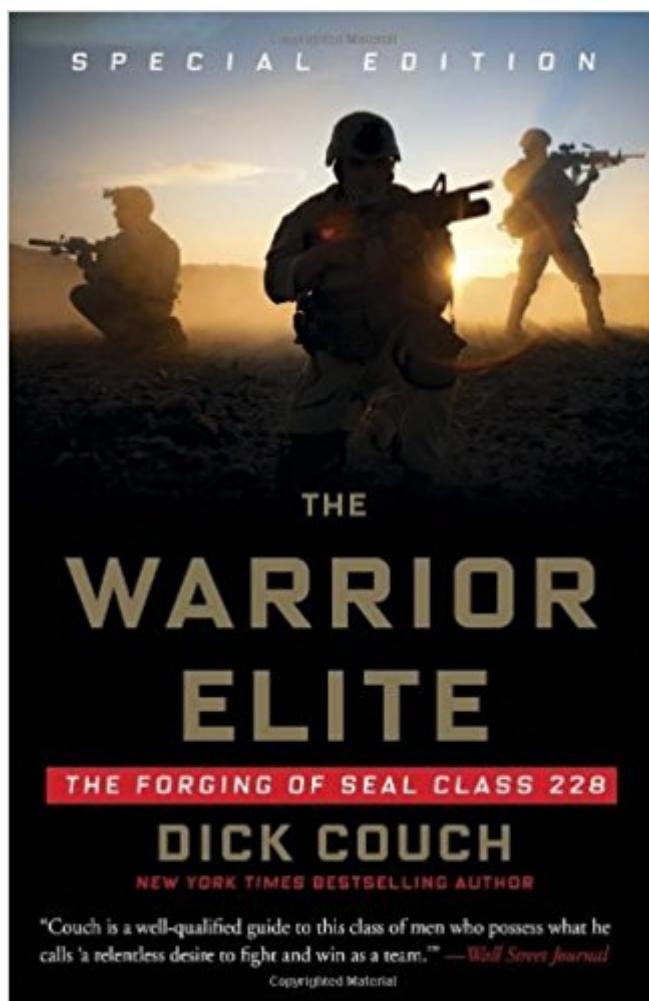


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# The Warrior Elite: The Forging Of SEAL Class 228



## **Synopsis**

With 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.

## **Book Information**

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## **Customer Reviews**

There is a pod of good books on the SEALs, but this one is unique. Couch, a Vietnam-era SEAL and retired naval reserve captain, was given the most complete access possible to the demanding BUD/S (Basic Underwater Demolition/SEAL) course and has recorded his observations, those of one who has been there and done a good deal of that. His account of Hell Week, the culmination of a formidable three-phase course intended to produce men who are physically, psychologically, and technically the best in the world at what they do, may leave the average reader short of breath. Few Hollywood stereotypes are on view; in their stead are a man who passed BUD/S at age 39, a superb swimmer who was disqualified for sinus problems, and a trainee at the low end of the fitness scale who subsequently won the Congressional Medal of Honor. Also on view is much serious thought by serious thinkers on the making of warriors at the dawn of the twenty-first century. Roland GreenCopyright © American Library Association. All rights reserved --This text refers to the

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"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 BUID/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.

I've now read three books on the US Navy SEALs. This will be a combined review I'll post on all three books, because I feel each one is important to understanding these elite warriors. Ever since Operation Neptune Spear, and the announcement that SEAL Team Six had successfully raided a compound in Pakistan and killed Osama bin Laden, I had been wondering why it was that SEAL Team Six had been sent, rather than our other elite counterterrorism unit, the mysterious Delta Force. After all, the mission took off from an airbase in a land-locked country, traveled over land to their target hundreds of miles inland, and then returned, having not flown over any major bodies of water at all. Why send the Navy, when an Army unit presumably could do the job just as well? I've always been interested in the military, and military training. Though that particular life was not for me, I've always admired those who choose it, and been proud of my veteran relatives. I've watched countless boot camp documentaries, shows on special forces fiction and non-, and I want to understand what it takes to be a warrior. To understand what it takes to be a warrior tasked with taking down the most wanted terrorist in the world, I wanted to read books that would explain their training, their lives, and their physical and mental toughness. The Warrior Elite: The Forging of SEAL Class 228 by Dick Couch was the first book I read. It covers the entire Basic Underwater

Demolitions/SEAL training course for Class 228. In the introduction, the making of a SEAL warrior is already made clear. Couch, a former Navy SEAL himself, Class 45 during the Vietnam era, explains that the Marine Corps builds 20,000 new marines a year for a force of 174,000, trained over eleven weeks. For the Army, the very tough Ranger School graduates 1,500 soldiers a year from their eight week course. With a twenty-seven week course, only 250 men a year graduate BUD/S, and even then, they are not yet SEALs. BUD/S only earns you a chance, and at least another six months of training await these men before they earn their Trident, and become a SEAL. The Warrior Elite covers the 27 weeks of BUD/S, following along a single class from day one of Indoc to graduation. But first Dick Couch tells the story of Kim Erksine in Grenada, a SEAL who led his eleven men during a mission that went bad when they were unable to use their radios. Along the way, he describes how their training, beginning with BUD/S, shaped their decisions and actions each step of the way. They made it to the water, many of them wounded, but all of them alive and still fighting. Eventually they swam out into the ocean and were picked up. Kim Erskine credits his and his men's survival to the knowledge that each of them had survived BUD/S. Already, it's clear. SEALs don't quit. So how does the Navy find men who just won't quit? They do everything they can to make BUD/S volunteers quit, and then trains the rest. 114 men had orders to BUD/S Class 228, and on Day 1, only 98 are still on the roster, 16 gave up before it even started. At any time, a BUD/S student can quit, and many do. After two weeks of Indoc, where BUD/S hasn't even begun yet, the class is down to 69 men. At graduation, 10 men remain from the original class. Another six would graduate later with another class, having been rolled back for medical reasons. The story of what those men went through to graduate, and to earn the right to continue their training and perhaps become SEALs someday, is what The Warrior Elite explores. Frequently reading the book, I exclaimed out loud "wow", I just couldn't believe it. Everyone talks about Hell Week, the week in Phase One that weeds out a significant number of students, most on the very first day, but that is just one very hard week out of 27 very hard weeks, and the men who survive it learn that to be a SEAL is to only have harder weeks ahead. While The Warrior Elite covers post-BUD/S training briefly in the epilogue, The Finishing School: Earning the Navy SEAL Trident, by the same author Dick Couch, covers this training in much greater depth. This second book is a sequel researched and written in the years following 9/11, and as such a higher emphasis is placed on protecting the identities of the warriors who are training to become qualified SEALs in the platoons, and the secret tactics used by SEALs in their operations. In that regard, the book is much less comprehensive, and much less personal. While a great deal of information is given on the recent reorganization of the SEAL Teams and their deployments, less information is given about actual training. It's hard to read

The Warrior Elite without also reading The Finishing School, without the second book you're missing half the story, but The Finishing Book is sadly not the complete story, either. It's understandable for security reasons, but for somebody with a fascination for military training and tactics, as well as the men who go through it all, it's disappointing. Again, though, the lesson is clear in The Finishing School. Not everyone who gets through BUD/S is going to become a SEAL. Some quit, some disqualify for medical or performance reasons, and the graduating class is smaller than the class coming in. One thing that The Finishing School does very well is explain the warrior culture of the SEAL Teams. These are quiet professionals who work together in close-knit groups. All of them are eager to get on deployment, and each of them maximizes their opportunities to continually learn and get better whenever they can. Those who are lone wolves, and can't work safely in a team, are quickly removed from the organization. As always, it pays to be a winner, and no man is left behind.

The third book is SEAL Team Six: Memoirs of an Elite Navy SEAL Sniper, by Howard E. Wasdin and Steven Templin. This book is very much a memoir, rather than a detailed day-by-day log of the training done in SEAL Team Six. In fact, for somebody wanting to read about the internal workings of the Navy's most elite-of-the-elite warriors, they wouldn't get very many details at all. What you get, instead, is a sense of the sorts of men who do what Howard Wasdin did, volunteer, and then keep volunteering, for the hardest jobs they could find, always looking for a bigger challenge. At times, Wasdin comes across as incredibly arrogant. He seems to put down other members of the special forces community, as well as federal law enforcement, at numerous occasions. We may never know, since members of SEAL Team Six, the CIA, and Delta Force are so tight-lipped, just how much of it is completely accurate. But nonetheless, this is a story of the sorts of brutal childhoods that spawn special forces operators, and the psychology of a warrior during training and in combat. Wasdin, I think, is more humble than he comes across. What he is, is a straight-shooter. If somebody else screwed up, he says so. At times hilarious, and at times horrifying, the story of Howard Wasdin from childhood to adulthood, with military service in between, is incredibly engaging. I had difficulties putting it down, and read through the entire book in just two sittings. While nowhere near as comprehensive as The Warrior Elite or The Finishing School, it gives us a window into the minds and lives of the men who got bin Laden. I highly recommend all three books, and in the order I read them. Having read each one, I've come to understand, perhaps, some of the reasons why President Obama ordered SEAL Team Six to a compound in Abbottabad, Pakistan. I'll leave it up to you to decide for yourself why that might've been, but if I learned anything at all about SEALs, reading these three books, it's that they always work as a team, it pays to be a winner, and they'd rather die than quit. The Warrior Elite gets 5 stars for being as

comprehensive as it is, and a truly astonishing tale of 10 men from Class 228, and the others who didn't graduate with them.

I loved this book specifically because it follows the story of class 228 going through BUD/S, it shows and follows the men who have the committed to push on and never give up, one of my favorite parts is how even through the pain some of the students can still keep a smile on their face, great respect to the men of class 228 and Jason Birch who smiled through it all. Once again awesome job to Dick Couch on this book.

A great read. I like the way the Author took the story, it helps to understand the thinking of these brave men. The one thing I guess I'll never understand is why The country spends so much time, money and effort and then second guess these guys. They really are the last stop before the smelly stuff hits the whirly thing, and yet they die for there country, it really would behest the country to support those that put their life on the line, fighting horrors we will probably never get to see or hear about, in countries that are basically living in another century, except for their very rich and connected overlords whom it seems get educated in the very elite Colleges and universities around the world, in the countries they are trying to hurt. Go figure. To all you Warriors out there, we salute you and thank you for your selfless service for us, and bless you for looking after the very freedom's that we take for granted.

First off, let me just say if you are interested in becoming a SEAL, know someone who is or wants to become a SEAL, are just interested in elite warrior teams, or just like to read about how people can endure incredible amounts of physical and mental torture at the hands of loving instructors, then you need to read this book. I have read a few books about the SEALs. I was under the assumption that BUD/S and Hell week were the pinnacle of the incredibly tough and demanding training these men have to endure. I was wrong. BUD/S training lasts about 6 months, Hell week happens before month 2. And the pace never lets up. This book covers the additional training these men receive after BUD/S training. They must also complete STT, (SEAL Tactical Training) US Army Airborne training, and a host of other choices like language schools, sniper school, SDV (SEAL Delivery Vehicle) etc. After BUD/S training it will be at least 6 months of arduous training just to get to the point where they have their review board and are deemed qualified to receive their SEAL Trident. Then its another year or so of training before they will deploy somewhere and start earning their keep. That is at least two years, and sometimes even more, before these guys are ready to go start

contributing to the war on terror, or whatever other international problem we may have that needs special attention at the moment. I was pleasantly surprised to read about the SEALs "zero tolerance" for alcohol related offenses. After seeing Hollywood characterize these men as hard drinking Rambo types, and after reading about some of the SEALs in Marchinkos books, you would think drinking was a requirement. But the newer policy makes a lot of sense. These men are incredibly well trained, why would you allow someone like that to possibly get drunk and lose control? That would be a scary thought. It is already pretty scary thinking about how well trained these men are, and the calm level of control they maintain. I feel sorry for anyone that is not on their side. I have a renewed interest in the Navy SEALs at the moment. Many, many years ago, right after I finished Navy dive school (which I absolutely loved, maybe I am a glutton for punishment?) I started to seriously think about going to BUD/S. There were a few reasons why I decided not to go, and I put that part of my life behind me. Instead of being cold, wet, and tired, I started a family and had 4 boys. My oldest just turned 18 and was accepted to a great military college in Virginia. His plan is to get his degree (which I have told him was non-negotiable, a degree is a must) and then he plans on becoming a Navy SEAL. Its funny how fate keeps bringing this back into my life. That is why I read this book. I have given this book to my son to read. If he is still set on this course after reading it, I will help him to prepare for his journey. I know I can help him to get to an even higher level mentally and physically and that will be of some help to him. I can only hope it will prepare him for what he will have to overcome. Getting back to the book, I have an even higher opinion of these men than I did before I started reading this book. I am very proud of what they do and I am even prouder that they are on our side! The level of professionalism these men achieve and maintain is incredible. It is hard not to stand in awe of what they can accomplish.

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