

## Course Report: Twin Tanks Workshop, 29<sup>th</sup> May 2010

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When you ask people why they dive in twin tanks, there are normally a few answers that you'd always get back... larger gas reserves, redundancy and so on. But almost without fail you will also hear "the stability is awesome" or somesuch wording. Whilst it is true, these people have clearly forgotten their first few dives in twins, that constant tipping forward sensation, the difficulty caused by a harness that isn't quite adjusted right or just plain being overweighted.

Learning to do technical dives safely is challenging enough, but adding in that unfamiliarity with twin tanks often increases the task loading to the point where it takes away from the learning process. That's one of the reasons we have chosen to offer an orientation to twin tanks workshop, to give people an opportunity to try different options of tanks and backplates, and get some supervised experience of diving in twin tanks.



Mike, Tim, Chris and Tony recently took the opportunity to do a workshop with their usual enthusiasm for learning new things. I loaded up the car with five sets of gear and headed down to the Olympic Pool for an evening. With both 10 litre and 12 litre steel tanks as well as some AL80s there was plenty of opportunity to mix and match with different backplates to see how different combinations would effect buoyancy characteristics. Before we even got in to the water there was plenty to learn – why the tanks are set up the way they are, how the valves work and of course practicing dry runs of key skills.

Obviously, the ability to donate gas to another diver in times of need is a high priority, so that was the main focus of the pool session – along with plenty of time swimming around and getting used to the feel of the tanks. Certainly at this point, I don't think anyone would be claiming that they felt stable!

Our plan for the open water dive was to take advantage of the extra gas that twin tanks provide and circumnavigate Goat Island – but with a week of heavy rain, and a forecast of high seas and wind, we decided to head to the Sylvan Park side of Lake Pupuke. With a quick reminder about pre-dive procedures everyone conducted their modified valve drill and modified S-drill before heading in to the water. This side of the lake is markedly different from the Pumphouse, with large rock walls providing interesting topography. With Mike as team captain, we headed along the walls with everyone looking much more comfortable in the gear. Maybe this stability thing isn't such a myth!? Turning the dive according to the plan, we headed back to the entry point where a number of the new Tech Dive NZ beanies were waiting to warm those chilled ears....

