Recruits use teamwork to pass Confidence Course

BY CPL. WALTER D. MARINO II
Chevron staff

Beads of sweat dripped down the faces of Company C, 1st Recruit Training Battalion, recruits as they worked through various obstacles on the Crucible Confidence Course aboard Marine Corps Base Camp Pendleton, June 25. The Crucible is a 54-hour test of endurance in which recruits must conquer more than 30 different obstacles while they experience food and sleep deprivation.

Many of the Crucible’s exercises require teamwork, and the Confidence Course is one such exercise. For this event, Recruits are broken down into groups of four and must complete 50 ammo cans, high crawling, buddy dragging, fireman’s carries, and overcome the Two Line Bridge and the Skyscraper.

The Two Line Bridge requires recruits to move across a rope bridge carrying cargo, while the Skyscraper requires them to lift one another up each level of the obstacle. Both the Two Line Bridge and Skyscraper have parts painted in red. If at any time a recruit touches red, while completing the obstacle, the entire recruit group is required to do additional exercises and start over.

Co. C drill instructors watch over the training with a keen eye. They not only supervised the entire exercise, they also evaluate and grade the recruits’ teamwork and performance.

“By the end of the Crucible, all recruits will have been in a leadership role,” said Sgt. Cesar D. Martinez, drill instructor, Platoon 1041. “At The Crucible, all recruits will have been in a leadership role.”

An armorer confirms the M-16 A4 service rifle serial number matches the one on the information card before handing it to a recruit. Marine Corps Recruit Depot San Diego, June 18.

One recruit, one rifle

BY SGT. LIZ GLEASON
Chevron staff

During their first week aboard Marine Corps Recruit Depot San Diego, recruits are issued essential items they will need throughout their rigorous three month journey to become United States Marines.

Establishing itself as one of the world’s finest fighting forces, the United States Marine Corps has trained and disciplined some of the world’s finest fighting forces. From the day recruits take their place on the yellow footprints, they embark on a rigorous three month journey to transform from a civilian to a Marine.

During recruit training they will have to push through mental and physical challenges to improve strength and endurance.

On Training Day 7, recruits of Company D, 1st Recruit Training Battalion, received a class on musculoskeletal injuries aboard Marine Corps Recruit Depot San Diego, June 18. "As part of the Sports Medicine Injury Prevention Program, we give a course to the recruits to give them knowledge on how to take care of themselves and how to properly address concerns during recruit training," said Scott LaFalce, 1st RTBN athletic trainer. "We also inform them of common problems they may encounter during training and how to recognize the signs and symptoms.

Some of the more common injuries experienced at recruit training include shin splints, back pain, stress fractures and knee injuries. These injuries can result from various causes such as a poor pre-participation conditioning program, repetitive activity, inadequate rest and doing too much, too fast, too soon.

Although the training schedule is geared to help recruits reach and exceed physical standards at a safe pace, recruits arrive at the Depot at different physical fitness levels—making injuries possible.

First and foremost, it’s important for recruits to know their body and their physical limits. Knowing the difference between soreness and pain is pertinent at recruit training due to how much they need to accomplish mentally and physically during their short three month stay at the Depot, according to La Falce.

“It’s good that they give us this class early on because we learn what to expect for the future, training is only going to keep getting harder,” said Recruit Daniel Johnson, Platoon 1075. “I was an athlete before joining the Marine Corps and I’m glad that the information wasn’t new to me however I did learn some new stretches and it reinforced the
Recruits of Company C, 1st Recruit Training Battalion, conduct ammo can lifts during the Crucible Confidence Course aboard Marine Corps Base Camp Pendleton, June 25. Ammo can lifts were just one exercise among many, other exercises included buddy drags, low and high crawling.

OBSTACLES 4

Two Line Bridge they’re tired by the time they get there and because they’re tired they might not be thinking straight. But they have to work together and communicate, and overall I think they worked pretty good.”

Despite the heat and fatigue, recruits did not give up and did their best to work together. Many recruits understood the key to success was teamwork.

“It can be easier or harder depending on how well you work with your team. If your team doesn’t have good cohesion, you just keep going and going,” said Recruit Anthoni W. Treichel.

Although recruits do not know what else the Crucible has in store for them, believe teamwork will continue to be vital. “I think all the obstacles are going to be like this, said Recruit Richard E. Noone, squad leader.

“I believe it’s like this because they want us to be able to work well together under harsh conditions.”

While watching his recruits finish the exercise, Martinez explained he was proud of how far they have come. “Seeing them from the first time we got them to now and knowing I trained them to the best of my abilities makes me feel proud,” said Martinez.

RIFLE 4

all times.

The service rifle is also an essential part of drill, which instills discipline, team work and esprit de corps.

Although at this point the recruits of Co. H don’t realize it, they are building a foundation and setting habits that will help them throughout recruit training and their careers in the Marine Corps.

That is why it’s pertinent that they are taught the proper handling, care and marksmanship techniques early on in training, according to Kim.

After they received their rifles and cleaning kits, they were taught how to break down and properly clean their weapon. This was the first of many lessons to come pertaining to the service rifle.

“Some important things to remember when handling your rifle are keep the muzzle face up, don’t point it at anyone, and don’t drop it,” said Bautista. “Also keep it clean, well lubricated and pretty. Also give it a good name because it’s your partner, my rifle name is Jessica.”

Bautista, who started shooting at the age of nine, is looking forward to learning more about the service rifle. “I think that my experience will help me when it comes to accuracy however when it comes to form, it might be a little harder for me to get used to the Marine Corps’ way of doing things,” said Bautista. “Nonetheless, it’s always good to learn new things.”

Recruits will continue to gain knowledge as they progress through training and on Training Day 24 they will head to Edson Range aboard Marine Corps Base Camp Pendleton Calif. where they will be taught in depth about Marine Corps Marksmanship. While at Edson Range they will also get to shoot and qualify with the service rifle.

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INJURIES 4

importance of taking care of yourself.”

Johnson helped demonstrate different stretching techniques while Liu Falcon explained what muscles they stretched and the proper form. The recruits also learned ways to help prevent injury such as staying hydrated and setting good eating habits.

Although the recruits of Co. D are only in the first of three phases, they will continue to build on the foundation they have laid during the first few weeks aboard the depot. Laying a good foundation of knowledge and setting good wellness habits will not only help them during training but in
This week the Chevron asks: “Do you have any fun plans for the summer?”

“I’m going to hang out with fellow Marines. I’m going to the beach, watch fireworks and going to Sea World for the first time.” Pfc Nathaniel J. Bittler, CPAC, Headquarters Company, Headquarters and Service Battalion

“I’m going to the fair. Get out and enjoy some rides, embrace the little kid in me.” Lance Cpl. Nicole A. Davis, Legal, Headquarters Company, Headquarters and Service Battalion

Military personnel and their family members ran the Freedom Run aboard Marine Corps Recruit Depot San Diego June 28. All patrons had a choice of running the 5k or walking the 1k on the hot Friday. Awards were given to the top three finishers in each age category of the 5k and everyone received a free t-shirt, food and beverages. There were also sponsored booths set up, watermelon eating contest, music, and raffles.

Upon their arrival during receiving week aboard Marine Corps Recruit Depot San Diego June 17, recruits move with speed and intensity. Staff Sgt. Patrick C. Salcido, chief drill instructor, Receiving Company, Support Battalion, yells at a recruit after he failed to properly follow instructions during receiving week. We rid them of all excess items that they won’t need during recruit training. We take away their personal identity and individuality. This is the first step to break them down, and make them look the same,” said Salcido. “We want to strip them of all individuality and make them look the same, as if they are part of a team.” Every stage in this early process is controlled chaos for recruits. Drill instructors expect orders to be followed quickly and efficiently. When recruits hesitate, drill instructors yell different commands making recruits scream louder every time, and thus, causing confusion. This confusion is only a preparation for training and is intended to instill recruits with instantaneous obedience to orders. Obedience to orders will be reinforced once their formal training begins.

The road to earning the title ‘Marine’ begins when young men and women step upon the yellow footprints. Recruits of Company M, 3rd Recruit Training Battalion, do just that aboard Marine Corps Recruit Depot San Diego June 17. The first night starts with recruits-filled buses arriving to the depot. Drill instructors get the new arrivals to give recruits their initial orders. They are told to move with speed and intensity at all times. They then rush to step on the infamous yellow footprints. Recruits must be loud and the only responses they are allowed to say are “yes sir,” “no sir,” and “aye, aye sir” and must refer to themselves as “this recruit.”

While standing on the yellow footprints, they are read a few of the articles under the Uniform Code of Military Justice, which recruits must now abide by. The UCMJ is a set of rules and regulations all service members must uphold. “We try to get it in their head that there are rules, regulations to follow and punishments,” said Staff Sgt. Patrick C. Sakiode, chief drill instructor, Receiving Company, Support Battalion. Once recruits are made aware of the standards, they move on to the contraband room where they are stripped of all items banned during recruit training including watches, alcoholic beverages, gambling devices, money and electronic devices. We rid them of all excess items that they won’t need during recruit training so they stay focused,” said Sakiode. “It is to have them forget about home and focus on their mission at hand, becoming a Marine.”

Recruits make a brief phone call to their families in which they read a pre-written message to let them know they arrived safely and are ready to begin training. In the next stage, haircuts are then given to every recruit to establish uniformity. Hair is shaved and will be like this for the remainder of training. “We take away their personal identity and individuality. This is the first step to break them down, and make them look the same,” said Salcido. “We want to strip them from being an individual and rebuild them to be part of a team.” Every stage in this early process is controlled chaos for recruits. Drill instructors expect orders to be followed quickly and efficiently. When recruits hesitate, drill instructors yell different commands making recruits scream louder every time, and thus, causing confusion. This confusion is only a preparation for training and is intended to instill recruits with instantaneous obedience to orders. Obedience to orders will be reinforced once their formal training begins. However, before this training begins, recruits are given vaccinations and the necessary equipment needed to begin in a week-long period known as receiving week.

At the end of receiving week, recruits are introduced to their training cycle drill instructors, in a day known as black Friday, marking the official commencement of training. Recruits of Co. M have 12 weeks of training to complete the transformation from civilians to Marine.

Recruit recovers from injury to become most improved

BY CPL. WALTER D. MARINO II
Chevron staff

After cracking a rib during a Marine Corps Martial Arts lesson, Recruit Jacob A. Birdsong was devastated. He immediately realized what the injury would mean and the emotions overwhelmed him.

"It broke down into tears," said Birdsong. "It was one of the worst feelings you could imagine. I missed my family and knew it was going to set me back in training."

Birdsong was dropped from his platoon to begin a rehabilitation process. Two months later, after being medically cleared, Birdsong was inserted back into recruit training with Platoon 1046, Company C, 1st Recruit Training Battalion, aboard Marine Corps Recruit Depot San Diego.

From one of the windows of the helicopter, Birdsong watched his former platoon graduate and rejoice with their loved ones.

Knowing that could have been him was tough, explained Birdsong.

Over the next two months, Birdsong pushed himself through the fear of being re-injured to catch up to his fellow recruits of Co. C physical fitness level.

"Once you've been injured, it's kind of constantly in the back of your mind," said the 20-year-old, Birdsong. "During physical training it was a constant worry to be hurt and dropped again."

Birdsong said the encouragement from Sgt. Shawn M. Donovan, drill instructor, is what gave him the ability to push himself farther than he thought possible.

Once among the weakest recruits and one of the last to finish the exercises, said Donovan. "But over time, through the guidance of drill instructors and his platoon mates, he grew up as an asset to the team and our most improved recruit."

Birdsong improved his max set of pull-ups from four to 14 and improved his three-mile run time by three minutes.

"Sgt. Donovan would run next to me and say, 'come on you can do it'," said Birdsong. "I didn't want to let him down and I wanted to prove to myself I could go far and not be afraid anymore."

Birdsong was not the only recruit moving on from an injury in Plt. 1046. Fellow platoon member, Recruit Aaron M. Garfias, met Birdsong in rehab while he was recovering from his own injuries and the two quickly became good friends.

After being placed in the same platoon, they encouraged each other every day during recruit training.

We kept motivating one another. We told each other, 'we've been here too long to give up', said Garfias. "Birdsong is a different person now. He's more motivated to be in boot camp. It seems like he realized how bad he wanted to be a Marine. I believe he is the most improved recruit and deserves to be a Marine."

Now near the end of their training, the biggest obstacle left for Birdsong is the Crucible. The Crucible is a 54-hour test of endurance in which recruits must conquer more than 30 different obstacles while they experience food and sleep deprivation.

Through his struggles, Birdsong has become a stronger recruit and believes he is ready for the Crucible because he has grown both physically and mentally.

"What I've been through has increased my self-respect and confidence," said Birdsong. "The crucible is really going to test me, but I can do it."

Ret. Lt. Col. Howard Lee
Parade Reviewing Officer

In December 1955, retired USMC Lieutenant Colonel Howard Lee was commissioned a second lieutenant in the Marine Corps Reserve. He subsequently completed the Basic School in Quantico, Va., and the Marine Corps Supply School in Camp Lejeune, N.C. In January 1958, he was integrated into the Regular Marine Corps.

Lee served with distinction in a variety of challenging command and staff positions throughout his career. His service included time in units throughout the Marine Corps, across the country, and overseas. He is a veteran of numerous deployments including Okinawa, Japan, the Mediterranean Sea, the United States intervention in the Dominican Republic, and two combat deployments to the Republic of Vietnam.

It was during the first of these two tours that he would first distinguish himself in combat and earn the Medal of Honor. His Citation reads in part: "For conspicuous gallantry and intrepidity at the risk of his life above and beyond the call of duty as Commanding Officer, Company E, Fourth Marines, Third Marine Division, near Cam Lo, Republic of Vietnam, on 8 and 9 August 1966.

"A platoon of Major (then Captain) Lee's company, while on an operation deep in enemy territory, was attacked and surrounded by a large Vietnamese force. Realizing that the unit had suffered numerous casualties, depriving it of effective leadership, and fully aware that the platoon was even then under heavy attack by the enemy, Major Lee took seven men and proceeded by helicopter to reinforce the beleaguered platoon.

"Major Lee disembarked from the helicopter with two of his men and, braving withering enemy fire, led them into the perimeter, where he fearlessly moved from position to position, directing and encouraging the overtaxed troops.

"The enemy then launched a massive attack with the full might of their forces. Although painfully wounded by fragments from an enemy grenade in several areas of his body, including his eye, Major Lee continued undaunted throughout the night to direct the valiant defense, coordinate supporting fires, and appraise higher headquarters of the plight of the platoon.

"The next morning Lee collapsed from his wounds and was forced to relinquish command. However, the small band of Marines had held their position and repeatedly fought off many vicious enemy attacks for a grueling six hours until their evacuation was effected the following morning.

"Major Lee's actions saved his men from capture, minimized the loss of lives, and dealt the enemy a severe defeat. His indomitable fighting spirit, superb leadership, and great personal valor in the face of tremendous odds, reflect great credit upon himself and are in keeping with the highest traditions of the Marine Corps and the United States Naval Service."

In addition to the Medal of Honor, Lee's personal decorations include the Bronze Star Medal with combat distinguish device and gold star in lieu of second award, the Purple Heart Medal, Navy and Marine Corps Commendation Medal, and the combat action ribbon. Lee retired from active duty in 1975. He was married to his wife Jean for 50 years. They have four children and nine grandchildren. He currently resides in Virginia Beach, Virginia.
The Marine Corps has a great history of battles fought. Marksmanship training contributed to the ability for Marines to be extremely effective against the enemy, which helped with accomplishing these great feats.

During recruit training, recruits undergo numerous classes and practice sessions before they start applying these techniques on the shooting range. Recruits of Company I, 3rd Recruit Training Battalion, learned the proper shooting techniques and positions during Grass Week at Edson Range aboard Marine Corps Base Camp Pendleton, Calif. June 25.

The purpose of Grass Week is to teach recruits the basics of firing their M16-A4 service rifle to successfully qualify on the shooting range. It’s a requirement recruits must complete and show proficiency in to graduate recruit training.

“We have the recruits go through this training to build a basic shooting position foundation and muscle memory because if they don’t learn the basics they won’t have a stable position to shoot,” said Staff Sgt. Jason L. Fair, senior drill instructor, Platoon 3213. “For some of the recruits this is the first time they have ever handled a weapon so we want to ensure they are comfortable and confident when they have to do it on their own next week.”

Recruits learn during the week that firing from a proper shooting position is not as easy or comfortable as it may seem. This is why a full week is dedicated to training the recruits to ensure the proper techniques are instilled in them.

“I have seen and heard recruits talk about the difficulty getting their bodies adjusted and comfortable in the different positions,” said Recruit Mitchell D. Krasnican, Plt. 3213. “We’ve been taught to hold our bodies and hands a certain way but some try and do it their own way, which the primary marksmanship instructors keep correcting them on.”

Primary marksmanship instructors and drill instructors stress the importance of practicing and executing the proper techniques recruits are taught during the week. Becoming an expert shooter will not only help them in combat but also in the Fleet Marine Force.

“In the Fleet Marine Force, having a better rifle range score will help their overall composite score, which helps with their promotions,” said Fair, a six years straight high expert shooter. “In combat it will help them be effective in their unit and be able to not only defend themselves but the Marines to their left and right.”

Each phase of training recruits are taught a core element of the Marine Corps. Recruits started out learning discipline through drill and physical training. During grass week, recruits are challenged with becoming the best shooter that they can.

Throughout history, the Corps has upheld the traditions of marksmanship at its highest level. The reason behind it is simple.

“Every Marine is a rifleman, it’s the backbone of the Marine Corps,” said Krasnican. “Everyone needs to be comfortable with a weapon whether you’re a cook or an infantryman.”