
About Equipment

Our tech guru answers your questions

Dear Delmar: I've been looking at the Sea Quest Black Diamond BC. I've never used an integrated weight system, but I don't like weight belts anymore. I would like a BC with large storage/attachment capabilities, one that would allow what I call an "all attitude" capability without having to fight the BC. Any comments or suggestions?

Bob Stinson

Dear Bob: I looked at the Black Diamond at the industry trade show, but I haven't had it in the water yet, so I can't comment on its stability. I really like weight-integrated systems and prefer them to weight belts.

I have dive-tested the Sea Quest QuickDraw (and its descendant, the Zero Gravity) with drysuits and plenty of lead, as well as the USD Alcyone in warm water — both of which I have reviewed in *In Depth*. Of the three, the Alcyone is my favorite. The Alcyone does not have large weight pockets (probably limited to around 16 pounds) but it is more comfortable on me than either of the Sea Quest units.

The Alcyone has a back-mounted bladder, with all the buoyancy behind. This can cause a bit of rotation when there's a lot of air in the BC, but I usually keep my BC almost empty. The other two are rather bulky, with weight

pockets as well as regular pockets toward the front of my hips. All those pockets, chest clips, and so forth tend to get in my way in the water, especially since I'm usually carrying a couple of cameras. Check to see if that's a problem for you by doing a pool test with photo gear in hand and full (normal) weights on board.

The Black Diamond is a technical BC, covered with D-rings and other attachment points. My guess is that it's got a lot of drag in the water. Is that an issue? It's also heavy; if you travel by plane, that may be a problem. I'd prefer the Alcyone to either of the Sea Quest units for tropical diving.

In terms of quality, you won't go wrong with Sea Quest (or the Alcyone). All are well made, and thoroughly backed by their manufacturers.

Delmar Mesa

Random Scatterings

News from on line and on letters

Watch where you fly your private plane. **Jimmy Buffett's** amphibious plane was riddled with bullets by Jamaican police as it was taking off near Negril, the beach resort area on Jamaica's western end. Apparently the police thought it was being used by drug smugglers. Although the plane was hit, no one was hurt, and the song title will not be changed to "Wasted in Magaritaville." . . . **A Dutch scientist sat in his underwear** under a mosquito net, released **mosquitoes** one at time, and watched where they flew. Seventy-

five percent headed straight for his feet. If mosquitoes are attracted to smelly feet, add clean feet to the list of ways to help avoid malaria in the tropics. . . . On the subject of prevention, several islands in Papua New Guinea are having trouble keeping condoms in stock. It seems that **condoms filled with salt water** are irresistible to tuna, so local trawlers have abandoned traditional fishing methods and switched to the new lure.

Michael Fagan of Baton Rouge writes that he read "**North**

to South in Yucatán" (*In Depth*, Feb. '96) with great interest since he dives down that way once or twice a year. He adds that "the best time to see turtles is June or July. In fact, last July, besides the dozen or so turtles I saw while diving, I witnessed two turtles laying eggs on the beach. Casa Cenoté, which is about five miles south of Akumal, is a quaint little restaurant with incredible BBQ by a blue cenoté within 300 feet of the ocean. A great, out-of-the-way place to do a combination beach reef dive and cenoté dive and have lunch. The reef is far better near Puerto Aventuras than at Akumal's Half Moon Bay where Las Casitas are. Just two miles south of Akumal at the Oasis Club Resort, the Akumal Reef is at its best and closest to shore. Also great night snorkeling or diving