



Divers and cloud sponge on deep wall, Sunshine Coast, British Columbia, Canada

Text by Matt Jevon
Photos by Barb Roy

In this essay, sports psychologist and technical diver Matt Jevon draws some parallels between the sport of technical diving and the sport of motorcycle racing, including attitudes and behaviors in regards to the inherent dangers and risks, sharing insights into our own natures as divers and adventurers.

A good few years ago now, I was a newly minted sports psychologist. I had done three years of supervised experience, after getting my graduate degree, and was looking to get involved in a practice as soon as possible, applying all that knowledge and theory I had been studying. One of my first roles was working with a motorcycle racing team, a very interesting set-up. I was working with youngsters, from 13 and 14 years of age, up to senior riders, all of whom were connected through the manufacturer's team. The youngsters raced on single-make series 125cc and 250cc motorcycles, depending on age; they then moved on to Supersport World Championship races; and finally, for the talented few—Grand Prix motorcycle racing.



Why Go Tech?

— *The Motivations Behind Technical Diving*

False assumptions

So, in the first meeting with the team, I mistakenly went in with a few assumptions—classically making a fool of myself. One assumption I had was that I would have to deal with issues about the dangers, the speed and the risks of motorcycle racing—perhaps having to develop

strategies to manage concentration blips caused by threats (or “cognitive intrusions” in psychology parlance) after a moment of control loss, or a competitor running them wide, etc. Nothing could have been further from reality.

The same false assumptions are often made when people find out that I cave

dive or engage in deep mixed-gas closed circuit (CCR) diving. I am looked upon as an adrenaline junky or thrill seeker. When I tell people that I love diving with sharks, they start looking around for nurses and straitjackets. At that point, even though I try to explain how much care I take to be safe, it often merely

looks like I am either a fool who does not understand the risks—which, of course, the uninitiated clearly understand better than I do—or I am a hero in rubber and latex, which is, needless to say, rather unlikely.

At any rate, my experience to date in training and diving with some of the



Divers in training doing their safety stop

of exploring a virgin cave and laying new line, can't be beat. Hardships will be suffered; the edge of acceptable risk will be pushed and sometimes exceeded; but the experience of being the first human to set foot on a ship since it sank over 100 years ago, or to see a new cave passage or connect a system, will be the reward that pays back again and again.

first and foremost—a vindication of the training, the preparation and the hard work. After that, was the celebration. I feel the same coming out of a deep dive or a cave—a complete satisfaction at having managed the odds. I need to review and embed this reaction before I can enjoy the “success” of the dive.

Stressors

Conversely, the things that cause the greatest stresses in motor sports include dealing with sponsors, discomforts of travel and strange hotel rooms, legal and insurance issues, not to mention,

Achievement.

It's not a question of whether or not the experience

rewards or satisfies the ego. For some, it's all about the task and the process to reach the outcome. Both ego and task work well as positive drivers. A person who is both highly ego-driven and highly task-driven is the most likely to succeed. In fact, these characteristics are key predictors of talent in high performance sport and business as well as in diving.

Beating the odds. There is also a huge satisfaction to be gained in simply beating the odds. For some, this is exultation, for others, relief. It depends on whether or not the major part of your motivational make-up is linked to a need to achieve or avoiding a fear of failure.

For me, when I played rugby, winning was a relief,

world's pre-eminent cave and technical divers has shown me huge parallels with the motorcycle and rally drivers, with whom I have worked. None of them are thrill seekers. In fact, they are the opposite. This does not mean they ignore or blank out the risks entirely. They coldly and calmly assess the risks, and formulate strategies and responses to deal with these risks. Once satisfied, they have been managed the risks, their conscious and subconscious minds are free to focus on the objective... winning. Accomplishing a successful dive mission or winning a race are indeed similar. Interestingly, motorcycle rally as a sport has a great saying: “To finish first, first finish!” The same is true in diving: To have a successful dive, finish alive!

Motivation

So what does drive technical and cave divers to set and pursue their goals?

Challenge. Well, for some it is clearly the challenge of exploring their personal limits. In any field of human endeavor,

this is a great driver and motivator. I see these guys as students and for a while as peers, working their way up through the levels until they hit the outer edges of certification programs. But then after a couple of years or less, they drop out, or fall back. Job done, goal achieved.

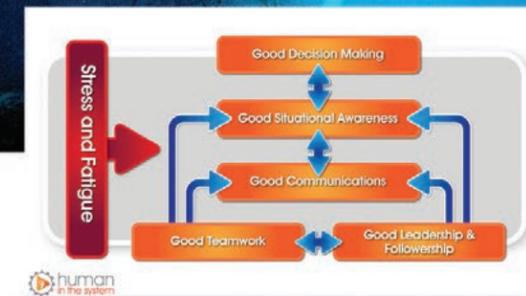
Self identity. For others, it's about the love of what they get to be, the sense of self and identity—the element of both uniqueness and individuality involved in being at the highest level of a sport. In short, it's about the passion to be different, to be excellent, in a society that all too often seems to pander to the average or worse, the lowest common denominator. So, I can empathize with the drive for excellence; it is a boost to one's self-esteem to be a little bit different, to be unique, to be part of a small and select group.

Because it's there. For many, it's the Everest story: They dive a wreck or a cave “because it's there”. For some, that feeling of discovering a new wreck,



Diver explores a wreck at Porteau Cove on Howe Sound, British Columbia, Canada

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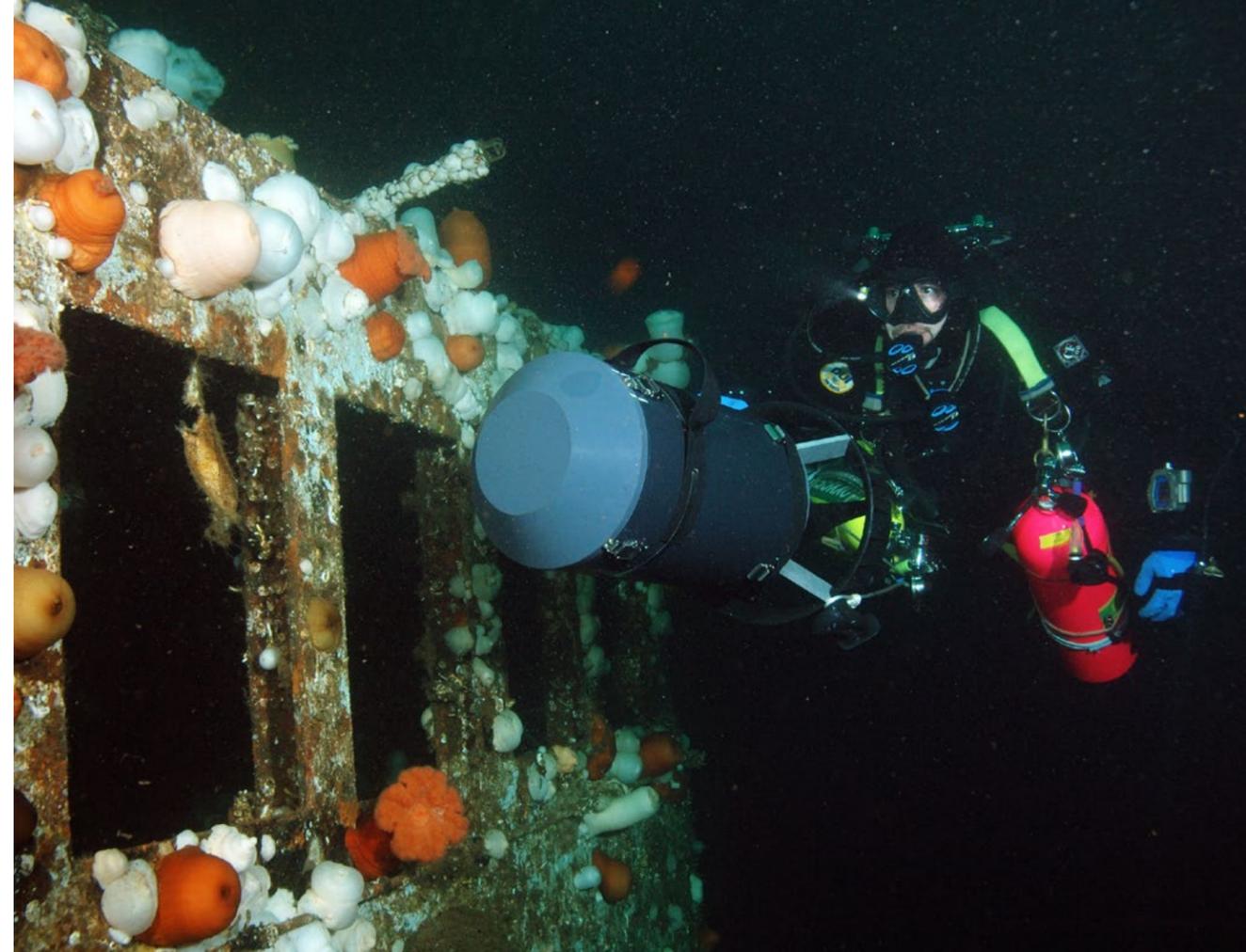
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Diver explores deep wreck, off Nanaimo, British Columbia, Canada



family and friends. It's not too different from diving. That is where the real psychological work is done: making sure that none of these issues interfere with concentrating on the objectives.

Risk-takers and thrill-seekers

So, do people dive for the thrill, for the element of risk? I am certain there are some who do. I have met a few, not always with big egos either. They just have a need to go beyond their comfort zones in order to feel alive.

Some cultures seem more prone to excessive risk-taking and thrill-seeking than others. The strange thing is this: The thrill-seekers will probably take risks on dives which could be properly managed with the

right training, kit and preparation.

I cannot say I have come across these traits in the divers I have met who have truly achieved feats of exploration and are still here to share those experiences with us. These pioneers take a more thorough approach to often much bigger risks, building in safety and maximizing performance by knowing how to manage and mitigate those risks.

Whatever the reason you dive, whether it's because the wreck or cave "is there", or because you like to be an individual, or because you like to coldly and calculatedly beat the odds—good on you, dive safe. Stay away from the thrill-seekers. Stay safe, stay focused. □

A native of the Republic of Ireland, Matt Jevon, MSc., is an experienced and passionate open and closed circuit 100m trimix diver and full cave diver. Whether using back-mount, sidemount or his favorite JJ-CCR rebreather, Jevon believes technical diving is all about being safe, having an awesome dive and enjoying experiences few people share. Jevon holds instructor qualifications from TDI, PADI TECREC and IANTD, and partly owns South West Tech—a TDI dive centre in Ireland. Jevon is also an approved JJ-CCR instructor and dealer. In addition, he is a sports psychologist, senior rugby coach and works in strategy and private equity. For more information, please visit: Swt.ie and MattJevon.com.

Technical divers at down line on wreck, British Columbia, Canada






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Rebreather Sorb Research Unveiled

Text by Rosemary E. Lunn

Until today there has been no published data that compares the carbon dioxide (CO₂) absorption of Spherasorb and Sofnolime 797 when dived in an AP Diving “Inspiration” rebreather.

This information is needed because a number of divers use Spherasorb in their APD units. Ambient Pressure Diving (APD) recommend that divers should use Sofnolime 797 in their unit—the APD units are designed and tested using this sorb. However, there are times when divers will use an alternative sorb due to cost, availability and/or because of perceived advantages in work of breathing or endurance.

Just under a year ago, in July 2015, Martin Parker of AP Diving issued a warning on the Inspiration Owners list, about the use of alternative (non-manufacturer recommended) CO₂ absorbents.

“We have all used other limes, particularly when we travel but you MUST reduce your usage times compared to 797. In some cases it should be reduced to less than 1/3rd of the 797 time!” Parker wrote.

Now new research regarding CO₂ absorption has been published in the South Pacific Medicine Underwater Society (SPUMS) and the European Underwater and Baromedical Society (EUBS) journal.

Safety information

Thanks to the intervention of Associate Professor Simon J Mitchell, the recreational, technical and rebreather diving communities have free, immediate access to this key safety information! (Normally the community has to wait one—two years before they can gain access to the paper).

The paper is entitled, “The duration of two carbon dioxide absorbents in a closed-circuit rebreather diving system,” and is published in the current edition of the quarterly publication, *Diving and Hyperbaric Medicine* (Vol. 45 No. 2, June 2016).

The research was conducted in the Exercise Physiology Laboratory at the Auckland University and funded by Shearwater Research. The team included Dr Simon Mitchell, Head of Anaesthesiology at the School of Medicine of Auckland University; Dr Nick Gant, Head of the Exercise Laboratory where the work took place; and Dr Neal W Pollock, Research Associate

at the Center for Hyperbaric Medicine and Environmental Physiology of Duke University.

Take-home message

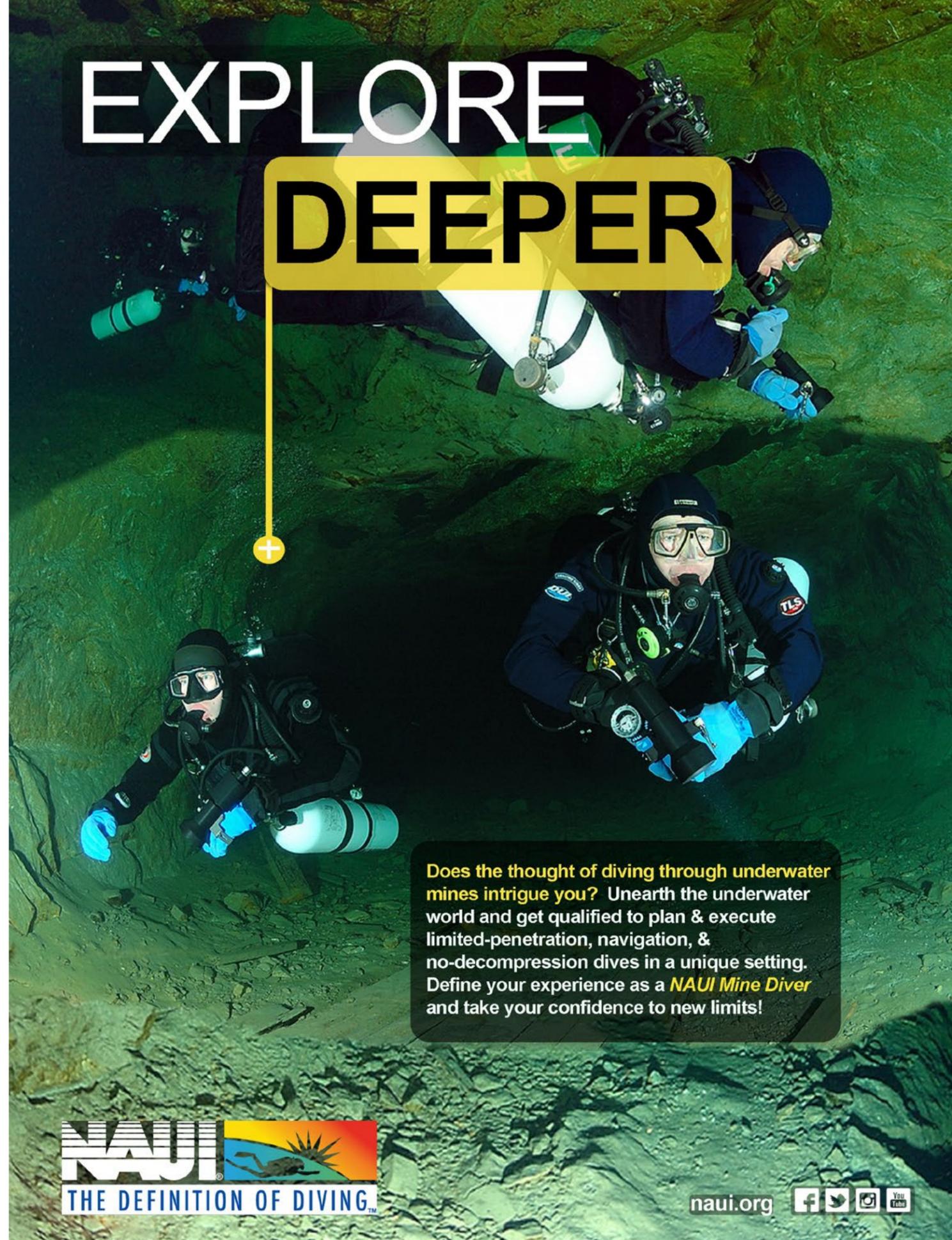
In summary, rebreather divers: You need to check and understand what sorb you are diving. You cannot expect different kinds of sorb materials to have the same CO₂ absorbing performances. You should also remember that all sorb preparations are less efficient when conditions are cold. If this is not understood and applied, it can (and may have had) fatal consequences.

The team is now expanding its sorb studies. The reserachers will be revealing the performance of solid sorb versus granular sorb, evaluation of storage strategies for partly used scrubber canisters, and an evaluation of the accuracy of temp sticks in predicting CO₂ breakthrough at the European advanced diving conference, EUROTEK, 8-9 October 2016, in Birmingham, England. ■

To read more about the test protocol, read the full article on our website at: <http://www.xray-mag.com/content/rebreather-sorb-research-unveiled>.



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