A project of the Combat Studies Institute, the Operational Leadership Experiences interview collection archives firsthand, multi-service accounts from military personnel who planned, participated in and supported operations in the Global War on Terrorism.

Interview with MAJ Stuart Farris

Combat Studies Institute
Fort Leavenworth, Kansas

Abstract

Major Stuart Farris deployed to Afghanistan in April 2003 as "the assistant to the assistant S3" in 2nd Battalion, 3rd Special Forces Group and later assumed the role as an SF detachment commander. While on staff, he was the night battle captain, acting as the battalion commander's RTO during several high-priority missions. After about a month, he took command of a team – ODA 341 – and moved out to Helmand Province, the largest producer of opium in Afghanistan. During his time in Afghanistan, he encountered little resistance. They did limited engagement operations and were focused on direct action missions, while leaving the opium trade alone. There was no Afghan military yet, so they used 50 to 60 indigenous fighters as extra security when going out on patrols. The lessons learned he took away from this rotation were that you have to have a plan with an objective you can work towards, that everyone is on the same team, and you have to integrate your enablers into your operations. This is the first of three interviews conducted with Farris about his three separate deployments to Afghanistan between 2003 and 2005.

Interview with MAJ Stuart Farris

6 December 2007

LL: My name is Laurence Lessard (LL) and I'm with the Operational Leadership Experiences Project at the Combat Studies Institute, Fort Leavenworth, Kansas. I'm interviewing Major Stuart Farris (SF) on his experiences during Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF). Today's date is 6 December 2007 and this is an unclassified interview. Before we begin, if you feel at any time we're entering classified territory, please couch your response in terms that avoid revealing any classified information; and if classification requirements prevent you from responding, simply say you're not able to answer. When did you first find out that you would be deploying to Afghanistan for the first time?

SF: I graduated the Q Course in February 2003. I immediately reported to 3rd Special Forces Group and was assigned to 2nd Battalion. I found out in March 2003 and they said we were deploying in April.

LL: Given that you had a short lead time, how easy was it to get into the rhythm of things with everyone else who was deploying?

SF: I really didn't have a choice. I was hoping to be a detachment commander right off the bat but there weren't any openings at the time and they put me in the operations (S3) shop as an assistant to the assistant S3. From day one in the S3 shop, though, I had to brief the battalion commander. We'd have daily briefings in that month prior to our deployment, so I was providing the operations pitch of current operations going on in Afghanistan at the time. They really threw me into the fire and said to go to work.

LL: Did you stay in the S3 shop throughout the deployment?

SF: No. I ended up taking a detachment in May. We deployed to Afghanistan in April. The battalion headquarters was set up at FOB 32 in Kandahar and on 10 May, I assumed command of a detachment in the Helmand Province. I only spent about two months on the staff.

LL: What kind of predeployment training and preparation did you and the battalion go through?

SF: The battalion did a pretty extensive trainup. They went to Fort Pickett where they did some mission essential task list (METL) focused certification training but I missed all of that. By the time I got to the battalion, they had completed their trainup. The battalion, the companies, the operational detachment alphas (ODAs) as well as the staff had done a pretty thorough trainup but I can't speak to specifics.

LL: So you weren't involved in any of the team-building exercises?

SF: No. They were all done with that when I got there. That last month before we deployed was focused on spending time with the family and being at home. Being the new guy on the staff, though, I was spending most of my time on getting smart on Afghanistan and reading up on what I needed to know. This was going to be the battalion's second rotation to Afghanistan, but it was my first.

LL: In retrospect, was there any kind of predeployment training that you wish you'd had?

SF: Since I was going to be a night battle captain for that first month, it would have been great to have gone through the staff trainup and rehearsals that I'm sure the battalion did before I got there. The battalion had good standard operating procedures (SOPs) established so it wasn't hard, even as the new guy, to figure things out. Duties and responsibilities were clearly defined for the folks in the S3 shop, so I was able to fall in and pick up without a whole lot of detailed training.

LL: How did the movement over go?

SF: From my perspective as the new guy, I thought it was pretty simple. I was part of the advanced party for the battalion and it was just a matter of getting on a C-17, taking off from Fort Bragg and landing in Kandahar about 24 hours later. We had one layover in Germany but that was it. I have a very narrow perspective but it was pretty painless. I didn't see any problems for the rest of the battalion as far as the deployment or the reception, staging, onward-movement and integration (RSOI). It was the battalion's second rotation and they had just left Afghanistan six months earlier. They had a lot of continuity and people in the same jobs. They were experienced with the process and there weren't a lot of problems. When we got there, we switched out with 7th Group. Not that it was 7th Group's fault, but when we got on the ground there was a compressed timeline and the guys out at the firebases didn't get a good enough relief in place. In some cases, they only had a matter of hours or a day or two to do a handoff with the other team before they assumed responsibility for operations in that area.

LL: How was your handoff in the S3 section?

SF: It went pretty well. I had about a week or more with the 7th Group night battle captain. He was thorough and he knew his duties and responsibilities really well. He passed on a lot of experiences he had been through. The first three days, I just sat next to him and watched him go through his procedures and drills and how they handled things. About day three, I started to assume some responsibility under his supervision. Within four or five days, we'd completed the handoff. So, it was a good transition.

LL: What were the regular duties you were asked to do once you got set up in Kandahar?

SF: I was the night battle captain. We pulled 12-hour shifts from 1600 Zulu to 0400 Zulu. Locally, that was about 2030 to 0830, and I was the guy running the operations center for the battalion during that time. About 2300 or so, the battalion commander and the S3 would bed down for the night and I was up monitoring the radios and staying abreast of what was going on. I'd track any teams that were out there doing missions at night and provide the necessary resource support if they needed any. There were also obviously certain wakeup criteria to get

the S3 or the battalion commander based on what was going on. I was basically just holding down the fort for the night.

LL: Were you involved in any operational planning at that time?

SF: Not really. I was doing a lot of battle tracking, not a lot of planning. The actual assistant S3 was put in the plans shop and he did the future plans.

LL: In terms of tracking ongoing operations, were there any that were particularly challenging or memorable for you?

SF: Yes. At this point, operations in Iraq had just kicked off and some of the specific direct action forces that had been in Afghanistan had been relocated to Iraq. That left a void. Our battalion was given the task of maintaining a force that was prepared to conduct direct action operations against high-value targets. In March 2003, there had been an International Commission of the Red Cross (ICRC) worker who had been pulled over at a checkpoint by some Taliban elements and executed. Through various means of collecting information and intelligence, we were able to determine who was responsible for executing this ICRC worker and so it had become a priority to attempt to interdict this individual and either capture or kill him. My position was kind of transparent since it was somewhat compartmented. The guys in the plans shop were helping to develop a course of action. The battalion put a company-minus in isolation to begin planning for this mission. They identified one ODA as the recon element to go out and get eyes on the area and then we had three other ODAs assigned to be the assault force. Once they identified where the guy was, they would fly in and conduct the operation. A lot of this was transparent to me because they kept it very hush-hush and compartmented even at battalion level for operational security reasons. It was memorable because it was going to be a nighttime operation and since I was the night battle captain, I was going to be the guy doing most of the talking on the radio. I was essentially going to be the battalion commander's radio transmission operator (RTO). The night it was going to happen, I remember coming on shift and I knew there was something about to happen but I wasn't read into the details. The mission was prosecuted and ended up being very successful. The targeted individual was Haji Satar and he ended up being killed. It was deemed a successful direct action mission and I was the RTO for the battalion commander. He had me talking to guys on the ground and to elements of the 160th who were in helicopters with aerial-borne snipers about an operation I hadn't been read in on prior to showing up that night. I had to find out what everyone's call signs were, what the mission, tasks and purposes were for all these guys. It would definitely have been better if I had been read in earlier so I could know what the concept of operations was as well as the call signs for the different elements. Things went very well but I was just thrown into that situation. I walked in and they said, "Here's the radio. Start talking." The first thing I said was, "What are their call signs?" That mission really stands out in my mind.

LL: At what point did they decide to give you a detachment?

SF: The battalion commander made the decision to relieve one of the detachment commanders. I won't get into specifics but, right or wrong, the detachment commander who was relieved happened to be a good friend of mine. To this day, I still think he's a really good guy but the battalion commander made a decision and I didn't argue because I was ready to get out there

and start doing things. I had just come off shift, had breakfast and went back to get some sleep. I got a knock on my door. It was the S3. He said, "Start packing your bags. The battalion commander has made the decision to relieve one of the team leaders and you're going to take his job." I kept thinking, "I wonder what happened to cause him to lose his command?" But that the same time, I was excited to get an opportunity to get out there. I packed up my stuff and the next day they brought in the guy who had been relieved. We did a two-day handover and he assumed my responsibilities as the night battle captain. The team came and picked me up in Kandahar and drove me out to Helmand Province. We were based at Gereshk in the Helmand Province. It was around 9 May.

LL: Was it completely out of the blue?

SF: Yes. I was just getting ready to go to sleep when the S3 knocked on my door. I was like, "Did I screw something up last night?" He said, "Pack your bags. You're going to take a team."

LL: After you took command and moved out to Helmand Province, what were the challenges you had to deal with?

SF: There were a couple problems from the get-go. The biggest hurdle to overcome was taking over this team where the commander had just been relieved. He had only been on the job for four months. He was a great guy and was very popular on the team. They liked him. I think the circumstances he was relieved under were unfortunate. Right off the bat, I was unsure of how the team was going to respond to me. The other thing was that I hadn't had any trainup either. These guys were on their second rotation and I was a brand new guy. I had just been in the battalion for two months and had been up on the staff the whole time, but I had done as much as I could to read up on the area and get as smart on Afghanistan as I could. I think I had a broad understanding of the situation over there but I didn't have the specific on-the-ground experience like those guys had. I also hadn't been through the trainup with them and I didn't know what the specific problems were in Helmand, so I had some serious catching up to do once I got on the ground. I had to really get in there and assess the situation. That took a while, to be honest with you. One of the reasons the battalion commander relieved the commander was because he felt there may have been a lack of discipline. I found it to be just the opposite. They were a really good group of guys. I think they were very competent, but a lot of times perception can become reality and I think that's what the problem was. To answer your question, the first thing I had to do was figure out if there was anything wrong with the team and if there was anything I needed to fix. As I looked into things, though, I found that there weren't too many problems. After that, I had to figure out what the plan was for the area and whether or not it made sense. At our location in Gereshk, there were two other teams. There was our ODA, 341, there was ODA 345, also from our company, and there was ODA 2045, which was a National Guard unit from 20th Group. Sometimes when you have more than one ODA in a location, it can be like putting a bunch of pit bulls in a cage. Everyone wants a piece of the action. There's some competition that develops and sometimes it's healthy but sometimes it's not. The first thing we had to figure out was who was going to operate in what part of the province. Everyone wanted to be in the region of the province that we thought would have the most action, so there was some conflict there.

LL: Was there anyone who had the overall responsibility for the area?

SF: The senior captain was on ODA 345 and he was deemed the commander of the firebase. He was senior in rank and was senior in terms of his command time and experience since he'd already had a previous six-month rotation. I really chalk up this whole first rotation I had in Afghanistan as a learning experience. We needed to come up with a focused plan, figure out how to get along with everyone and determine what our priorities are. Helmand Province was the number one opium-producing province in Afghanistan. Our mission was focused on capturing and killing what were called anti-coalition militia (ACM). There was a lot of crime. It was hard to determine if folks were actually no-joke Taliban or just criminals. That's where a lot of the problems were. We had to figure out who the bad guys were, whether they were in the scope of our mission and who we were there to target versus just being criminals and thugs. Sometimes, though, they're tied together. It was a very complex environment and was difficult at times to determine who the enemy was.

LL: By the time you left, were you fairly confident that you had sufficiently assessed what the situation was? Did it seem like you were still feeling your way though in terms of who was related to whom and who the bad guys really were as opposed to just the average criminals?

SF: By the time we left, I think we did, but in my opinion it was too late. Again, I really chalk up this first deployment as a learning experience. I took a lot of notes and was determined that when we came back not to make some of the same mistakes. On that deployment, there were a lot of dynamics between two of the teams over there. I don't know if I really want to get into a lot of it, but at times the real struggle was almost more internal than it was external. I hate to say that, but sometimes I felt we were fighting ourselves. Not within my team but with other ODAs in the area. There wasn't a lot of cooperation or unity of effort among the two teams. I think some of it had to do with the egos involved in various positions and some competition that was probably counterproductive to our overall effort.

LL: How were you set up for interpreters?

SF: We had three interpreters. Along with them, we had a psychological operations (PSYOP) team as well as a civil affairs team. Those three interpreters were shared by the three ODAs, the PSYOP team and the civil affairs team. My team had a habitual interpreter who we always used as did the other two ODA teams. Whenever the civil affairs or PSYOP guys needed an interpreter, they'd ask one of us and whoever was free they would use.

LL: How good were the interpreters?

SF: They were pretty good. They were from the Hazara tribe. The predominant ethnic group in the Helmand Province was Pashtun and the folks from the Hazara tribe are Shi'a, not Sunni. They didn't get along with the Pashtuns very well. They spoke English well and they weren't tied to any of the people in the area, so they were able to give us an unbiased opinion and interpretation of what was being said and whatever events were going on.

LL: How good were they in terms of helping you figure out the relationships between different tribes and ethnic groups since they weren't from the area?

SF: They were pretty competent as far as that goes. These interpreters were very young. They were anywhere from 18 years old to 23 or 24. As far as your question goes, I don't know if I can give you a good answer. I was just trying to learn as much as I could about everything, including how to use interpreters. On my second rotation, I had some great interpreters who I really trusted to give me a straight assessment on what was happening.

LL: Were all your operations direct action or did you do a lot of meet-and-greets as well?

SF: At the time, the battalion was very focused on direct action missions. That's what they wanted our main effort to be. The reality on the ground, though, was that we couldn't just be focused on direct action. It was just one very small piece of this whole thing and, frankly, the least important piece when doing counterinsurgency, which is what we were doing already at that time. We all recognized that even as early as 2003. People weren't calling it counterinsurgency yet in Afghanistan, but we identified early on that we were transitioning to a counterinsurgency fight and we needed to expand our focus from just going out to capture and kill bad guys. It had become much broader than that. We went out and worked with the local security forces and police there in Gereshk. We knew that local security for the people was the first condition that had to be set and it needed to be the Afghans that were providing it. We'd go out and do some medical civic action projects (MEDCAPs) with our great medics. They could really win hearts and minds by going into a village and setting up. There would be a huge line of people waiting to be seen by them. It was great. We'd send the civil affairs team out to do some assessments. They started some projects to build wells, rebuild some schools and work on infrastructure. If you looked at our mission statement, you could see that they wanted us focused on direct action stuff, but our actual mission on the ground was much broader.

LL: When it came to dealing with local notables, were you responsible for certain individuals in Helmand or was it just whichever team happened to be working in the area at the time?

SF: My team ended up focusing on the immediate area in Gereshk and working with the local police. ODA 345 started working with the provincial leadership in Lashkar Gah. They started a habitual relationship with them and that's what we all wanted to do. That's how we ended up task organizing. At this time, there was also an Afghan Militia Force (AMF) brigade in Gereshk that was commanded by a guy named Mir Wali. One of the problems was that he was tied to a lot of corruption in the area. Their compound was just down the road from us and I think they may have had about 300 or so soldiers that lived there. It was tough because the police chief at the time was a pretty good guy who wanted to do the right thing, but there were a lot of problems because there was a corrupt quasi-military leader in the area who was tied to the Hizb-I Islami Gulbuddin (HIG) there and also probably tied to some of the drug and opium smuggling, along with the provincial government which was also probably heavily involved in the opium trade as well. That's where a lot of those guys made their livelihood, through the smuggling of opium. The weird thing was that opium was not on the table for us. We were not conducting a counterdrug operation. Our rules of engagement (ROE) clearly stated that just because a guy was growing a ton of opium in his backyard doesn't necessarily mean he's a bad guy. We weren't allowed to target those individuals. During our time there, we really had freedom of movement throughout the province. My team went up into the Baghran Valley a couple times. It was an eight- or nine-hour drive through some extremely rugged terrain with only three or four vehicles, nine or 10 Americans and maybe 12 of the locally trained indigenous

force that we had. We'd go up there for seven to 10 days to do operations without meeting a lot of resistance. Another area we operated in on almost a weekly basis, if not biweekly basis, was Sangin, which is about an hour-and-a-half drive north of Gereshk. Over the last two years, there have been some *major* fights in the Baghran Valley. Sangin and Musa Qal'eh are probably two of the most contested villages in that area. It seems like if anyone goes into those areas, there are massive gunfights – and we used to go into there twice a week without any problems. After we left, the British came in, they were given some counterdrug authority, and they began to target and eradicate the opium, which may well have been a driving force behind the increase in violence. When we were there in 2003, we left the opium guys alone and focused our operations strictly on known hostile Taliban elements or ties to al-Qaeda, and there were very, very few of those; mostly it was hostile Taliban. But once they started going after the opium guys, a lot of people who had been sitting on the fence and not aligning themselves with coalition forces or with Taliban forces felt forced to align themselves with the Taliban because the coalition was taking away their livelihood. That's just my opinion. The increase in violence may not necessarily be tied to Taliban in the area, but rather to the counternarcotics operations that have been going on.

LL: Were you called to do very many direct action operations or did you spend most of your time doing the softer counterinsurgency things?

SF: Everything we did was driven by us. Our battalion was tasked to maintain a specific direct action element that was supposed to be like a reserve for high-value targets. What they did was take that company and put them in Kandahar with that specific mission. The rest of us out at these outposts around southern Afghanistan really drove our own operations. We developed them all, collected our own information and developed our own intelligence. When the time was right and we had sufficient intelligence, then we'd conduct the operation. At that level, direct action was more like a soft knock, cordon and search type thing. We'd get some local security, search compounds and detain whoever was there. We rarely met with any resistance during those operations.

LL: Was anything ever raised to the level of a firefight?

SF: Not on this tour. There was virtually no resistance on this rotation.

LL: When you did these ops, were you going out on your own or were you working in conjunction with the Afghan National Army (ANA) or Afghan National Police (ANP)?

SF: The ANA was just being stood up at this time and they were being trained in Kabul, so there was no legitimately recognized Afghan force in the country at that time. To compensate for that, we used anywhere from 50 to 60 indigenous fighters we had that we called the AMF. They were guys we recruited and trained to fight with us. They brought their own equipment. Pretty much every Afghan has their own AK. The one thing we didn't have for them were uniforms so they looked like a ragtag motley crew, but we needed them. We had very few Americans at our location, maybe only 18 soldiers, so we needed them for additional security. Often times, we'd incorporate them on operations as the Afghan face but the problem was that they weren't a legitimate force. On select missions, we'd incorporate the police as well. Again, these are all lessons learned from this trip that we identified and fixed the second time around.

LL: Were there cultural speed bumps that you ran into that you weren't expecting in terms of the counterinsurgency operations that you were doing? What were the little things that happened that you weren't expecting that threw a monkey wrench into your plans?

SF: The only thing I can think of was when I got really sick my second day on the ground. We went out and had a meeting with Mir Wali. He hosted a big luncheon for us and I probably made the mistake of eating some fruit that had been washed with the local water. About 12 hours later, I felt like I was on death's door. I was laid out for the next three days. I was as sick as I have ever been. One of the funny things is that people say if you have that initial sickness, you won't get sick like that again. On my subsequent rotations, I never did get sick again.

LL: Was there anything cultural?

SF: I had some better cultural experiences on my second rotation. There isn't anything that sticks out in my mind culturally.

LL: What kinds of conditions were you living in on that forward operating base (FOB)?

SF: It was very austere. Initially we just had tents that had been reinforced with some plywood on the inside. My team had one tent and connected to us on the other side was ODA 345. We also had a mud brick wall that went around the perimeter. The perimeter itself was about a mile and we had strung up wire around it as well. After about a month or two, we hired a local contractor and they came in and built five very nice hardened structures. It took them about two months and we were able to move in around July. They also built us a large operations center to have our command and control node and our commo set up. We had a little morale, welfare and recreation (MWR) room for guys to be able to watch movies and things like that. Even though we had some buildings to live in after a while, it was still pretty austere.

LL: How easy was it to work with the civil affairs team and the PSYOP team?

SF: Personality-wise, everyone got along well, but none of us were really nested in what each other was doing. We were going out and doing our own thing. ODA 345 was going out and doing their own thing as was the civil affairs team. They'd come back and say, "We have a great idea. We want to do this." At that point, though, it was almost like we really didn't want to have anything to do with the civil affairs stuff. We didn't appreciate it or employ it to its fullest capability. The same was true for the PSYOP guys. The PSYOP team only had two individuals and they were both young. They were good guys but just young soldiers. We'd employ them quite a bit on operations, but at that point I wasn't switched on enough to give them any focus. They would just come up with their own things, do loudspeaker broadcasts and hand out leaflets and things like that. I didn't give those guys the focus I should have. I just let them do what they wanted to do.

LL: Did you have any interaction with other US services while you were there?

SF: No.

LL: Did you work with any other coalition forces?

SF: No.

LL: Any media contact?

SF: No.

LL: Any non-governmental organization (NGO) contact?

SF: No.

LL: When did you guys deploy back to the States?

SF: We got back in late September 2003.

LL: How did your handoff go?

SF: It went okay. It was the first one I'd ever participated in so I didn't have any frame of reference. I think it could have been better, but a lot of it was based on the projected airflow and when we were going to leave versus when the incoming guys were going to come in. We had a good five days on the ground with the incoming team's leadership and we were able to get those guys out to do a good handoff with the local Afghan leadership. We were able to explain what was going to happen and that these were the new guys coming in. We gave them a good familiarization with the terrain as well. It was a good handoff. I think we did a much better one on our second deployment.

LL: What were the biggest professional lessons learned you took away from this deployment?

SF: Number one is that you have to have a plan. I assumed that when I fell in on my team, they had already had a plan and some objectives they were working towards. The honest reality was there wasn't one. They were just going day by day. You have to have a plan. Number two is that we're all on the same team. I never cared who got credit for something as long as the job got done. I said to myself, "When we come back next time, I will never let egos get in the way. We're here to accomplish a mission and we're all on the same team." Another lesson would be the integration of the enablers you have. It's absolutely critical to use the assets you're given from civil affairs, PSYOP and intelligence elements.

LL: Based on this first deployment to Afghanistan, if you could make one recommendation to the Army about how to do things better in the future, what would you tell them to do?

SF: The improvements I think about are more focused on what we as a company and battalion could have done better. A lot of that goes back to the lessons I just mentioned. You have to have a plan and a concept that you're working towards. You can't just be figuring things out as you go day by day.

LL: How did the family separation and family readiness group (FRG) piece work for you and your detachment?

SF: The battalion had a very robust FRG. I'm very blessed because my wife is very independent. I had two young sons at the time, one wasn't even a year old, and my wife had her hands full but there weren't any issues. My wife didn't really need to rely on the FRG during the deployment.

LL: Do you think a six-month rotation is the right amount of time for the kinds of things you're doing in Special Forces?

SF: On both my deployments as a detachment commander, I thought four months was the right amount of time. Everyone was able to stay focused for four months and that four-month mark was when morale seemed to take a nosedive. There seemed to be more bickering and infighting because you had guys who had been living in very close proximity with no outlet or time to get away for 120 days. That became a challenge. So, I used to think that four months was the right amount of time. You'd get there, do your hand off, have 30 days to get familiar with the area and then that gives you three months to do good, focused operations. You'd do your transition and go home. That's what I used to think. Now that we have the conventional forces doing 12- or 15-month long rotations, though, I think continuity is critical to the counterinsurgency piece. You learn the area. You become the subject matter expert of the whole region you're in and it takes a good six months to get to that point. Right about the time you know who the movers and shakers are, what tribes you can work with, what tribes you need to keep and eye on and you've established yourself very well in the area, it's time to move. The next guy comes in and it starts all over again. We really lose the continuity of effort as well as the intelligence continuity and collection. The local people know what's going on. Right around the six-month mark, they'll start asking, "You should be leaving here pretty soon, right? Two more weeks, right? Then new guy comes." You have to play stupid and say, "What are you talking about? No way. I'm not going anywhere." They have the system figured out. To do it right, the Green Berets, the guys who are out at the remote locations and who are doing more of the foreign internal defense mission, they probably need to be there for at least a year. It's not what the families or the soldiers want to hear, but it's what's best for the effort.

LL: Is there anything else about your first deployment to Afghanistan that you'd like to add?

SF: It was a tremendous learning experience for me. I graduated from the Q Course and got thrown right into the staff. It was great to be on the staff because I got to see things from the battalion perspective and see what the battalion commander looks at. At that time, the only link the teams had to the battalion was the daily SITREPs that they sent up and their perception of what you're doing is all based on that SITREP, so you have to be very careful. I learned that you had to be careful how you say things and what you say because it will mean certain things to the staff. I was glad I had that time up top to see that. Overall, it was a tremendous learning experience. Taking that team unexpectedly without knowing any of the guys or having any time to train up with them, then getting thrown into a situation in which their leader had been fired, it was certainly a challenge.

LL: Thank you for your time.

END OF INTERVIEW

Transcribed by Jennifer Vedder