Delta learns Confidence Course lessons

BY CPL. MATTHEW BROWN
Chevron stuff

Honor, courage and commitment are Marine Corps core values, but they are not the only vital traits recruits must attain during recruit training in order to become Marines.

“Confidence and adaptability are paramount,” said Staff Sgt. Frederick J. Turley, drill instructor, Platoon 1061, Company D. “If we didn’t continue to pound these traits into every recruit’s head, so to speak, we would definitely lose our edge.”

Turley said these traits are emphasized during the Confidence Course portion of the Crucible.

The Crucible is a 54-hour training event in which recruits undergo a simulated combat stress consisting of food and sleep deprivation while overcoming physically and mentally challenging events, testing all that they have learned during their 12 weeks in recruit training.

“Although they are being tested, they are actually still learning a lot,” said Turley. “We rotate leadership billets each obstacle to help some of the less confident recruits learn what it takes to lead.”

Each obstacle is meant to help recruits find a sense of confidence they might not have had before, whether it be in themselves or in their fellow recruits and leaders, said Sgt. Wayne S. Gallagher, field instructor, Weapons and Field Training Battalion.

The Confidence Course consists of four separate obstacles known as the Stairway to Heaven, the Sky-scraper, the Two-Line Bridge and the Weaver.

The Stairway to Heaven is a tall wooden ladder in which recruits are split into two teams and race up one side and down the other and pass off their safety harnesses to their teammates.

During the Weaver, one recruit takes charge and instructs his fellow recruits on how to weave over and under each log of a triangular bridge while transporting their weapons and two ammunition cans.

Like the Weaver, the Two-Line Bridge consists of transporting supplies and personnel over an obstacle from point A to point B. Although in the Two-Line bridge obstacle, recruits work in teams of two rather than one large team.

The final obstacle they tackle is the Sky-scraper. During that exercise, one recruit takes charge and instructs the rest of his squad on how to transport Fred, a simulated casualty dummy, from the top of a multi-platform structure to the ground while ensuring the rest of the recruits are providing security.

“If recruits don’t have confidence in each other or their leader, things can get very difficult,” Turley said “They did alright today though.”

Each obstacle started with a drill instructor calling his recruits to the position of attention. Then he would read the Medal of Honor citation for that obstacle.

“We read these citations before each obstacle so recruits know what it took for past Marines to become great Marines,” Turley said. “Those Marines lived by our core values and showed unselfish courage for the greater good and their fellow Marines. We should all strive to emulate them.”

After the citations are read, the mission brief is read by one of the recruits and the safety rules are explained by a field instructor.

“Almost every obstacle has the color red on it somewhere,” said Gallagher. “If they touch red, they are dead; if they are caught, we have them get off the obstacle and carry two ammunition cans back and forth for about 100 meters.”

The punishment that comes with contacting the red marks adds a little bit of pressure so the recruits are forced to focus on the exercise or fail it, said Turley.

“The ability to stay focused while under pressure and take up a leadership position unexpectedly is vital,” Turley said. “They may only learn the basics of leading here, but these are essential fundamentals that will become the foundation on which they will build their future leadership skills.”

The Marine Corps’ emphasis on confidence, adaptability and small unit leadership is a big reason the Marine Corps continues to be successful in battles in Iraq and Afghanistan and will be successful in future conflicts, Turley said.

“If a Marine’s leader is incapacitated during a firefight, the Marine under him can swiftly take the reins and continue the fight,” Turley said. “All of the traits recruits learn here eventually come together to form some of the best small unit leadership in any military service.”
Recruits of Platoon 1061, Company D, work in two-man teams to cross the Two-Line Bridge obstacle with either a jug of water or an ammunition can during the Confidence Course portion of the Crucible at Weapons and Field Training Battalion, Marine Corps Base Camp Pendleton, Calif., June 30. The Crucible is a 54-hour training event in which recruits undergo simulated combat stress consisting of food and sleep deprivation while they are forced to overcome physically and mentally demanding obstacles.

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Recruit Jason Duren, Platoon 1061, attempts to steady a water jug as he slides it from one side of the Two-Line Bridge obstacle to the other during the Crucible.

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A row of recruits from Company D provide security as they await the rest of their platoon to accomplish the Two-Line Bridge.

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Recruits of Platoon 1061 attempt to transport ammunition cans and their weapons from one side of a log bridge known as the Weaver. The rules of the obstacle require all movement of personnel and supplies to be done in an over and under fashion similar to weaving.

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