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"Sugar's got a pact with the Devil"

ONE HELL OF AN OFFER

It's the scariest job interview on TV and Lord Sugar has upped the stakes. Now, the winning *Apprentice* candidate will be his business partner in a £250,000 venture of their choice. **buzz** finds out what's at stake from His Lordship and his crack team of **Karren Brady** and **Nick Hewer**

WORDS PAUL SIMPER
PHOTOGRAPHS IAN DERRY

WHEN IT COMES TO reality TV contests, we're up for anything. But nothing quite gets **buzz**'s juices flowing like the self-promoting, often deluded candidates of *The Apprentice* and their job interview from hell with Lord 'formerly Sir Alan' Sugar, 64, and his hroschpeople - shrewd silver fox Nick Hewer, 67, and super-smart Karren Brady, 42. The prize has changed but the dance remains the same. Expect inept decisions, raised eyebrows, backstabbing, the odd spark of genius, and firings. Lots of firings. We, quite simply, cannot wait...

NICK HEWER

Do you think this new bunch of candidates are more capable because they've already run their own businesses?
I think the candidates this time are more competent, serious and dead-eyed. They really want the prize. This isn't just winning £100,000 for a year - this is getting a share of £250,000 with Uncle Alan as a shareholder watching you run this new business you've decided upon. That's long term. It is a very serious proposition.

What was your first moneymaking scheme?

I had a brilliant moneymaking scheme when I was about 12, which was taking apples from my parents' orchard and selling them at the gate. I undercut the local greengrocer and had no overheads, so I did very well - until my old man found out. **What would Lord Sugar be like as a business partner?** I've never had a joint venture with him. He was a client of my PR firm. But any interaction with Sugar means that you actually are working for him. This may sound strange but I found him incredibly

adult in business. He's an emotional guy but he's very fair. He has a short temper but there's no feuding. He's impatient but he learns things very fast. You can hand him a report of 73 pages and he'll find the one glaring error in the whole bloody report in minutes. I think he's got a deal with the Devil - a Faustian pact - because he certainly knows how the world works. He's wired differently to the rest of us. **Do you ever miss any details on the tasks?** It's not easy. Karren and I are writing and scribbling away all the time. You try to follow eight people for

three days, noting down everything they say. Was it true? What was their reaction? Was their reaction genuine? And then we have to go through everything with him. Sugar will go: "For God's sake, Nick, please try to be more accurate. Karen says it happened at 4.42 and you say 4.39. Which was it?" Then he throws us out and sits there, absorbing everything we've told him before the candidates are called in. It's quite a tour de force, really.

Lord Sugar told us he thinks he's mellowed. Would you agree?

Yes. I think the football experience with Spurs softened him quite a lot. There was a time when people were very unpleasant to him. I used to go to matches at White Hart Lane and sit in the directors' box and you'd get high-court judges and cabinet ministers effing and blinding at him. But I was with him in the south of France a couple of years ago at a restaurant. Three English teenagers came up to our table. We looked up and one said: "Oh, Sir Alan, we just want to say we love you." Well of course, we burst into tears. That was how much The Apprentice has changed things for him. **Has His Lordship flown out to see you in your second home in south-west France?**

He has. He's a wonderful guest - he did the washing up. He's very generous and witty as a friend. But then, if you're working for him, he'll ring you up at 8am the next morning and tear your head off.

KARREN BRADY

How do you think His Lordship will be if his new business partner disagrees with him?

Oh, he doesn't employ 'his' people. He employs people who are able to articulate why they have a different opinion to him. I think most people who run businesses like us are looking for somebody who has a better idea than us. That's what drives us. So we're not always looking to be right. We're actually looking to be wrong.

What was your first ever moneymaking scheme?

I went back to my school at Aldenham in Epsom to do a talk recently and they showed me all these letters I'd written to the



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headmaster suggesting schemes the school could do. It was relentless.

Have you seen Margaret Mountford since making the last series?

Yes, I've seen Margaret a few times. She still does the interview process with the candidates, which I think she enjoys coming back for. But I don't think she's got any desire to come back full-time. It's a tough schedule. I remember when Nick and I got the running order for the sausage task last series, and we were like: "Oh, look, it's a 24-hour task. Isn't that interesting." Then we realised what that meant for us as well. By the time I eventually went to bed, it was actually 46 hours.

I laughed so hard, Alan kicked me under the table

How good is your poker face when you're out observing candidates on the tasks?

There is an incident on one task this time that I don't think I'd ever be able to pull a face like that again after what I saw [laughs]. Something happens which is so jaw-droppingly, staggeringly... I can't even think what the right word is to describe it. But I don't think you'll ever see anything like it on TV again.

Do you think Lord Sugar's mellowed over the years?

Oh, yes, definitely over the 20 years I've known him. But Alan is one of the funniest people I have ever met. There's no Anzoco or script when we're in that boardroom. It's literally them and us in the room.

So he doesn't store up funny lines? No. Nothing is written down. I'm sitting next to him so I'd see. I still laugh about the last series when Shabby, who was

a surgeon, said: "You drink with your eyes," and Alan said: "You drink a cup of tea with your eyes - you call yourself a doctor?" [laughs] I had tears rolling down my face. I was being kicked by Alan under the table. I couldn't breathe for laughing.



"Is Piers really a success in America?"



Firing squad: Lord Sugar means business

LORD ALAN SUGAR

Are the tasks going to be any different now that you are looking for a business partner?

Yes, that's what excites me about this new series. The tasks have all been designed on the basis of a mini business start-up. Each task will show viewers how you can start a business from scratch and, in the course of a week, make a certain amount of money. The idea is to bring people down to earth and stop dreaming about becoming dotcom millionaires. We have a culture at the moment of young people who think they can just fast-track to the top. They think people are going to give them tens of millions of pounds on some whim of an idea. The truth is that the real successful people started at the bottom with just 250 quid and learnt their trade.

Why change the format? Although the Apprentice job has been quite successful with the people who won, like Lee McQueen, Simon Amrose, Stella English and Tim Campbell, if you run a tight ship, like me, I don't want to have

to creating a new position for somebody in the company after every series. You can't just throw the winner into the middle of your current team - who have worked with you for a long time and who are possibly resentful. **What are you looking for in a business partner?**

I'm looking for someone with business nous. But more importantly, some kind of experience in running something. They will choose what they want to do. I'm not going to say to them: "We're going to start an airline." It's their choice what business they're going to be in and I will go along with it. **What do you think of Piers Morgan's success in America?**

Well, is it a success? He thinks it's a success! The funny thing about Piers is that when he was over here as one of the Britain's Got Talent judges, the show reached great viewing figures of 11 million. He would claim that all those figures were for him and then he would compare the 11 million that show got to the seven million The Apprentice got and say: "There you are, I beat you again!" I have pointed out to him that when

he was on Britain's Got Talent there were three of them on the panel, so if you took their 11 million viewers and divided them by three, at best it would be three million each. Considering Simon Cowell was one of them, I would then re-evaluate it and give Cowell maybe eight million and Morgan maybe half a million.

Is it true you've been watching The Only Way Is Essex? Regrettably, yes. I'm just fascinated by some of this new language that is spoken by young people. There's this whole new spectrum, which goes all the way from how those young people speak in Essex to how the more academic, open-collar shirt, Evian-bottle-holding, blue-blazer brigade are speaking in business. I find a paragraph of their business-speak could be priced down by me to about three words.

WATCH IT! THE APPRENTICE BEGINS TUES TO MAY 9PM BBC1

Stuart Baggs: Brand of gold?

Stuart Baggs, 21, was the youngest candidate ever to enter the boardroom in series six. He announced himself as The Brand and made it to the final five thanks to his legendary 'field of ponies' speech - "I'm not a one-trick pony, I'm not a ten-trick pony - I'm a field of ponies waiting to run towards this job." **buzz** asked Lord Sugar, Nick and Karren for their assessment...

IS THERE ANYONE LIKE STUART BAGGS IN THE NEW SERIES? Karren: You'll have to wait and see but I don't think you will be disappointed.

HAS STUART GOT GENUINE POTENTIAL AS A BUSINESSMAN? Nick: Stuart Baggs has got a talent - there is something there. But it might just be a talent to infuriate. He got so full of himself. I think that's dangerous psychologically for him. There he was at award ceremonies, shaking hands with Brad Pitt, his arm around Sylvester Stallone. He thought he was prime-time Hollywood.

WOULD A FIELD OF PONIES-STYLE SPEECH EVER SAVE SOMEONE'S NECK AGAIN? Lord Sugar: No. Stuart was an anomaly because he's an intelligent guy. He just deploys his assets in the wrong way. Nick: Alan was genuinely angry with himself that he'd been duped by Stuart's speech. It won't happen again.

Karren: I think for Stuart the line between reality and fantasy was just a little blurred. If all the things he was claiming about himself were true then he was a very impressive candidate. And therein lies the problem!

• Stuart Baggs can be seen at 9pm in Celebrity Five Go... on 4

• Read all Stuart's story in the new Apprentice history

