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GUE “Fundies” class this weekend!

We had a very successful Fundies class this weekend! Congratulations to Gareth, Ginnie, Tim, and Gary for a



job well done!

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2 Comments

1.

Gareth Dimery

2:52 pm on [August 13, 2012](#)

Less than 3 months ago, I meet two local divers aboard the Bottom Time, the Dive Alaska charter boat. Gary McGee and Virginia Lause (Gin). Gin is a relatively new diver, certified years ago but now getting back into it. Our first dive together was rugged ridge (July 2012), and a memorable one at that. I will always remember shooting that SMB in the current as we lost site of the wall. She has just completed her AOW PADI course and has about 20 recent logged dives. Gin is an energetic, outgoing person that is a corrections officer at the local penitentiary, watch out she is a tough girl. Gary, an Army MP, a Padi Dive Master, is always willing to help and guide a dive. He has a weird obsession with Chem lights and tazzers (thankfully he doesn't take either under water). Then there is myself, Gareth, a FAA software engineer, a recreational Master PADI Scuba diver with 96 logged dives. The three of us, with completely different backgrounds, had one thing in common; we want to excel at diving in a team environment. GUE Fundies it was.

We show up Thursday evening, notebooks in hand at the Dive Alaska shop for 4 hours of class room. Scott Anderson (GUE Instructor – Dive Alaska Owner) introduces us to Tim White, a PSU Geology instructor that runs the scientific dive program at Pen State. If that wasn't intimidating enough, he is a NAUI instructor with 2500+, oh yeah he had already had a GUE primer class too. Scott had got us a 4th team member that has an impressive diving resume, compared to the rest of us! Down to business it was and we all got our first real introduction to GUE. End of class we fit dry suits. The most important thing I took from the first night was how important a strong team is that has the same "Education, Experience and Equipment so we are Comfortable, Confident and Competent" in the water. See Scott I did listen in class! Oh yeah we were asked to be flexible too.

Friday, Scott has a coast guard inspection in Seward for man overboard drills. As a flexible team, the schedule gets mixed up. We get to go to Seward early and actually dive Friday (a bonus day) that was much needed. After some bad road construction on the way to Seward we are all on the boat ready for more lectures and diving. Dive #1 is brutal in Thumb Cove (silty bottom with nothing to look at and COLD glacier run off). We do the GUE dive plan. Scott pairs us up, and wants us to do a team decent, line up on a line and "HOVER". Simple right? Well that first dive did not look like a team on the decent. Separated by more than 15 ft vertically wasn't acceptable. However there were a few individual high notes on the Balance, Buoyance and Trim amongst us (But this isn't individual diving). Dive #2 that day was the same but introduction to propulsion. We were not organized at all. Oh, I do have to point out someone was dragging a camera through the silt. Ummmmm.... The end of the day we all had some personal highs, but we felt that we failed as a team. More lecture in the evening. Very humbling video debriefs over Pizza and Beers at Christos. And Gas Management problems (it's OK Gin, how do we calculate a volume based dive plan??). Then we called it a night. Guys slept on the boat and Gin got to crash in the RV with Scott and Karen. I heard about the breakfast you cooked Gin where was mine, Scott??

Saturday, off to one of my favorite sites, Sharks Tooth (we had a couple recreational divers on the boat with us). After a long surface swim (did that count as my 300yd swim ???) I am thinking I am not even going to get to enjoy this because its training. As we are kicking on our backs Tim is giving us a Geology lesson on the age of the rock faces. Sorry Tim, I forgot how old the formations were, I remember you said billion something. At that point it made me realize how lucky we are to have Resurrection Bay as our local dive site. This dive was all about propulsion. Not bad. Tim and Gary nailed the back kick. I sort of had it down and was getting better as the weekend went on. Gin had a decent frog kick. I gotta not let those knees drop! The sea lions had propulsion down pat. Not a bad dive. Dive #4, Scott "Heffner's" Grotto, Gin dived with Kristen and worked on Balance buoyancy and Trim, while Tim, Gary and Myself

move on to the basic five. I got to say I came up from this dive thinking I nailed it (Scott had a different opinion). Apparently I wasn't being a team player when I went to simulate donating air. I would make sure I had my back up secure before giving up my primary. Even still though despite the contradictory video evidence, I impressed myself! Basic five while balanced and in trim with neutral buoyancy, hell yeah! This was the first dive where we looked like a team. The descents and accents were still rough but you could see a difference. Gary and Tim were looking good. Tim also had a good basic 5 (except for the clipping off) and Gary was killing the back kick but a little + buoyancy on the basic 5. Gin came up with positive reinforcements from Kristen. All in all everybody was improving and progress was being made. That evening we couldn't keep the BBQ lit so Scott cooked our dinner in the RV. The picnic table overlooking the bay was the perfect setting for more lectures on Nitrox and Gas Management. Tonight we splurged for hotels with comfy beds and hot showers. Lights out by 9pm, we were beat!

Sunday. Dives #5 and #6 were at the shackle. We needed to redo basic 5. We all improved after multiple land drills. On Dive #5 Gin went with two Tech 1 students (Sean and Brandon) while Gary, Tim and I wrapped up the basic 5 and started S-Drills. Apparently I didn't listen to the dive briefing on this. Scott wanted me to go to 20ft and shoot a bag. I went to 40 ft and wanted to start into S-Drills. Anyway once Scott gave me that ever so familiar WTF look and pointed me in the right direction, I had a successful SMB deployment and time to knock out the skills. Tim and I did a few really good S-Drills, well we kind of looked like we knew what we were doing. Dive #6 Gin was back with us. We started and finished as a team. Except this time our decent rocked. To 60ft in 6:07 seconds not bad, and we did it while maintaining a square. We were descending a little fast between 30 and 40ft but we got it back together and held our team formation. Great leadership Tim! Then we had to go from 60ft to 20ft to complete our skills. Watch the video ,we are swimming along and we look like a real dive team! What a difference! Our valve drills were tough, Gary had the best, I man handled my tank and got through it, Tim could reach his valve but struggled to turn it. We complete a few more S-Drills, SMB deployments (Gin deployed a nice SMB), and air share accents (I did mine with Gin) and then it was time to clean up the deployed SMB's everywhere. I was tired at this point and Gin and I dumped out air and kneeled on the bottom (I soon regret this) and started winding in spools. Scott had left us to go check on Gary and Tim. I thought I just had to wind in the spool and do an accent. Oh was I wrong. I look up and there I am kneeling on the bottom looking into Scott's light. At the moment I felt like crap! Why didn't I wind that spool in while hovering in trim. I know better! I got that look. He left Gin and I again to clean up the spool and we did an accent. I was tired, but that was no excuse. I wish I hadn't finished the diving portion of fundies that way. Anyway on the surface swim back we start the debrief, I heard Gary and Tim and an awesome minimum deco accent on the last dive.

All in all, if there is ever any doubt if you should do Fundies. Do it! We don't know if we passed or not yet, it really doesn't matter (Scott can't take my Jet Fins from me and stop me from backing up in Trim). If you look at our team we had the novice with 20+ dives to the extreme opposite, NAUI instructor with 2500+ dives. We all were very humbled by the video footage. We all have things to work on. And finally we all grew as divers. Thanks to my team mates for a memorable class and thanks to Dive Alaska, Scott & Karen, for hosting a great weekend! The most valuable gain from the weekend is I have three new dive buddies that dive like I do.

[Reply](#)



Gin

7:11 am on [August 22, 2012](#)

What a narrative, Gareth! I'm highly impressed! I was ever so lucky to have Gareth, Gary and Tim, who were all incredible divers as part of my team. And our instructor, Scott Anderson is the best instructor ever. He is patient with us slow folk, extremely knowledgeable and the best diver I have seen... and I hope to emulate his diving skills one day! I really tried not to hold anyone back, as I have a long road (swim) before I can begin to dive as well as they do. And, do I need to say, "I HATE MATH@!" But still, I am persevering on those math equations that are some of the basic skills necessary for a safe diver. Our last dive gave me goosebumps on how well we had developed as a team. While I didn't pass the GUE Fundamental Course, Scott is the best instructor EVER! I left with me so many more new skills to continue developing (I'm not gonna lie, I'm worried about this thing called winter diving!) and hope that one day, our team can all get back together again! I recommend the Fundies course for anyone who wants to develop their diving skills. The difference in my diving of yesterday is that I floundered in the water. Now, I am more in tune with my environment and feel at home in the water (at least, until my body decides it wants to go up to the surface without asking... grrr). Practice, I need lots of practice... is the pool open Scott? I want to blow some bubbles! Let's go DIVE!!!

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