



Course Report: Advanced Wreck, November 2010

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The course started with a theory evening. Amongst other things, it consisted of a review of the different rules for gases in overhead environment and some scary stories of accidents linked to poor gas management and the scariest of all 'Freddy the diver'... still hard to believe... but if you want to find out more, this story is copyright to the course so you know what to do...

The second evening session the following day was a dip in Lake Pupuke for some dry practise runs with the outcome that Chris and I were told bluntly that there wasn't much to be proud of with such a long exit whilst following the line with eyes closed. In other words, we'd be dead by now. The tie-off party also proved to be a challenge... looking forward to the week-end with some real line work on the Canterbury...

A few nights of nightmares followed and then it was the first big day out with fantastic conditions, the dream of sea-sickness prone people... Yeah, that's true, some people are... Flat sea, nice sunny day out.

For the first dive of the week-end the plan was fairly simple: going down to the hangar at about 28m, laying the line properly from outside the hangar, through the torpedoes' room (we'll call it that, it has something to do with torpedoes somehow...) all the way down the corridor to an opening outside the wreck on the galley. Then, follow the line back to the hangar through the wreck once whilst sharing air with a buddy and once more whilst wearing Freddy's mask (blacked out mask - it must have been his idea, fits the character).

Looks easy enough, well... after 10 minutes wasted because I was on the starboard side thinking I was on the port side (I still don't understand how I managed that one), plus 10 minutes spent to complete my first tie-off outside the hangar, I only managed to reach the torpedoes' door before it was time to come back up, running out of time (deco) and out of gas... at least there was a second dive planned... If the poor completion of the tasks wasn't enough, I managed to give myself the headache from hell with massive build up of CO₂ from the huge effort required to cross the hangar... I went back up and threw up upon reaching the boat... This trip could have been the one, you know, the one trip I would have been on a boat without throwing up, but no, I guess it wasn't meant to be... same as me and the lotto weren't meant to be either the previous week-end.

After a couple of panadols and a long sunny break, it was already time for the second dive of the day... and man I couldn't wait to get my headache back... The aim of the dive this time was the same as the one before... at least one of us had not lost faith in my legendary efficiency.

So we headed down and I managed to lay the line all the way this time, but I then had to leave it up to Jamie to reel it back since time was catching up on us again... that is when I understood the difference in time we were talking about for a 'normal' exit first and then an emergency one. I now know how it feels to be a kiwi driver at 60km/h on the right lane on the motorway... We went back up, I had my little throw up session and back to the cow shed for a deserved break.

The following day I thought could only be better. I made a few kit modifications for low headache purposes.

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The plan for the first dive was for Jamie to lay the line the same way I had done the day before so that I could follow it sharing air and then blind... The air sharing went ok even though Jamie thought a couple of times that I was going to lose the reg in my mouth if I didn't stop kicking him in the face right away...

I had used up all my good luck for the day unfortunately and I chickened out on Freddy's mask... I tried it, didn't like the feeling so put mine back on instead and completed the simulated silt out exit with my eyes closed.

For once we had plenty of time left so I got to reel the reel back myself and I manage to almost pass Jamie, generously helping me out by removing tie-offs close to the ceiling, too busy that I was on the way out. I did them all...

Time for the last dive of the course and the lost line drill. I basically managed to die on that one too with a search of 37 minutes, but no line found... although apparently I almost tangled my manifold in it about twice...

Overall a very challenging course, with so much to it, so many details that make the difference between 'life' or 'death'...

Unfortunately with my lotto loss of the previous week-end, my plan of paying someone to lay lines on my dives was a goner, the only thing left is to continue training to lay them myself...