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Scuba diving grows as a popular recreational activity

By Kellie Rouse

Over the years, some may not know, but the sport of scuba diving has become quite popular.

Being developed centuries ago, men and women practiced the art of scuba, which is an acronym for 'self-contained underwater breathing apparatus,' by looking for underwater artifacts, such as the mother-of-pearls.

Scuba diving evolved from three previous types of diving—free or skin-diving, diving in a walled vessel, and diving with compressed air supplied from the surface.

Free or skin diving is the earliest known type of diving. It involves no equipment, and depends only on the divers capability for holding their breath in compressible air spaces. The dive is limited by the diver's resistance to breath-hold and their awareness of the risk of drowning. Most of these dives last a minute or less.

Diving in a walled vessel is diving in a submarine. The vessels can maintain a normal atmosphere inside, while it is at or near sea level pressure, preventing the surround water pressure from affecting the occupants.

Diving with a supply of compressed air from the surface is the closest form of diving to scuba that exists. The diver is separated from the surface, while fresh air is sent down to him through a long umbilical cord.

Finally, scuba diving came to be significant from the rest of the diving types for the fact that an apparatus is completely carried by the diver and not in any way connected to the surface.

Roughly 2.5-3.5 million Americans participate in scuba diving as a sport, and around 500 thousand more get certified each year. In the early days of scuba, the divers were mostly men, but today, men and women alike of all ages participate in the sport.

Antioch Community High

School junior Rob Ryan is a certified scuba diver. Ryan has been scuba diving for about four years, after being certified through the YMCA. Ryan first got certified for a scuba trip that he and his boy scout troop were attending, but today he is looking at a career in scuba diving.

He would like to go on to be certified as a dive master, which is one of the highest forms of scuba diving. Being a dive master would allow Ryan to teach scuba diving as well.

In his four-year career as a scuba diver, Ryan has already traveled to places such as Florida, Jamaica, and Mexico for the purpose of diving. "I think it is the best sport that I have ever done. It is a great workout. There is really nothing quite like it," said Ryan. His dream diving spots include the Great Barrier Reef and Fiji.

Scuba equipment is not that of ease. It includes a tank of compressed air worn on the back, first and second stage regulators, a face mask, two submersible gauges, an inflatable vest, a type of weight system, fins, and a wet suit.

Before becoming a certified scuba diver, one must be aware of the possible risks of diving, including decompression sickness, air embolism, hypothermia, physical exhaustion, and injuries from marine life.

The buddy system while diving is usually required. With a buddy, one can share air or provide other assistance if needed. Buddies should have the same or similar training and skills.

People with heart pain, chronic asthma, heart failure, heart muscle weakness, pulmonary insufficiency, high or low blood pressure, or any nervous system instability are not advised to scuba dive. All divers must be in good health with a good heart and lungs, a sound mind, and no significant problems with the ears or sinuses.

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 -Rob Ryan
 ACHS junior

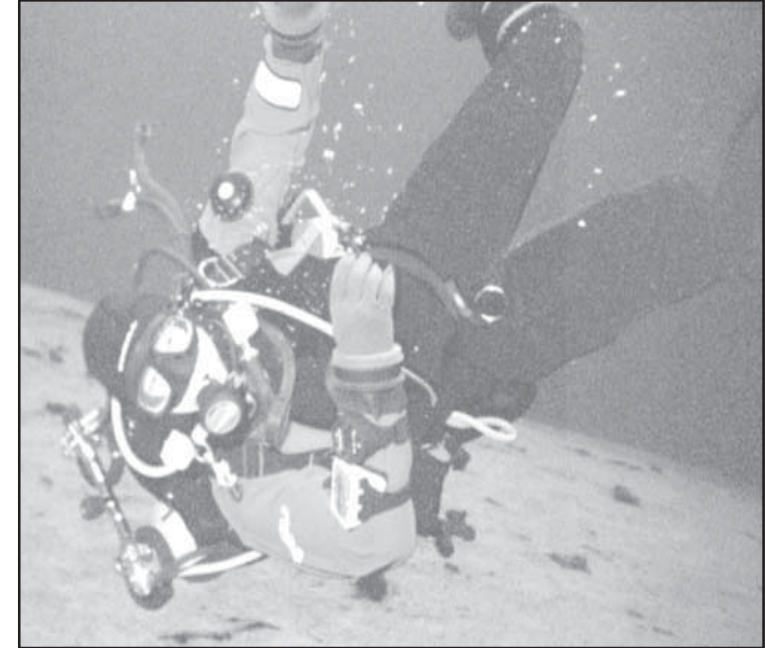


Photo courtesy of www.community.webshots.com

SUBMERGED: Scuba diving is a diverse sport that has many risks, but in spite of its possible hazzards, over 2.5 million people take part in the underwater challenges.