

# Jesse Iwuji

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SCHWAN: So, Jesse, you want to give me a little bit of your background, early. You don't need to do when you were a baby crap, but uh, we want to get a sense of your military history, where you're going from now, and what's in front of you.

IWUJI: Yeah, so I originally grew up in Dallas, Texas and played high school football there. Got recruited to play football at the naval academy, I took that offer and went there because my whole goal and dream at that time when I was a kid was that I wanted to play college football, and Naval Academy was the best school that was offering. You know, a full ride scholarship pretty much, to play football. So, I went there and I knew that I was gonna get to play and also at the end of it be able to serve the country. So I took that offer, went there, had an amazing time. And I graduated in 2010 and when I did I became a surface warfare officer in the [US] Navy, and by doing that - that basically put me on the ships. So my first four years active duty in the Navy I was on two different ship

SCHWAN: The first ship was a mine-sweeper, the second was an amphib. So, I went on one deployment with each ship, my first deployment was about 10 months and my second deployment was about five months

SCHWAN: And you were deployed to the Middle East?

IWUJI: Yeah, yeah, yeah- both times I went over to the Middle East. The first time I spent about the whole ten months in Bahrain uh the other time I was basically all around the Arabian Gulf. We went to Abu Dhabi, Bahrain, Kuwait, we went through the Straits of Hormuz. So, we just kind of sailed around on this amphibious warfare ship, we were on the USS Comstock.

SCHWAN: Now, did they have you serving with [US] Marines on the amphib?

IWUJI: Yes, yes- so prior to deployment we only had, you know, 400 sailors on the ship. Once we were getting ready to go on deployment we beefed up to about 800 people on the ship. The other 400 were Marines. So, they were from the MEU [Marine Expeditionary Unit]. We went out with an amphibious readiness group. So, it was us, the USS Makin Island and also the USS San Diego, so as a group

with the LPD [Landing Platform Dock or amphibious transport dock], LSD [Landing Ship Dock], and LHD [Landing Helicopter Dock] ship we all went out on deployment together.

SCHWAN: Did you guys get into any action? Or just...

IWUJI: Well, we didn't get into any action... there was some stuff that happened though, the Makin Island when they were, they had split from us for a little portion of the deployment, and when they did there was an accident with one of their planes. It lost power, as it was going down, some of the crew had to jump, and when they did, they never found two of them. That was probably the only mishap that happened throughout the whole deployment. But as far as like action and you know, actually, we never got into any type of battles or situations with any other navies or other military components out there. So, it was pretty, for the most part, pretty straight forward.

SCHWAN: So, what was your naval career like after you got out of the [US Naval] Academy? Four years?

IWUJI: Yeah, so getting out of the Academy we had a commitment of five years, during that five years, you know, I had a good time, learned a lot you know. Just deploying and going on different under ways when I was in the States. Being on the ships and leaning from a lot of experienced people who have been a lot of different places. People who had careers that had been going already for fifteen, twenty, thirty years. I got to learn a lot and see a lot and got to go to a lot of cool places. Asia, Middle East, Hawaii, you name it. Got to really sail a lot and see some cool things, and really to experience, a lot. You know, if I wasn't in the Navy, maybe I would have never gotten the opportunity to shoot a gun, I would have never gotten the opportunity to learn how to defend myself and defend other people, maybe I wouldn't have learned how to drive a ship, or navigate on the seas, and do all the things that we got to do. So, my naval career definitely really taught me a lot

SCHWAN: Now you're still a reservist?

IWUJI: Yeah, so I left active duty, and transitioned from active duty to the [US] Reserves in May of 2017. And I plan on staying in the Reserves for probably another fifteen or so years.

SCHWAN: So you've got, what's your Reserve commitment?

IWUJI: I think the contract renews...probably I think it's in about three years, so I think it's in three-year spurts. So, I'll just keep on renewing it and staying in until, most likely until more fifteen years.

SCHWAN: Now, did you have men under your command?

IWUJI: While I was active duty? Yeah, yeah. So, when I was active duty, when I was on the ships I was a division officer. So, my first ship I was on I was a first tour division officer, and my second ship I was a second tour division officer. The first tour division officer, I was a deck officer, so I had the deck department under my command. We had during my time, anywhere between ten and fifteen enlisted personnel under me. And I led that division for two years while I was onboard that ship. I learned a lot, I got to lead people who were younger than me, my age, and also older than me. So, it taught me a lot. And they taught me a lot too. Just because I was leading them didn't mean I couldn't learn from them.

SCHWAN: When you came out of the Academy, were you prepared for leadership responsibility?

IWUJI: When I came out of the Academy, I thought I was prepared. But once I got into the Navy and got to see my division for the first time, you know, I had a lot to learn. These folks had been there done that, knew what they were doing, had way more experience on the ships than I did. So, I still had a lot to learn as far as leadership went. But I learned it from my chief, basically my senior enlisted in my division. And you know, getting to watch others on the ship who had been there a while, other officers, got to learn leadership traits from them. And I just, piled it up together and did what I could to lead the people under me

SCHWAN: What were your academic strengths when you went to the academy?

IWUJI: Yeah so, going to the academy, math was definitely a strength of mine

SCHWAN: Okay.

IWUJI: Yeah, math. I actually, you know, didn't do too bad in Calculus One, Calculus Two, Calculus Three, Differential Equations- those were definitely my strong points. Also, different sciences, like physics and chemistry, didn't do bad in those. Some of my weak points were, actually like, English. For some reason I wasn't good at writing papers but I love numbers. I could do numbers, but I just wasn't great at writing.

SCHWAN: And what is your degree in?

IWUJI: My degree was in General Science

SCHWAN: General science?

IWUJI: Yeah, General Science at the Academy

SCHWAN: And you're an, you're basically an engineer?

IWUJI: Yeah, so in General Science you do a lot of engineering classes, you do a lot of physics, oceanography, a lot of math- it's more technical stuff than it is history and English and economic and all that. It's different than that

SCHWAN: And how did you then make the transition into...

IWUJI: Into motor sports?

SCHWAN: Yes.

IWUJI: So, while in the Navy, on the side, you know I'd go home and I'd have some free weekends, and on my free weekends I had this passion for motor sports. Once football was over at the Academy, and I was in the real world, obviously I couldn't play football anymore, I had to find something else that I could be competitive in. and motorsports was it. I always just had a little bit of a passion for cars and racing. Somewhere around 2011, I began drag racing with my car that I had at different drag strips. Started going to road course open track days and started doing that with my car. And then finally in 2014, I made the decision that I wanted to become a professional race car driver. That's what I want to do. And I'm gonna do it while, you know, during my free time in the Navy. And luckily, around that point is when I was transitioning to shore duty: so, I was going to have a lot more free time, I wasn't going to be deploying any more, and I was actually going to be able to pursue this during my off time. So, I started pursuing it, and started trying to work my way up the NASCAR ladder, and, you know, now I'm racing on TV.

SCHWAN: So what level of NASCAR are you in?

IWUJI: Currently, right now, I'm in the NASCAR K&N Pro Series West and I'm also racing in the ARCA [Automobile Racing Club of America] Series, which are both similar type levels: same type of cars, different motors, and they race on different tracks. But, I, before this I was in the NASCAR Whelen All-American Series, which is late model stock cars. And prior to that, I hadn't really raced anything, so

definitely learning and moving up. My next step is the NASCAR Camping World Truck Series.

SCHWAN: Where does that run at? What course does that run on?

IWUJI: The NASCAR Camping World Truck Series, they run on all of the tracks that big NASCAR runs on, so all of the cup series tracks. So, they have about twenty-two, twenty-three races a year. You know, I'm planning on this year doing some of those races which should be cool, it should be a nice step up for me. But they run Chicagoland speedway, they run Kansas, they run Iowa, they run Daytona, Talladega, Bristol- a lot of great tracks.

SCHWAN: And your car can go how fast?

IWUJI: My current car that I race in in the ARCA series, the fastest I've been is probably around 187, 188 or so. My average speed for my best lap at Daytona this year was 184 miles per hour, and that was the average speed for that lap, so. We're definitely moving pretty fast.

SCHWAN: Now how are you combining... your Navy career with your race car career? It's an unusual balance.

IWUJI: Yeah, so time management is huge. I don't have a ton of free time in-between both of them. While I was active duty and racing, I would basically work during the week, just a regular 8 to 4, and on the weekends, I was racing. And every once in a while, I would have a race or some type of test or practice that might happen during the week, and I'd have to take either special liberty or leave to make that happen. And then once I transitioned into the Reserves, now all my military commitment days are now on the weekends, which are also during a lot of race weekends, so I've had to move them around a little bit. Maybe if I had a race on this certain weekend but a free weekend the next, I'd have to move my drill weekend to the next weekend, so that I could still do my Navy commitment but also be able to race too.

SCHWAN: Now, is the Navy cooperating with you on that?

IWUJI: Yeah, they've been very flexible with that which has been great. Because, you know, I've also been able to represent the military too. So, while being in NASCAR, being in the ARCA Series, you know, it's a big stage, a lot of people are watching. And with what I'm doing I can be an inspiration, a motivation, to a lot of sailors, Marines, and really, anyone in the military. I've been trying to be the

best ambassador I can for the military so that while I'm doing my thing on the track, I'm also representing the military in a great light.

SCHWAN: So what is the logical conclusion of your Reserve career? What rank can you get to, what are your aspirations there?

IWUJI: As a reservist? I can get all the way to the top, you can become an admiral. I'm not aiming to become an admiral, I would love to, if possible to become a captain, an O6, in the Reserves. I would love to do that. But the goal is basically to do it for another fifteen years and whatever the highest rank I can get to in that time, I want to make that happen. Maybe it's O5, maybe it's O6

SCHWAN: Are you subject to deployments, like every other reservist?

IWUJI: Yes, we are, yes, I am. When that time comes, hopefully, I can wiggle it around to where I can do it during the off season. But, it's part of the commitment, and I'm in the Reserves and it's something that I've got to do. So, when it comes around I'll be ready for it.

SCHWAN: How do the other guys in the service look at you?

IWUJI: They love what I'm doing, because I'm out there chasing my dreams and goals, I'm not just, you know, just doing a regular 9 to 5 job, going home, sleeping at night, waking up, 9 to 5. I'm actually going out and trying achieve some big goals and dreams and represent the military in a great way.

SCHWAN: Well, I imagine the Navy is pleased to have you out there representing them

IWUJI: Yeah, yeah, for sure they are. They've been doing a lot of stuff with me lately and hopefully there's more stuff to come, hopefully maybe one day we can get the Navy back into NASCAR, you know as a sponsor somehow and use it as a recruiting tool.

SCHWAN: With the new budget I think they can.

IWUJI: Yeah, definitely, for sure. Air force is still in it, right now

SCHWAN: Army's still in it, aren't they?

IWUJI: Army? They aren't right now, they were up until...Army and Navy were there up until late 2008 or so, or 9.

SCHWAN: Okay.

IWUJI: And then, maybe ten, and then they got out. But they never had a driver who had been in the military. So, with me being in the military, I can actually, you know, I can speak from experience my military experience, and I can go to schools and different places and talk to kids and tell them about the Military because I was in it. You know, I'm not just a driver with a pretty face saying, "Hey, join the military", I'm a driver who was in the military and who did it.

SCHWAN: And you get, you get a lot of opportunities to represent the military on your weekend on reserve?

IWUJI: Yeah, yeah, yeah, yes, I do yeah. While in the Reserves, we do a lot, we do mainly a lot of training, you know, but while there, you know, it's pretty cool. A lot of people, they didn't know I was racing, and then they started seeing it and they were like, "Wow, we didn't realize you were a race car driver." So, it's attracted some good attention. We've been doing some things with the Navy and their marketing campaigns they've using to promote the Navy in a great light. They've been using some of the stuff I've been doing to help do that.

SCHWAN: What do your parents think about your racing?

IWUJI: They thought I was crazy, at first! But slowly, over time they've gotten used to it. And they know that I'm chasing my dreams and nothing is gonna stop me and, you know, and they're just supportive, they just want to make sure I'm safe.

SCHWAN: So, do you have an affinity for speed? Or an affinity just for the danger of it?

IWUJI: I don't know if it's the danger, hmm... I think it's just... I don't know, for me, it's just really fun, it's cool, like it's challenging. You know, to be able to race and to do it well, it's not easy. But when you can do it right, for me it's really rewarding. And I love cars, I love the sound, I love the speed, it's just fun to me, it's really interesting.

SCHWAN: How many cars are in one of your average races?

IWUJI: It depends. In the NASCAR K&N Series it can be anywhere between twenty up to thirty-three cars. In the ARCA Series it's the same way, twenty to really forty cars. At Daytona, racing in the ARCA Series with BBMC Mortgage onboard as a sponsor, we had thirty-nine cars in that race! So, thirty-nine other cars going 180-plus miles per hour.

SCHWAN: What's the highest you've ever finished?

IWUJI: The highest I've ever finished in stock-car racing was, I think my best finish probably...was fourth or fifth, or something like that... fourth, I believe, yeah, that was in late model stock car race in Meridian Speedway in Idaho. And then, yeah. I've had a few top 5's in that. So I'm working my way up. The goal is to get into a cup series and then win a championship there.

SCHWAN: How much of it is dependent upon your skill, and how much of it is dependent upon your car?

IWUJI: A lot of it's the car. You have to have good skills to drive it, but a car will only go as fast as a car can go. The car only has enough horsepower to go 180 miles per hour, no matter how good of a driver you are, you can't make it go faster than 180 miles per hour. So, my goal is always to be good enough to where, whatever matter what car I'm in, I can maximize the capability of it. So if I can do that, then I know I'm doing my job.

SCHWAN: Now, are you in a position where you can go up with sponsors, or you'll keep a sponsor but go up with cars?

IWUJI: Right now, working on basically bringing sponsors up the ladder with me. So, we're partnered up with BBMC Mortgage and also Perfect-Hydration. And the goal is to keep these sponsors as we rise up through the series and hopefully give them the best return on investment that we can.

SCHWAN: So you get a lot of interviews, a lot of exposure.

IWUJI: Yeah, exactly,

SCHWAN: Because of your unusual background?

IWUJI: Exactly. So being a military guy who's also racing, it's different. It hasn't been done before, at least recently, over the last twenty-thirty years or so. Doing that and being different, it's helps a lot.

SCHWAN: I've kind of never heard of it, I thought this- yeah, I mean, I knew the Army car, but the Army car had professional drivers.

IWUJI: Yeah, drivers who had never been in the military,

SCHWAN: Exactly right. Are you the first in the military driver?

IWUJI: I'm not the first...there was one back in I believe the '60s or so, he was a guy in the Air Force, I believe an officer in the Air Force, from what I know, I'm the first



naval officer. I haven't heard of anyone else, unless you know, records weren't really that great a long time ago, so maybe there could have been some but at least for the last thirty-forty years or so, I think I'm the only naval officer, and definitely the only Naval Academy graduate to race in NASCAR.

SCHWAN: So, you are the first Naval Academy graduate to drive a race car?

IWUJI: To drive a race car in NASCAR, at least. I don't know about other motor sports. I don't know if there's somebody who maybe ran in sports car series or anything like that.

SCHWAN: And what is your aspiration relative to that career?

IWUJI: Um, just racing? So, my goal is to make it all the way to the top of NASCAR and then to win a championship in it. And just to have a long illustrious career, to do well, and to succeed, and to be able to inspire and motivate others to go after their dreams too.

SCHWAN: And you get a lot of requests to speak?

IWUJI: A few here and there. I'm sure it's going to increase more and more, as time goes on, and as I continue to rise up, especially when I get to the top level, and I've made it, I'm sure there will be a lot.

SCHWAN: Yeah, your profile will change.

IWUJI: Yeah, exactly, and it will be proven. It will show that this guy went from nothing to something, and he did it through hard work, crying, and faith.

SCHWAN: Nothing wrong with that.

IWUJI: Nothing wrong at all.

SCHWAN: That's the American way.

IWUJI: Exactly.

SCHWAN: That's why your parents came here, that's why all of our parents came here. Because you got a shot at doing better.

IWUJI: Exactly, and they did. They weren't scared to do it, they were like, you know what, here's an opportunity, let's jump on it.

SCHWAN: And your parents still are supporting your activity?

IWUJI: Yeah, yeah. They you know, they love it, you know. They aren't able to financially support it, but, they love it though

SCHWAN: They go to a lot of races?

IWUJI: They haven't been to one yet, I need to get them out to races. Because all of my races have been so far from them, it's been tough with their schedule, but this year I've got to find a way to figure out something that's a little bit closer to them and easier for them to get to-

SCHWAN: Buy them a ticket, don't be cheap.

IWUJI: I know, I know, it's because it's a lot of them!

SCHWAN: And you're single guy?

IWUJI: No, I have a girlfriend, well, I'm not married, I don't have any kids or anything like that.

SCHWAN: And what does your girlfriend think about it?

IWUJI: She's been supportive, she's been supportive. She knew what she was getting into, you know, I was racing prior to dating her, so she knew getting into this that I was going to be very busy.

SCHWAN: And you're going to live in California?

IWUJI: No, eventually the goal is to live in North Carolina, because that's where all the NASCAR teams are based out of, so, eventually, I'll be over there. The goal is, hopefully, by next year.

SCHWAN: You've got your progression worked out

IWUJI: Yeah, in my mind. Sometimes things don't work out exactly how I want them to, but eventually it works out.

SCHWAN: Now, are you in graduate school?

IWUJI: So, I went to Naval Post-Graduate School and I worked on the staff there - that was 2015-2017

SCHWAN: So, you got a Master's?

IWUJI: I just worked on the staff there, I didn't actually go to school. When I originally was going there, I thought I could work on it, but then once I started doing

NASCAR thing, I just figured, I just didn't have enough time. There was no way I was going to be able to focus on studies and also race

SCHWAN: Now obviously, you're still working out.

IWUJI: Oh yeah.

SCHWAN: Now, is that critical to driving?

IWUJI: Yes, staying in shape is huge. These race cars get really hot, and it's a big physical stress on your body when you're driving these things for lap after lap. Because, you know, it's not a 10-lap race, you're going 150-plus laps, in 120-130 degree race car, and fighting that car around corners and trying to race against people, keep it off walls, it's a struggle. So, you definitely have to stay in shape.

SCHWAN: Where has what you've trained for in the Navy assisted you?

IWUJI: Communication, that's been huge. So, radio communication, you know, from ship to ship, you know, and to other units, that helps me on the radio in a race car. Stress management, being able to handle myself in high-stress situations. When you're in a race car, it's high stress, all the time. And teamwork too, just being able to work with a team and leading your team, to get everyone to be able to do their certain job so that everything gels right and you can have a good NASCAR.

SCHWAN: And your leadership skills are obviously transferable.

IWUJI: Exactly, and leadership can transfer to everything. And I'm glad I learned a lot of it in the Navy. I've been able to bring it over to the civilian world and the NASCAR world, and it's helped me a lot.

SCHWAN: Now, you've got to be aware that, you're really a rarity, as a military officer and...

IWUJI: Yeah, I try to use it to my advantage.

SCHWAN: Yeah, you should. So you're pleased with your service so far, in the military?

IWUJI: Yeah, I'm pleased. I mean, I did everything I was asked, never got in trouble, went on my deployments, two of them. And went to a lot of cool places and got to do a lot of great things and learn a lot.

SCHWAN: Did you see changes in the Navy since you've been in?

IWUJI: Yeah, there's been a lot of changes since been in, and a lot of changes, even more changes, since I've transitioned to the Reserves. Yeah, it's definitely evolving for sure. But at the end of the day, that's the world that we live in, you know. The world is evolving, you know, our Military has to evolve to keep up with it too, in all different kinds of ways. Sometimes, we agree with some of the evolvment, sometimes we don't, but at the end of the day it has to. Because if we stay too old school, we'll fall behind, and if we fall behind, other countries get ahead of us.

SCHWAN: There's no question about that. Absolutely none. And you were at, well, not all of the trouble spots. Did you get to Asia at all?

IWUJI: Just for a little bit, we stopped in Hong Kong, so that was the only place in Asia we actually, did. So, I was never off the coast of Korea or anything like that. While I was on deployments, our big thing was the Middle East. And now it seems like focus is shifting more to kind of Southeast Asia and all that. But we weren't, that wasn't the big focus for us. Right as I was leaving the ships and going to shore duty that was around the time when the focus started somewhat shifting a little bit more.

SCHWAN: What's your weight?

IWUJI: I'm currently 195 pounds.

SCHWAN: Okay, 'bout six...

IWUJI: Six foot.

SCHWAN: Yeah, so you're continuing that workout.

IWUJI: Oh yeah, I'm basically in the same shape I was in when I was in college. Maybe five, ten pounds heavier, max but still in good shape, still run every day, still lifting weights every day. Still do my physical fitness assessments well. You know, I do one hundred plus pushups during those, I do.

SCHWAN: Now, you were a track and field guy?

IWUJI: Yes, I ran track and field, I was a sprinter.

SCHWAN: Okay, not a surprise. What did you run, the 100?

IWUJI: I ran the 100 meter, the 200 meter, and the 400x100 meter.

SCHWAN: How good was your team?

IWUJI: They were all right, you know, Naval Academy, we were pretty decent. We were in our conference we were always, I would say top three or so in our conference. It was always a battle between us and army, they had a really good team too. But yeah, we always had a pretty decent squad. I was always excited to run track, it was my second sport.

SCHWAN: Did they ever try to recruit you for the SEALs?

IWUJI: No, not really. I don't know if I would have ever done that. My swimming skills weren't up to par for that.

SCHWAN: I was going to say.

IWUJI: Yeah, you have to be a really good swimmer.

SCHWAN: You almost have to be an Olympic quality swimmer to deal with that kind of ...

IWUJI: Honestly, if you're a great swimmer, then half the battle is done.

SCHWAN: What is the, what are your courses, to stay in the Navy for fifteen more years? What do you have to train, what do you have to learn, train, is there a graduate school for advanced officer training?

IWUJI: In some ways, there's the War College in Newport, Rhode Island, there's different things that you could go to to advance your career a little bit more and get certain trainings and schools done. They all come with time. So, the War College that would be one place to go. And then getting your graduate degree, that very helpful, and so on. There are different things you can do to help

SCHWAN: Now, would you be an engineer?

IWUJI: Um, no, I would not be an engineer. Engineering is cool, but I don't necessarily want to get an engineering degree. It's a lot of work. With what I'm doing right now, I'm so limited on time.

SCHWAN: How many days a week do you have to get in a car?

IWUJI: Race car, so, basically the only time I'm in a race car is on race day. There's no practice during the week, for me or anything like that. My only practice that I get to do, the only training that I get to do, is on a racing simulator at my house. I

have like a racing seat, steering wheel, pedals, and a shifter, and a screen, and I just practice on there.

SCHWAN: Does it help?

IWUJI: It helps a lot, yeah, because it simulates real life, and it's very, very close and realistic so, I can at least train my mind, so my mind is always sharp when I jump in a race car, you know. I'm good to go.

SCHWAN: So, how much of it, is your mind?

IWUJI: A lot, its, racing in a race car a lot of it is mind. A lot of it is you being able to keep your focus so you can go in a proper line on the racetrack, you can get around people properly. A lot of it is in the head.

SCHWAN: And how do your fellow competitors feel about you being a Navy guy?

IWUJI: You know, I think, they think it's cool. A lot of them show a lot of respect, which is great, you know so. Some of them don't really understand because they didn't grow up like that, a lot of them grew up racing for their whole life, so for them they don't really get it. But some of them who maybe have some military friends or family, they understand and they get it.

SCHWAN: It really puts more pressure on you, though. I mean, you're in an example. That a military guy can come in and do it.

IWUJI: It can be a little bit of pressure. The pressure is mainly because some people expect you to perform at a super high level, and it takes time. I've only been racing for a few years, I'm not going to be perfect, right now, I'm not going to be going and winning championships, right now. I'm still learning, but as I get better and better, eventually I'll get to the point, where I'm winning a lot of races, I'm winning championships, and at that point

SCHWAN: Now does your sponsor fund your regular lifestyle?

IWUJI: No, so BBMC mortgage, them jumping onboard as a sponsor, it's mainly in the racing so that they can get the exposure that they get out of all the stuff that happens, all the media attention that happens out of the racing. And also, all the stuff I can use to promote, like use my social media to promote them. As far as my regular living, that's through my regular day job that I have, which is being the Head of Marketing and Sales at Magnus and Superchargers.

SCHWAN: That's a, that's really, a lot to digest, in your mind.

IWUJI: It's a lot. My mind is always constantly just whirling.

SCHWAN: That's good, that's good. And what's your next race?

IWUJI: My next race is going to be at Bristol Motor Speedway.

SCHWAN: In Virginia?

IWUJI: Yep, well, in Tennessee. It's probably really close, right there.

SCHWAN: They're all together, yeah.

IWUJI: So, Bristol, and then Talladega, and then Charlotte.

SCHWAN: Those are all the big-time tracks.

IWUJI: Yeah, I'm racing all those. And then Chicago on June 28<sup>th</sup>.

SCHWAN: How late is the, how long is the average race you run?

IWUJI: Most of them are about 150 laps.

SCHWAN: Okay.

IWUJI: So, an hour and a half, or two hours.

SCHWAN: One hundred and fifty laps is what, about two hundred miles?

IWUJI: Depending on what size track. So, yeah, it just depends what size track.

SCHWAN: So, you're going to come here, what racetrack is it on in Chicago?

IWUJI: Chicagoland Speedway, which is in Joliet, Illinois.

SCHWAN: I've been there. And you're going to have a bunch of Navy support there?

IWUJI: That's the goal! Hopefully, I'll have a lot of Navy support.

SCHWAN: Are you going to have the guys that you served with?

IWUJI: I don't know if I'll have that, but I'll have definitely people who are- maybe even some of the people from the local Navy station in Chicago.

SCHWAN: In Great Lakes?

IWUJI: Yeah, in Great Lakes, yeah. Maybe have a lot of them come out, some recruits.

SCHWAN: Now, have you gone up to Great Lakes?

IWUJI: I've never been there, I've driven by but I've never, like actually, been to the base.

SCHWAN: They have 20,000 naval personnel up there.

IWUJI: Jeeze!

SCHWAN: That's where everybody, that's where the Navy Basic course is.

IWUJI: Oh yeah, yeah, that's a lot of people.

SCHWAN: It's a heck of a place, it really is.

IWUJI: That's wild, that would be interesting to go there, see all the new faces coming in, people who are like, ok this is my...

SCHWAN: How old are you, about thirty-two?

IWUJI: Thirty! Thirty.

SCHWAN: Okay, so how many years can you do it? Another twelve? Fifteen?

IWUJI: The goal is to do it till about forty-five, do the Navy for fifteen and do NASCAR for fifteen.

SCHWAN: Well, what the heck, you're going to have a full load!

IWUJI: I know, I know. That's the life I'm choosing to live.

SCHWAN: Where do you want to end up living?

IWUJI: After that, probably Texas, Dallas, Texas. Go home.

SCHWAN: You Texas guys want to stay in Texas.

IWUJI: It's a great place. Maybe have a place in California I can visit, so I can go snowboarding.

SCHWAN: Oh, you've got to be careful doing that. You ever been injured?

IWUJI: I've been hurt, I've gotten a few road rashes

SCHWAN: Is that from a burn?



IWUJI: No, it's from glass, I was in a car wreck prior to NASCAR racing, but I, from racing I haven't really been injured. I've been in some wrecks, but you know, walked away from it. A little sore here and there. But I've been all right.

SCHWAN: Do you ever feel you are frightened by it, or not at all?

IWUJI: No, no. you just go, you just race. Pray that nothing bad happens, and luckily, nothing happened other than...

SCHWAN: Does your girlfriend go to the races?

IWUJI: Yeah, she's been to some of the races so far, yeah. I'm sure she's probably freaking out when she's watching the race, yeah.

SCHWAN: So, are you bringing her up to Chicago?

IWUJI: Hopefully, she comes out, yeah, if she's not tied up that weekend, that'd be cool.

SCHWAN: Bring her out here, bring her here. We'd love to have her. Anything we can do to help you?

IWUJI: Just promote the good word, connections are huge, that's a big thing.

SCHWAN: Now what's the Ambassador, Phoenix Patriot Foundation?

IWUJI: So, the Phoenix Patriot Foundation is a nonprofit organization out of Southern California and their main mission was to support wounded vets. So, they were my first big partner in NASCAR when I started racing in 2015 so, we would bring different wounded vets to the track and honor them, they would have their name on the race car and would show them to a great time. And they would have hospitality in the suite and just have a really good time at the racetrack. So that was kind of my way of being able to give back to vets.

SCHWAN: So, are you still involved with them?

IWUJI: Yes, we are, yes, we are. I still have them on some of my race suits, I promote some of the things that they're doing. Last year in 2017, 2018, Cares was the vet foundation that we were really supporting this year it's Patriots Charity Initiative, which is part of BBMC Mortgage. They've donated over two million dollars to different veteran causes like, that try to fight against different issues, like homelessness, vet homelessness and mental illness and things like that, they're doing great work.

SCHWAN: Well, that's a critical responsibility you have. I personally am involved with several charities, this is a charity also as you know. Well, a not-for-profit. A charity is a bad word, based on what the wounded warriors did. So, they get you to try to speak at those things?

IWUJI: Yes, so, that's some of the stuff that I've been trying to work into. My biggest thing is just promoting and bringing awareness about them. That's what we've been doing through social media and at the race track, just trying to bring awareness to different organizations so people know that these services and people are around. A lot of people just don't know, they might be going through different issues and they just know where to look. And my job is to at least show, "Hey guys, there are these organizations that are doing this, just wanted to let you know so you can call them up."

SCHWAN: Now, does the Navy line you up to speak?

IWUJI: Not yet, but one of these days, hopefully.

SCHWAN: And you've never been, we are connected with Great Lakes, so if at some point, not that you need it, but at some point, if we can get you hooked up there we will, for a speaking engagement.

IWUJI: Oh cool, cool, cool. That would be awesome.

SCHWAN: So, what you need to do is give us, well, Victor has all of your contact information.

IWUJI: Yeah, that would be cool, that would be interesting.

SCHWAN: So, you're going to spend the day with Victor?

IWUJI: Yeah, grab some food, yeah.

SCHWAN: And then, when are you headed out?

IWUJI: I fly out tomorrow morning, go back to California, and then go back to work. And then I fly to the Middle East this Friday, for work. Work stuff.

SCHWAN: So you're on assignment right now?

IWUJI: No, not right now, right now I'm more on just free time. Not even really free time, more of NASCAR time

SCHWAN: Well, that's great. It's a pleasure to meet you and I think you're going to have, you've certainly got the attitude, and the command presence ...

IWUJI: Thank you.

SCHWAN: which the military teaches you

IWUJI: Yeah, they teach you that, oh yeah.

SCHWAN: There's no question about it.