preparation for their SEALs training, have the greatest potential for success. Can you elaborate on that? How are kettlebells, sandbags, logs, thick ropes, rocks used? If at all?**



I feel that BUD/S is one of those environments that is chaos to the body. Those that train for BUD/S or any SPECOP program and focus their training primarily on running, swimming, and calisthenics are grossly underestimating the demands these programs will place on their bodies over time.

When you isolate all of the tasks that you are required to perform at BUD/S you can more accurately predict your body's needs and build an exercise program that will follow the SAID principle. The more non-conventional approach works best because you can be random and use your creativity. You have to work your body in all planes of motion and train movements not muscles for success at BUD/S. You mentioned kettlebells, sandbags, logs, thick ropes, rocks, etc. I recommend and use all of the above as well as medicine balls, rings, paralletes, dumbbells, bodies, towels, and anything that I can simulate a task or functional requirement at BUD/S.

## Q5

**I been through your site and it is amazing. The workouts, the intensity, the heart...it seems almost primal. Talk to me about the state of mind you need to be in to get through Hell Week. What is the percentage of drops per class?**

Thank you. This is truly a passion of mine. I know this sounds cliché but the only way to get through Hell Week is, just don't quit! Recognize that most of Hell Week is going to be miserable but not unbearable. In each 6 hour block throughout Hell Week you will get 1 hour to eat and 5 hours to suffer. Go from one evolution to the next and stay focused. Just don't quit.

## Q6

**You prepare young men to take on the challenges of becoming a SEAL. Tell me the structure of your program. Bodyweight exercises progressing into loaded drills?**

I mentioned earlier that I break things down to the bare tasks or physical requirements needed at BUD/S. I feel training movements is most effective and



allows the most freedom from injury and builds the strength endurance and reserve needed to get through BUD/S. I use a combination of bodyweight and loaded exercises in circuit fashion because this most resembles a day at BUD/S.

You have to contend with the Obstacle course, carrying a boat or log, runs to chow, endless pushups, grinder workouts, pool work, ocean swims, buddy carries, surf passage, soft sand running, holding a boat at extended

arm carry, etc. Grip strength, running and swimming endurance, breath holding, etc are things to consider when putting a program together. Not to mention the ability to tolerate pain, endure cold, overcome unrealistic timelines to complete tasks, days with little sleep, academic tests, skills tests, among others. A SEAL is a complete package in physical, mental, intellectual and emotional proficiency. SEALs are awesome warriors and require a preparation program that works.

## Q7

**Tell me about the TSQ Challenges.**

These were born out of the [www.crossfit.com](http://www.crossfit.com) concepts and methodologies. I then tweaked them to apply to the context of BUD/S training. They are also used for competition and as a benchmark to gauge one's readiness for the rigors of BUD/S.

## Q8

**If someone gets injured during maneuvers – what happens? They are dropped and have to start over with the next class?**



The injury and circumstances will dictate what happens. Usually if they can heal in a reasonable time they will start with the next class they are able to perform. If the injury will take too long to heal then there is a possibility of Navy Fleet time.

## Q9

**What is the schedule for a typical day of BUD/S training? How are classes integrated into routine?**

The article reinventing BUD/S answers this question.

<http://www.mediacen.navy.mil/pubs/allhands/apr01/pg24.htm> I would also visit [www.seal.navy.mil](http://www.seal.navy.mil)

## Q10

**You need to be able to count on the man next to you during the most critical moment – tell me how you foster this environment between the men in training?**

Teamwork is the hallmark of being a SEAL. From day one you are paired with your swim buddy that you are not allowed to stray from for more than 6 feet. You are assigned to a BUD/S Class that is broken down into boat crews of 6 to 7 men. You learn that no man is an island and you need the expertise of each SEAL to succeed. BUD/S starts with a lot of individual evolutions such as 50 yard underwater swim or underwater knot tying, but they quickly progress to team evolutions where you reap the rewards if you succeed or pay in pain if you fail such as rock portage.



The training is based on the crawl, walk, run, sprint method and it takes BUD/S and SEAL Qualification Training to engrain this into the new SEAL. Then it is honed during an 18 month SEAL Platoon workup.

**DIESEL CREW ARTICLES – IT2(SEAL)KORY KNOWLES, CHEKII, CFT**

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## Q11

### **How has BUD/S changed since you graduated in 1990?**

BUD/S has gotten smarter and the training is more streamlined. There has been a lot of research done to improve the quality of the warrior and increase the throughput without losing the standard. BUD/S has succeeded in producing a more capable warrior but the throughput has not gone up because of the lack of qualified individuals getting to BUD/S from boot camp and the fleet.

## Q12

### **What was your biggest success? What did you learn from that experience?**

I don't think I am there yet. I have so many dreams and so much more to accomplish in life. I don't look back very often. I my sights set on a gym and thriving business in corporate and individual achievement coaching. I see myself as a Life Coach to those that want to excel. My best is yet to come.

## Q13

### **What was your biggest failure? What did you learn from that experience?**

My biggest failure was a dot com company that I tried to build in 2000 that totally fell apart and found my unemployed. I really went for it and put all of my energy into making this happen. I learned that it is okay to fail as long as you don't quit. I learned that not everyone plays by the same rules or agenda. I learned that most don't have a vision or passion in life. I have learned more from my failures than from my successes in life. I do and I am not afraid to fail, I think that all great success comes at the risk of enormous and catastrophic failure. I am okay with that because in the end I will always succeed or die trying.

## Q14

Tell me about Jonathan Livingston Seagull, by Richard Bach.

Wow, you really did go through my site. Well I love this book because it is about a seagull that couldn't settle for the status quo. I am not the kind of guy that settles for what others think or a set of limitations on life. I see myself as a seagull that dares to soar and dive in a way that has not been done before, and then give back to the next generation.

*"Don't believe what your eyes are telling you. All they show is limitation. Look with your understanding, find out what you already know, and you'll see the way to fly."*

## QUICK WORD ASSOCIATION

What is the first thoughts that come to mind, when I say...

**Focus** – Living in the zone, my preferred place

**Hypothermia** – State of mind, fight it

**The Log "Ole Misery"** – PAIN!!!

**A Close Quarter Fight** – You better be on my team

**Paul Chek** – Genius

**The Powerlung** – Just hold your breath and work intervals

**Quitters** – Somehow lost their way

**Kettlebells** – Awesome play time

**Family** – My joy on earth



## Q15

**Finish this statement, "If I could go back 5 years, I would do the following 5 things (that I just recently accomplished) immediately – and not wait!**

...I would (1) date my wife more often (2) donate more of my time to those in need (3) pray more (4) read more (5) play more

## Q16

**Does your background predispose you to be too rigid when dealing with the general population?**

If you asked my wife she would say an emphatic yes. I expect a lot and I have a hard time with incompetence, failure, and a lazy attitude towards life.

## Q17

**What 5 sites do you go to everyday?**

[www.thesealquest.com](http://www.thesealquest.com)

[www.biblicaltraining.org](http://www.biblicaltraining.org)

[www.t-nation.com](http://www.t-nation.com)

[www.crossfit.com](http://www.crossfit.com)

[www.ptonthenet.com](http://www.ptonthenet.com)

## Q18

### **What 's coming up for you in the near future? What's on your calendar?**

I have just started as a SEAL Mentor working for [www.ustactical.com](http://www.ustactical.com) at NRD Miami. So I am going to be here for the next 5 years. Right now I am focused on recruiting, mentoring and preparing the next generation of SEALs through a comprehensive targeted recruiting and training program in south Florida. I love my job.

Within the next 5 years I plan to open a high performance gym somewhere in North Carolina and expand The SEAL Quest into corporate team building seminars and challenges.

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*Editor's Note:*

*Kory,*

*Thanks a million for such a great interview. I appreciate it even more, knowing how busy your schedule is...Everybody, go out and checkout Kory's site, [TheSealQuest.com](http://TheSealQuest.com)!!!*

*Smitty*