



opinion



# It's Not Always About the Cards

Text by Simon Pridmore

**Diver training agencies are in the business of selling scuba classes and would like you to believe that the only way to develop your knowledge and skills is to sign up for one of their vast array of courses. While time spent with an instructor is indeed a very good way to improve your technique, you do have other options, a number of which I was reminded of recently.**

The other week, I joined a dive live-aboard charter and two of the fellow guests were very new divers, with four and 24 lifetime dives, respectively. We were in Raja Ampat, where the diving is fabulous, the corals are lush and the fish life as plentiful as it is anywhere in the world. It is also a patch of ocean where currents can be intense and a number of the best dive sites can be tricky if the conditions are not perfect, which is rarely the case. Raja Ampat is not a place for beginners.

The liveaboard usually attracts

experienced divers, and there are no instructors on board, only dive guides whose job it is to make sure the divers get the best possible dive at each site by leading them along the optimum route and spotting marine life as they go along.

One of the dive guides was placed in charge of the two new divers and, as soon as he saw on the checkout dive on day one how new they really were, he made it his mission to do his utmost to teach them how to be better divers.

Over the week, I watched him teach them how to weight themselves correctly, how to descend properly, how to ascend and do a safety stop, and how to raise a surface marker buoy from their safety stop to show the tender boat where they were. He showed them how to swim more efficiently against a current and how to use a reef hook to stay in place when a current is running. He instructed them on how to swim horizontally using a variety of fin kicks and how to remain motionless in the water to observe marine life up close and take pictures of it. (Of course, despite

their lack of experience the divers both had cameras!) On deep dives, he reminded them to concentrate, not get distracted and monitor their computers more frequently, and he briefed them and guided them on their first night dive, which they loved!

By the end of the trip, the two divers were transformed. They were comfortably accomplishing dives in a high current that even veteran divers were shying away from. They were working together as a team

and becoming less dependent on the guide with every dive.

Did they receive a dive card at the end of the week? No! Did they become better divers?

Unquestionably! Did the guide feel a sense of considerable pride in what he had achieved? Absolutely! Will the new divers recommend the guide and his operation to friends and the dive community at large? Every time!

This was a perfect example of how excellent diver training does not always need to be about handing out reading material, completing quizzes and card collecting.

The success of the week, of course,

*Excellent diver training does not always need to be about handing out reading material, completing quizzes and card collecting.*

Where modern technology enhances old fashion diving

# W4 5mm



**STYLISH SILVER DESIGN LOADED WITH FEATURES.**

W4 is the latest back-zip wetsuit from Waterproof. After nearly 30 years of experience of making wetsuits we have put all our knowledge into this high-quality suit with an eye-catching retro-futuristic design.

The 3D anatomical design, with pre-bent arms and legs with stretch panels and gender specific construction ensures a comfortable fit and a relaxing body position in the water. 3D-moulded real rubber kneepads are perfect for the diving instructor who spends a lot of time on his/her knees in the water while teaching.

Double smooth-skin seals at arms and legs, adjustable neck and a 10mm spinepad, with an extra seal at the backzipper work together to keep the cold water out. Seals are designed to fit WP boots and gloves.

All zippers in top class Vislon from YKK. The Bronze slider in the back zipper ensures trouble-free function for many years. ToughTex panels at elbows and knees, Bonded HiQ Nylon Thread and 100% CR Neoprene in all panels - quality in every detail.

The W4 also features double computer strap anchors with anti slip, comfort front neck zipper, inner plush lining, seat and shoulder antislip reinforcement.



The WPAD™, or the Waterproof Personal Accessory Dock, is a soft artfully constructed docking station located on the right thigh used for attaching our expandable pocket.



[www.waterproof.eu](http://www.waterproof.eu)



MATTHEW MEIER

was not solely down to the efforts of the dive guide. It was also due considerably to the students' willingness to learn. While you are fun-diving with professionals, do not be afraid to seek advice on equipment, technique or how to manage certain diving environments. You just have to pick the right moment when they are not busy with other things and ask.

Most will be willing to help and will often be very pleased you asked. It is much better to have divers in your charge who confess they do not know something and want to learn, than to deal with folk who are unwilling to admit ignorance, pretend to know everything and then get themselves into difficulty.

### Staying dive fit

Living in Bali, where there are as many yoga studios as there are dive shops, I have a number of friends who practice yoga under the tutelage of an instructor, sometimes several times a week. The instructor takes the students through the exercises, positions and skills, demonstrating how they should be performed, gently advising them with suggestions and praising them fulsomely when progress is made. The classes keep the students active, enthusiastic and yoga fit.

This is a training concept that could easily be imported into the world of scuba diving. Regular confined water scuba circuit practices for divers would improve their

skills immensely as well as keep them in tune and dive fit between trips. Instructors would also gain from the regular work and derive important job satisfaction from building a group of highly capable divers.

Like yoga classes, there would not be any cards handed out, (although, if you need such things, you might be able to get an attendance certificate for your "Me" wall!) Assuming a sufficient number of divers signed up and turned up regularly, sessions could be priced about the same as yoga class-

*Regular confined water scuba circuit practices for divers would improve their skills immensely as well as keep them in tune and dive fit between trips.*

es, with the group sharing the cost of the pool booking and the instructor's time.

Keeping dive fit is important. No matter how experienced we are, most of us will become better divers during a dive vacation and, by the end of it, swimming on scuba is as natural as walking. Within a few months, however, highly-polished

instincts become dulled, finely-tuned skills go off key, and by the time we come to the next dive trip, we find we have to climb the learning curve again. It is no coincidence that, wherever people dive, the largest number of accidents take place at the beginning of the season.

### Dive clubs

Traditionally, dive clubs have taken on the job of keeping us training and dive fit between trips, and I was reminded of this when I was asked to give a talk at a dive club in Singapore last month. Weekday evening meetings at

the club and organised weekend dives allow experienced divers and instructors to mingle and dive with newer folk on an informal and social basis, with everyone benefitting from the consequent exchange of information and advice.

To find a dive club in your town, ask around. Enterprising urban dive shops often establish clubs to keep local divers active and involved in the sport. If you can't find a club, then think about establishing one of your own and recruiting some like-minded, locally-based divers to join you.

If you need a further incentive to take the initiative, you might be interested to hear that, as well as enabling you to keep your skills sharp, expanding your knowledge through association with other divers, and enjoying social opportunities with like-minded folk, a dive club also gives you substantial buying power. Resorts and liveboards will often offer advantageous deals for group bookings, with discounts and free spaces. So, as well as all the above, you can get cheaper dive holidays too! ■

*Simon Pridmore has been part of the scuba diving scene in Asia, Europe and the USA (well, Guam) for the past 20 years or so. He is the bestselling author of Scuba Confidential: An Insider's Guide to Becoming a Better Diver and has just published a new book entitled Scuba Professional: Insights into Scuba Diver Training and Operations. Both are available from Amazon in a variety of formats.*

## Cards

# You are invited to the launch of THE GREAT NORTHERN DIVE SHOW

Event City, Manchester, UK

Saturday 23rd & Sunday 24th April 2016

16,000 sqm of dedicated space which hosts 50 stands, a seminar room, 2 cafe areas and...

"The Aquatheatre" - The largest portable open windowed tank in the World. The 6m long, 2.2m deep tank has no need for underwater lights and cameras, you can shoot straight through the super clear tank windows. It was used as the Shark Tank in Kick Ass 2 and has featured on Britain's Got Talent.

Speaker presentations include Paul Toomer, Mark Powell, Ian France, Garry Dallas, Louise Forse, Ashley Roberts, Steve Millard, Nick & Caroline Robertson-Brown, Andy Torbet and Rosemary Lunn.

Freediving demonstrations by some of the UK's top freedivers

Watch the Wigan Warriors undertake their first scuba lessons!

The ability for customers to book a try dive in the Aquatheatre

Press and Media attendance and much much more!



facebook.com/thegreatnortherndiveshow  
www.twitter.com/northdiveshow  
www.thegreatnortherndiveshow.co.uk