



Text by Simon Pridmore

The following article is adapted from a chapter in Simon Pridmore's latest book, Scuba Exceptional: Become the Best Diver You Can Be.

The scene for this story is a live-aboard in Southeast Asia, which, on most of its itineraries, would offer guests four dives a day and imposed a 60-minute maximum dive time for each dive. Divers were also asked to stay together on a dive, and follow their guide. There were 12 divers and three guides, so each guide would usually be leading four divers.

On this particular trip, one of the divers, Brian, made it very clear that he did not like these policies. He would often swim some distance away from the group, complaining afterwards that their bubbles kept getting in his photographs. Sometimes, he would swim in completely the opposite direction from the group, on the basis, as he would subsequently explain, that the guide had been taking them all the "wrong" way. And, on every dive, he would just refuse to come up at the 60-minute time limit. When he

did eventually surface, he would boast about how much air he still had left.

He tried to cajole other divers to join him in his one-man protest action but was unsuccessful. They could all appreciate the safety advantages of staying

together and also understood how the 60-minute policy helped the liveaboard fit four dives, travel time between sites, three meals and tank filling into an all-too-short tropical day. They pointed out to Brian how his insistence on extending

his dive was causing them to fry in the sun on board the tender while they waited for him, but all he did was suggest hats and sunscreen.

The other divers eventually just shrugged their shoulders and nicknamed

Brian "the lone wolf." The liveaboard crew tried to reason with him, but he would just become aggressive and point out angrily that he had paid for his trip and so was entitled to dive in whatever way he wished. He threatened that he



The Lone Wolf

— *Dangers & Consequences*

PIXABAY





would give them a bad review if they tried to ban him from diving. They too eventually gave up arguing with him.

Rough seas

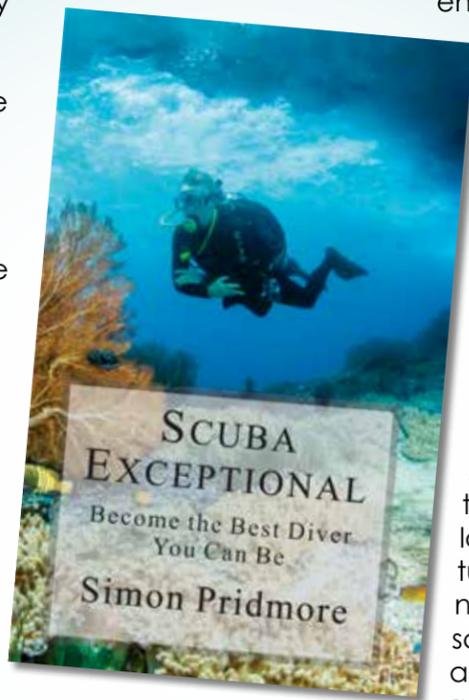
One afternoon, halfway through the trip, after a dive on a reef wall in relatively

rough seas, all the other divers surfaced and were back in the boat before 60 minutes were up, as the conditions had not been very comfortable underwater. Things were not much better on the surface either, with the tender buffeted by heavy waves. The lone wolf, as

A New Book for Scuba Divers!

Scuba Exceptional may be the fifth in Simon Pridmore's *Scuba* series, but it is actually the true follow-up to his first book, the best-selling *Scuba Confidential*.

The philosophy of safer diving through the acquisition of knowledge and skills is the same, although this time the themes are different. As before, Pridmore provides us with a whole host of extremely useful advice and techniques, illustrated by real-life experiences and cautionary tales. The focus this time, though, is more on issues that experienced divers face. There is more technical diving content, and Pridmore covers some relatively complex issues in his usual clear and easy-to-read style. In many cases, the issues that concern technical divers reflect those that affect scuba divers at every level. After all, as Pridmore writes, technical diving is on the same spectrum as conventional sport diving: It is just a differ-



ent frequency.

Scuba Exceptional also deals in more detail with the psychological approach to scuba diving, broaching familiar topics from new angles and borrowing techniques and procedures from other areas of human activity.

While most of *Scuba Exceptional* focuses on the diver, it also takes a look at the wider picture and highlights a number of areas where scuba diving professionals and the "industry" as a whole are letting divers down. As always, Prid-

more is realistic in his assessments. He may shine a little light on the dark side of the scuba diving world, but he does this in order to illuminate bad practices and encourage change, while offering solutions.

Scuba Exceptional: Become the Best Diver You Can Be by Simon Pridmore is available on: **Amazon.com**.



usual, was not with them. Nobody was concerned, as this was normal. Brian would not be denied the diving time he deserved just because the conditions were poor. At least, the sun was not burning down upon them. The sky was grey and cloudy, just like the sea.

It was only after they had been rocked and rolled by the swell for almost half an hour that the boat crew sensed that something might not be well and that even the lone wolf should have surfaced by now. They began a search, but they did not find him. After a while, they abandoned the effort briefly to return the divers, some of whom had been seasick, to the mother boat. Then they went back out to search for him again. The lone wolf had become the boy who cried wolf, and the other divers wondered if they would ever see him again.

After almost two hours, just as darkness

was falling, a sharp-eyed crew member saw what looked like a small orange buoy in the fading light. As the tender approached, they saw it was a partially inflated safety sausage and, to their relief, there was a diver attached to it, waving frantically. Brian was unharmed but looked pale and scared as they helped him into the tender. Of course, by the time they got him back to the liveboard, he had recovered his usual bluster and was furious with the crew and his fellow divers for losing him in the first place and then not finding him more quickly.

During the remainder of the trip, however, he did dive much closer to the group and would surface with them on time every time.

The blame game

This sort of scenario is all too common in diving, and stories like this divide opinion.

Some might attach blame to the liveboard crew for not enforcing their policies more strictly. Some might feel that they had got their priorities twisted and that, no matter how objectionable Brian was, after having given him a number of warnings, they should have stopped him diving, let him off the boat at the nearest port and refunded the cost of his trip.

After all, he was causing his fellow divers inconvenience, and he was messing up the boat's schedule. For all his miraculously low air-consumption, he was not diving in what would conventionally be seen as a safe manner. Stopping him from diving would have meant a safer, more pleasant trip for everyone else on board, simply at the expense of a refund and the risk of a bad review.

Others might agree with Brian and might argue that he had paid for the trip and so should be able to dive any way

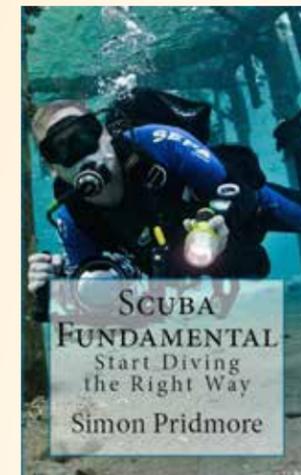


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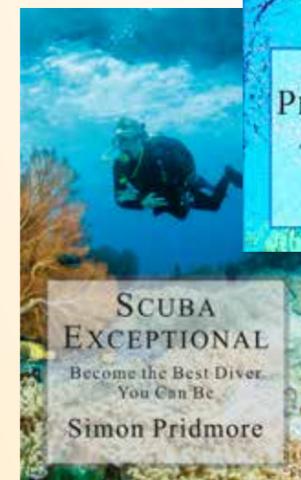
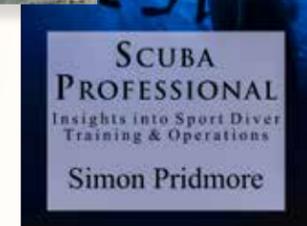


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mother boat. The concept also extends to the diving world as a whole and to rescue teams who are called out to search for divers when they go missing at sea, in lakes or in caves.

Just as you hope that the people who take you diving have your best interests in mind, so should you, as a sport diver, keep their interests as well as those of your fellow divers in mind. You have a responsibility to others in the diving community to keep yourself safe so that they do not have to put themselves in harm's way, or even just put themselves out, to search for you or rescue you. Many of the most important dive safety rules, such as "one up, all up," are anchored in this idea.

For the sake of a few more minutes underwater, Brian felt that he was justified in flouting the dive operation's rules, ignoring their interests completely in favour of his own, putting the crew under pressure and making his fellow divers suffer while they waited for him.

Behaviour like this may sometimes seem harmless but, as in this case, it can lead to potentially disastrous sce-

narios. When, at least partly because of his obstinacy, Brian got himself into difficulty, he was probably quite happy that the crew and his fellow divers nevertheless had his interests at heart and kept searching for him for as long as they did. Not that he would ever admit it, of course. ■

Simon Pridmore is the author of the international bestsellers Scuba Confidential: An Insider's Guide to Becoming a Better Diver, Scuba Professional: Insights into Sport Diver Training & Operations and Scuba Fundamental: Start Diving the Right Way. He is also the coauthor of Diving & Snorkeling Guide to Bali and Diving & Snorkeling Guide to Raja Ampat & Northeast Indonesia, and a new adventure travelogue called Under the Flight Path. His recently published books include Scuba

Exceptional: Become the Best Diver You Can Be, Scuba Physiological: Think You Know All About Scuba Medicine? Think Again! and Diving with Divers: Tales from the Kitchen Table. For more information, see his website at: SimonPridmore.com.

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he liked. "He is obviously a good diver and it's a free world," they might say.

What makes a good diver

One thing is indisputable. Brian is not a good diver. An attribute essential to being a good diver is concern for the well-being of others. This is a qual-

ity that all good divers either possess naturally or have learnt through experience. Whether you like to dive solo, with a buddy or with a group of divers, diving is a team sport. You are part of a team. Some of the team are underwater, some are on the surface, some are back on land, or in this case, the

