



Private First Class Hunter Blackston, Lima Company, is this week's Honor Graduate
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MARINE CORPS RECRUIT DEPOT SAN DIEGO



AND THE WESTERN RECRUITING REGION

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“WHERE MARINES ARE MADE”

FRIDAY, OCTOBER 16, 2015

TOP STORY BUILDING STRENGTH

No obstacle too tall for Alpha company

STORY & PHOTO BY
LANCE CPL. ANGELICA ANNASTAS
Chevron staff

Recruits face new obstacles daily during training, and they must learn to prepare themselves for each challenge. Preparation is a key to success in recruit training, and it is what is needed to build the confidence for what is to come.

To prepare for the Obstacle Course II event on Oct. 8, recruits of Alpha Company, 1st Recruit Training Battalion, Marine Corps Recruit Depot San Diego, have conducted daily physical training sessions with their drill instructors since arriving at the depot.

The purpose of the rugged course is to prepare recruits for what they may face in their futures as recruits, and eventually as Marines. Often times in combat situations, Marines encounter troubling terrain and they may need to utilize certain skills to get to their destination.

“I think this event will help us develop good cardiovascular skills, and it will help us develop better upper and lower body strength,” said Recruit Mark J. Robinson, Alpha Company. “We’ll be needing that.”

They have conducted the course once before, and this iteration is to mark the progress they made since the first time they conducted the event.

“I’m excited for the new challenges that we’ll face,” said 20-year-old Robinson. “Since we’re doing this course more than once, I can benchmark my experiences. I can see the progress I’ve made in hopes that it’ll get easier as I go on.”

Recruits tackled high logs, high bars and finished the grueling course with a rope climb. When recruits reached the top of the rope they yelled out their name, platoon number and senior drill instructor’s name as part of their motivational climb. This final obstacle was omitted the first time they maneuvered the course, so recruits experienced more fatigue this time around.

“[A challenge I see the recruits face is] fatigue,” said Sgt. Eliud J. Reyes, drill instructor, Alpha Company. “Sometimes you can tell that they struggle with not having enough



Recruits of Alpha Company, 1st Recruit Training Battalion, climb ropes during Obstacle Course II at Marine Corps Recruit Depot San Diego, Oct. 8. This was the first time the recruits got a chance to climb the ropes. They did not attempt this obstacle during Obstacle Course I and realized how much more difficult the ropes are to climb when they are fatigued from running the course.

confidence in themselves, but we want this course to be like a stepping stone. We want them to get more comfortable with it for when it comes time to face future obstacles.”

Eventually the recruits will continue through training and participate in other events and courses that will build them up even more.

“I notice the weak recruits at first, and I like being able to see them keep trying,” said Reyes, originally from Dominican Republic. “It inspires you a little [to see that]. They came here looking for a challenge, and this is where they’ll find it.”

Completing the course is what will ultimately prepare the recruits for similar events they’ll come across during the Crucible, the final training event for recruit training.

“When I get there, I want to be able to pass with flying colors,” said Robinson, a native of Bellevue, Wash. “When we get to the fleet, or depending on our [military occupational specialty], we don’t know what kind of obstacles we’ll face. This, too, is preparation for that.”



Recruits of Alpha Company, 1st Recruit Training Battalion, maneuver over a high bar during Obstacle Course II at Marine Corps Recruit Depot San Diego, Oct. 8. The recruits were taught various techniques to assist them in completing the obstacle. The obstacle course tested the recruits’ upper and lower body strength.

BRIEFS

New Marine Family Meet & Greet

The depot hosts a New Marine Family Meet and Greet each Wednesday prior to graduation from 5 to 8 p.m., at the Bay View Restaurant.

This is a chance for families to meet other new Marine families and depot drill instructors. The event price of \$21.95 per person entitles the purchaser to a buffet dinner. Dinner service starts at 6 p.m.

For information and reservations go to www.mcrdmeetandgreet.eventbrite.com or call (619) 725-6388.

Gas Station Closure

The depot’s gas station lanes will be closed for annual testing Tuesday Oct. 27 and Tuesday Nov. 3 from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m.

MMOA/MMEA Visit

The officer and enlisted monitor team will be at the depot Friday, Oct. 30 briefing an all-officer presentation from 8:30-9:30 a.m. Interviews for the ground officer MOSs will be held from 1030 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. at the Bldg. 7 Conferene Center. An officer/SNCO ranks presentation will be held from 10-11 a.m., and a briefing for all FTAP Marines is scheduled from 11 to 11:30 a.m. Both briefs will be at the depot theater. All other monitor interviews will be held in the Bldg. 7W Conference Room beginning at 8 a.m.

Microsoft Sharepoint Training

G-6 will hosting and instructor from the MISTC-West to conduct training on Microsoft SharePoint 2010 in the Bldg. 7W Conference Room Nov. 2-5 from 8:30 a.m. to 4 p.m. Contact the G-6 to register for this training.

Brown Bag Lunch Seminar

Personal and Professional Development is scheduled to host a seminar to assist military members wishing to pursue a technical career after the military Oct. 21-22 at Bldg. 14 from 7 a.m. to 4 p.m. For more information or to register, contact Mina Threat (619) 524-1283 or mina.threat@usmc.mil.

S.T.A.R. Seminar

Personal and Professional Development Office will be hosting a Spouse Transition and Readiness Seminar on Tuesday Oct. 20 from 9 a.m. to 12 p.m. at Bldg. 14. Topics included are entitlements, education and career programs and the effects of career changes.

Send briefs to:

rdsd_pao@usmc.mil. The Chevron staff reserves the right to publish only those briefs that comply with Department of Defense regulations and the standards of the U.S. Government.

COMPANY FEATURE **Pfc. Hunter L. Blackston**

LIFE CHANGING DECISION LEADS TO FUTURE IN CORPS



STORY & PHOTOS BY
SGT. BENJAMIN WOODLE
Chevron staff

One of the greatest challenges people may face in his or her lifetime that gets in the way of a goal is themselves. One new Marine fought hard to overcome himself and change his life, and unknowingly, those around him.

Private First Class Hunter L. Blackston, Lima Company, 3rd Recruit Training Battalion, set his life on a new path by losing 105 pounds to attend Marine Corps recruit training at Marine Corps Recruit Depot San Diego.

Blackston was born in Columbus, Miss., but when he was four years old, his parents divorced and moved to different locations. Blackston and his older brother moved with his mother to live with their grandmother in Jackson, Miss., while his father stayed in Columbus, Miss., with Blackston's younger sister. While the divorce was a big change for him, he continued to do what he liked best, which was enjoying an active lifestyle outdoors.

"When I was little, I loved to go outside and play in the woods with my brother," said 19-year-old Blackston. "When I would visit my dad, we would always go out hunting and fishing."

Although Blackston had an active lifestyle, he recalled being overweight since he was a child.

"When I moved with my mom to my grandmother's house, that's when I started putting on a lot of weight," said Blackston. "My dad is really overweight as well, so when I would go visit him, we would eat a lot."

After spending a couple of years in Jackson, Blackston's mom

remarried, which took them down to Pluger-ville, Texas. During his teenage years, Blackston continued to gain weight. He used it to his advantage playing football in middle

school and during his freshman year of high school. However, soon another school program drew his interest.

"In my freshman year (of high school) I joined the Marine Corps Junior Reserve Officer Training Corps program," said Blackston. "Both of my grandparents were in the military, one in the Air Force and the other in the Navy, so I thought I would try it and see how I liked it."

Blackston explained that at the time he knew very little about the Marine Corps, but since it was the only program available at his school, he would see what it was all about. It became something he enjoyed very much.

"I really loved it," said Blackston, who became the battalion executive officer during his time in the JROTC. "That's what started to make me really think about wanting to join the Marine Corps. I saw their discipline and how they

carried themselves and really liked it. It made me feel better as a person."

Blackston, who at the time weighed almost 300 pounds, took action on his interest about the Marine Corps and went to his local recruiter's office.

"My senior year of high school I started talking to my Marine recruiter," said Blackston, who was recruited out of Recruiting Station Austin North, Texas. "He told me I was about 105 pounds overweight and that I had to lose that much before I could go down to the Military Entrance Processing Command to enlist. I went home that day and made the decision that I wanted to be a Marine, and I would do whatever it took to make that happen."

With his new found motivation, Blackston reached out to his JROTC instructor to help him on his journey to lose the weight.

"I talked to my Marine instructor in JROTC, and he helped me with a nutrition plan and workout plan," said Blackston. "He became my biggest support and inspiration, encouraging me every step along the way."

With a new game plan, Blackston set out to take on the biggest challenge of his life...over-

coming himself.

"I would go to the gym every day for at least two to three hours, running or lifting weights," said Blackston. "I ate healthy and stopped eating at fast food restaurants and drinking soda. I put everything into it."

The five-foot-nine Blackston realized early on that his journey was not going to be easy.

"The first week was the hardest for me," said Blackston. "I would go into the gas station or drive by a restaurant and think how something would taste so good right now, but I kept thinking to myself that this was not only about joining the Marine Corps, but also about benefiting myself and not always being overweight."

Three months later, a new and improved Blackston walked back into his Marine Corps recruiter's office.

"I walked back through those doors and was 195 pounds, losing the 105 pounds I needed to lose in just three months," said Blackston with a smile. "My recruiter was pretty surprised and said he thought he would never see me again, especially within three months."

Now, ready to ship to Marine Corps recruit training, Blackston had a new outlook on his life and the future that lay ahead of him.

"I felt so proud of myself," said Blackston. "I felt like I could do anything in the world. I now know that if I put my mind to it, I can go do anything. I felt confident that I could make it through Marine Corps recruit training."

BLACKSTON ◀ 2



Recruit Hunter L. Blackston, Lima Company, 3rd Recruit Training Battalion, looks down his rifle combat optic while providing security during the Crucible at Edson Range, Marine Corps Base Camp Pendleton, Calif., Oct. 6. Blackston lost 105 pounds in three months to be able to enter Marine Corps recruit training and motivated his friends and family to also lose weight and live a healthier lifestyle.

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HONOR PLATOON

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Battalion Drill Master

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* Indicates Meritorious Promotion

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| Pvt. C. W. Mullensnorris | Pvt. G. R. Addington | Pfc. Z. E. Fournier | Pfc. C. A. Sanchez | Pvt. M. T. Farnes | Pfc. B. C. Steadham |
| Pfc. T. P. Naughton Jr | Pfc. J. O. Aguinaldo | Pvt. N. A. Fritsch | Pvt. N. S. Semerdjian | Pvt. B. M. Fessler | Pvt. C. D. Thomas |
| Pvt. E. C. Navarreteochca | Pvt. D. P. Amigo | Pvt. A. J. Frost | Pvt. J. D. Sportiello | Pvt. J. D. Garcia | Pvt. T. R. Tofstad |
| Pvt. N. L. Neely | Pvt. D. E. Anderson | Pfc. M. N. Garcia | Pfc. D. F. Strafaci | Pfc. J. J. Garcia | Pfc. T. R. Trinneer |
| Pfc. D. Neta | Pvt. J. C. Anderson | Pfc. R. C. Gordon | Pvt. J. A. Tollinchi | Pvt. I. R. Gilliom | Pvt. T. M. Vanvoorst |
| Pvt. O. A. Orozco | *Pvt. H. B. Appleton | Pvt. A. M. Goulder | Pvt. J. A. Valderrama | Pvt. M. Gonzalezdominguez | Pvt. Z. D. Varadi |
| Pvt. A. J. Parrish | *Pvt. J. P. Arcekelly | Pfc. M. S. Hester | Pvt. E. Venegas | Pvt. J. M. Griggs | Pfc. A. Vargas |
| Pfc. J. M. Penamarquez | Pvt. B. Areeviwatkul | Pvt. H. L. Hill | Pvt. M. J. Weibel | Pvt. C. O. Hardesty | Pfc. A. Vargas |
| Pfc. P. Perez Jr. | Pvt. B. M. Avila | Pfc. A. P. Hill | Pvt. S. G. Yamada | Pvt. P. R. Herdina | Pvt. J. Vasquez |
| Pvt. C. J. Reiss | Pfc. J. S. Bach | Pvt. M. T. Hopkins | Pvt. S. Zepeda | Pvt. N. S. Hogan | Pvt. C. F. Velazquez |
| *Pfc. J. M. Rivera Jr. | Pfc. H. J. Bautista | *Pvt. P. I. Ibe | *Pvt. C. R. Zirbel | Pfc. B. A. Holland | Pvt. S. J. Wake Jr. |
| Pvt. B. T. Roatch | Pfc. S. Bearchum | *Pvt. B. B. Kelly | | Pfc. H. V. Howard | Pvt. C. J. Walters |
| Pvt. A. E. Rodrick | Pvt. J. J. Billingsy | Pvt. D. T. Kent | Platoon 3247 | Pvt. Z. A. Isom | Pvt. J. A. Ward III |
| Pvt. L. E. Rodriguez | Pvt. C. J. Braasch | Pfc. C. M. Kessell | Pvt. S. Abukhater | Pvt. J. R. Johnson | Pfc. K. S. Welch |
| Pvt. E. I. Ruiz | Pfc. Z. E. Brackin | Pfc. T. H. Konkol | Pvt. B. E. Archuleta | Pfc. E. J. King | Pvt. J. E. Weldon |
| Pvt. L. R. Sabin | Pvt. W. N. Brearcliffe II | Pfc. B. H. Lam | Pvt. D. M. Arnell | Pvt. T. J. Kleine | Pvt. D. A. Welsh |
| Pvt. A. M. Sanchez | Pfc. M. D. Brunk | Pvt. M. Landeros | Pfc. F. R. Avilabernal | Pfc. H. J. Kniola | Pfc. L. S. Whitaker |
| Pvt. C. L. Sanders | Pvt. G. D. Butler | Pvt. J. B. Laparejo | Pfc. B. A. Banwart | Pvt. F. A. Lara | Pvt. M. J. Wilson |
| Pvt. A. M. Sarver | Pfc. K. L. Button | Pvt. B. A. Lester | Pfc. B. V. Batchelder | Pfc. I. A. Lopez | Pvt. D. J. Wood |
| Pvt. S. J. Savu | *Pvt. F. A. Calderonlarios | Pvt. S. A. Lewis | Pfc. P. Bauer | Pvt. S. C. Mallory | Pvt. C. L. Wright |
| Pfc. J. D. Shepard | Pvt. A. Calix | Pvt. K. Lopezgarcia | Pfc. H. L. Blackston | *Pfc. O. R. Manasco | Pvt. M. R. Wunderlich |
| Pvt. G. R. Shreve | Pfc. A. N. Camarato | Pvt. G. M. Lucero | Pfc. D. M. Brejc | Pfc. T. D. Maningoine | Pfc. C. S. Xiong |
| Pvt. S. L. Skeen | Pvt. M. A. Carmona | Pvt. D. R. Maguddayao | Pfc. J. L. Burandt | *Pfc. J. D. Manney | Pvt. E. Zepeda |
| Pvt. A. E. Soto | Pvt. C. K. Carroll | Pfc. R. Mannings | Pvt. J. A. Cady | Pvt. A. J. Mendiola | |
| Pvt. A. M. Stoyer | Pvt. J. Castaneda | Pfc. C. Martell | Pfc. A. J. Carta | Pfc. H. T. Nguyen | |
| Pvt. S. M. Thurston | Pvt. D. Castilloportillo | Pvt. E. F. McCormick | Pvt. D. J. Castro | *Pfc. J. D. Nicholes | |
| Pvt. J. M. Tiede | Pvt. J. I. Cifuentes | Pvt. B. Mendoza | Pvt. B. Celaya | *Pfc. D. J. Nichols | |
| Pvt. P. R. Trowbridge | Pfc. V. V. Cimmarusti | Pvt. A. B. Nahnsen | Pfc. A. E. Chavez | Pvt. J. D. Nicholson | |

**Semper Fi,
Marines!**

see BLACKSTON ▶ 2

Others noticed the progress Blackston was making, including his mom, who was also a big influence and support for him while trying to lose the weight.

“My mom helped me out a lot and was very supportive of me and my decision to join the Marine Corps,” said Blackston. “I could tell she wasn’t that comfortable with it, but she wanted to support me in any way that she could. The rest of my family was still eating a lot of unhealthy food, but she made sure that I didn’t eat any of it and stayed on my plan. If it was raining outside she would help drive me out to the gym so I could get my workout in.”

After conquering his mental and physical

health, Blackston began the journey to conquer the challenge of earning the title United States Marine. It was a task that once again required him to put forth all of his efforts.

“My first thought when I landed at the airport, and the drill instructors were waiting outside by the bus, I was like ‘wow I did it, I actually made, I can’t believe I’ve made it this far,’” said Blackston. “Then when the bus arrived (at Marine Corps Recruit Depot San Diego) and the drill instructors started yelling at us to get off and I thought ‘oh crap, what did I get myself into.’ After a while I thought to myself, ‘you did all that work to get here, don’t throw it all away now.’ It helped me a lot to get through training. It’s amazing to know I’ve done so much to get to this point and join the Marine Corps.”

One night during mail call, Blackston received a letter that made him reflect on what he had accomplished, but also how it had affected others around him.

“While in recruit training, my mom wrote me a letter saying that she’s been going to the gym every morning before work, saying that since you’re going through this hard time I

should do something to change my life as well,” said Blackston. “It made me feel proud that I actually did something so early in my life that changed somebody else’s life.”

Blackston’s senior drill instructor, Staff Sgt. Matthew J. Rhoads, explained that he thought Blackston was a very motivated and goal-oriented person. Rhoads stated that Blackston pushed himself so much that he lost another 15 pounds during recruit training.

Having earned the title Marine, Blackston continues his journey to Marine Combat Training at the School of Infantry at Marine Corps Base Camp Pendleton, Calif., and then to his military occupational specialty school where he will train to become a towed artillery systems technician. Along the way, he will continue to inspire and motivate those around him as his instructors did for him.

“Never quit,” said the 180-pound Blackston. “If you want to do something, don’t listen to the people that say that you can’t. They are the ones that don’t want you to succeed because they can’t do it themselves. If you put your mind to it, you can do anything, no matter what the challenge or hardship is. If you want it bad enough you can do it.”



Recruit Hunter L. Blackston, Lima Company, 3rd Recruit Training Battalion, provides security during the Crucible at Edson Range, Marine Corps Base Camp Pendleton, Calif., Oct. 6. Blackston is a Plugerville, Texas, native and was recruited out of Recruiting Station Austin North, Texas.



Recruit Hunter L. Blackston, Lima Company, 3rd Recruit Training Battalion, verifies his plotted navigation points during the Crucible at Edson Range, Marine Corps Base Camp Pendleton, Calif., Oct. 6.