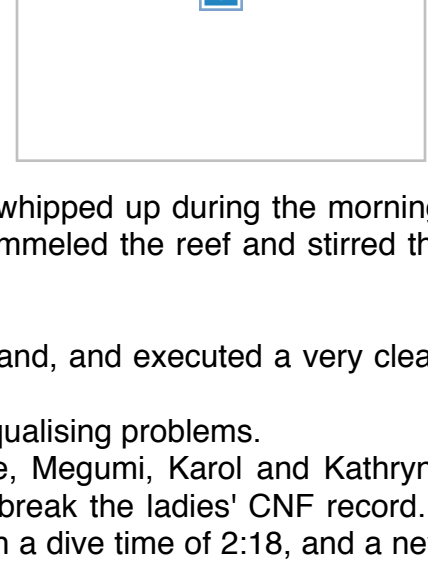


DAY ONE

April 1st, 2008 would have been Jacques Mayol's 81st birthday, and it is for this reason that we Jacques Mayol chose today to begin Vertical Blue 2008.

In his career Mayol tried to avoid interpersonal competition, preferring to test and extend his own and mankind's boundaries underwater. In the same way Vertical Blue is a chance for a small group of selected elite freedivers to extend world, national and personal records. The competitive monster in all of us will no doubt rear its head during the event, but for now everyone is working together to reach their individual goals.



Day 1 on Long Island, and it was the Blue Hole that tested its athletes. A strong southeasterly, the only wind that actually has an angle into the corner of the lagoon where the Blue Hole is hidden, whipped up during the morning, creating a small surface chop, while a huge ground swell from an Atlantic storm far out to sea pummeled the reef and stirred the water up with sand, reducing the visibility at depth to almost nothing.

Ryuzo was first up. Unphased by the reduced visibility he powered up from 95m with the tag in hand, and executed a very clean surface protocol to break his own national record in constant weight.

Guillaume (who announced 50m CWT) and Christian Maidane (62m CNF) both turned early with equalising problems. Then it was the girls' turn, with 4 attempts at 57m in Fries Immersion (top, pulling) from Natalie, Megumi, Karol and Kathryn. Natalie did no difficulty with her dive, which is suspiciously similar to the depth she will need to break the ladies' CNF record. Megumi turned early at 54m, and Karol suffered a surface black out. Kathryn was the quickest, with a dive time of 2:18, and a new national record to complete her set of all the NZ records. Well done Kathryn!

Then it was the boys' turn, with an attempt at 95m CNF, but unfortunately the wind was whipping through at this point and the surface chop, combined with a small dip from a controlled samba as he took of his mask meant that he will have to redo this depth for his first national record.

For now everyone is keeping a close eye on the forecasts to determine when they will start pulling out the stops and shooting for maximum depths. Dave Mullins, William Trubridge, Eric Fattah, William Winram and Kerian Hibbs all sat out today. With 11 days of competition there is no need to hit the first ball of the innings for six...

OFFICIAL RESULTS									
1 - 11 April 2008 Dean's Blue Hole, Long Island, Bahamas									
Day 1									
Date: 1st April, 2008									
Athlete	Discipline	Nationality	Announced	Realised	Dive	Card	Penalties	Points	
Ryuzo Shimomura	CWT	JAP	62m	57m	2:59	V	-	95	
Guillaume Nery	CWT	FRA	90m	69m	2:21	V	27	42	
Christian Maidane	CNF	FRA	62m	57m	2:19	V	-	27	
Natalia Avenenko	FIM	RUS	57m	57m	2:28	V	4	57	
Megumi Matsunaga	FIM	JAP	57m	54m	2:46	V	-	50	
Karol Meyer	FIM	BRA	57m	57m	2:27	R	-	57	
Kathryn McPhee	FIM	NZL	57m	57m	2:18	V	-	57	
Tomoko Yamanouchi	CWT	JAP	52m	52m	1:41	W	-	52	
Leo Muraoka	CNF	USA	44m	DNS	-	-	-	-	
Frank Pennett	CNF	GBR	38m	38m	1:35	P	-	-	

Gossip from the Bahamas

Eric Fattah, ex-world record holder in Constant Weight, has announced that he has switched to 'FCR dives', and will be exhaling at the surface before beginning the dive, flooding ears and sinuses with water during the descent.

Dave Mullin's made his intentions clear this morning, racing into the triple digits with a 100m CWT dive the day after touching down on the island. Some 'fireworks' during the ascent, but the narcosis was 'manageable' he said...

Karol Meyer and Kerian Hibbs have been doing super/fun sled dives standing on the base plate and being carried down into the blue night...

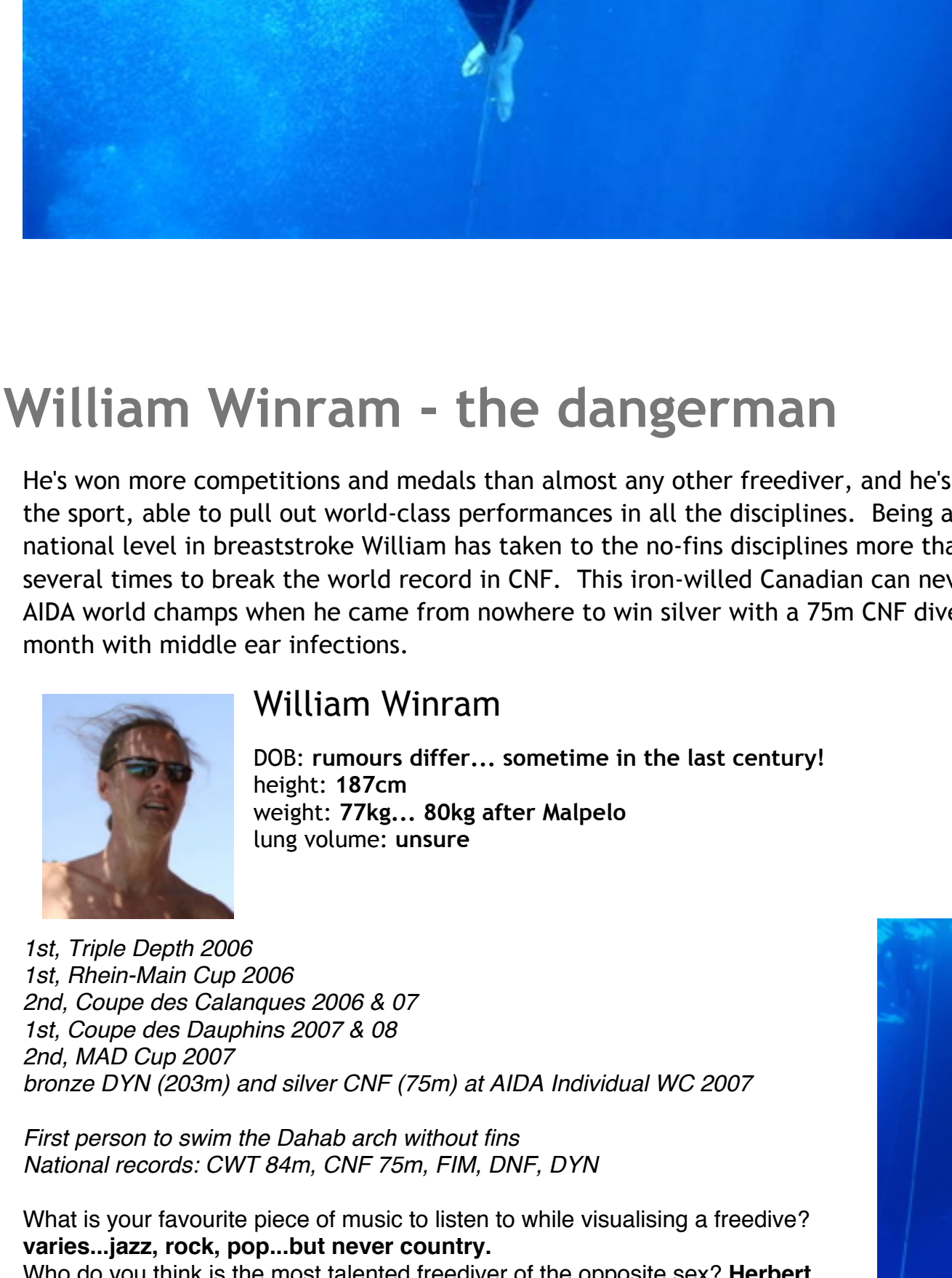
Kathryn McPhee and Natalie Avenenko continue to extend themselves in constant weight without fins. Secrets and tactics begin to enter the game, and both athletes talk about their dives in purely qualitative terms...

Frank Pennett is also unstoppable without fins, months of pool training having paid off as he cruises from one PB to the next.

William Winram is apparently 'out of the chase' for a world record in CNF at this event, but Trubridge is wary, having already been floored by the older William's bluffs in poker.

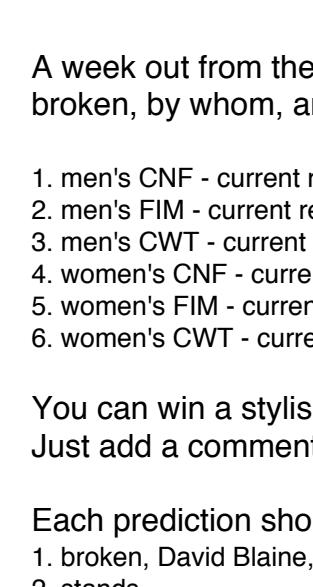
The Japanese contingent train in secrecy. Ryuzo is watched closely by his partner Tomoko, and for all we know could be diving halfway back to the Okinawa Islands by now. If anyone can translate Japanese there may be some clues (as well as the cool photos) on Ryuzo's blog.

As the moon wanes the tides settle, the winds die and a calm descends on the Blue Hole and the island. 36 hours to the first official top...



Karol Meyer - queen of the southern oceans

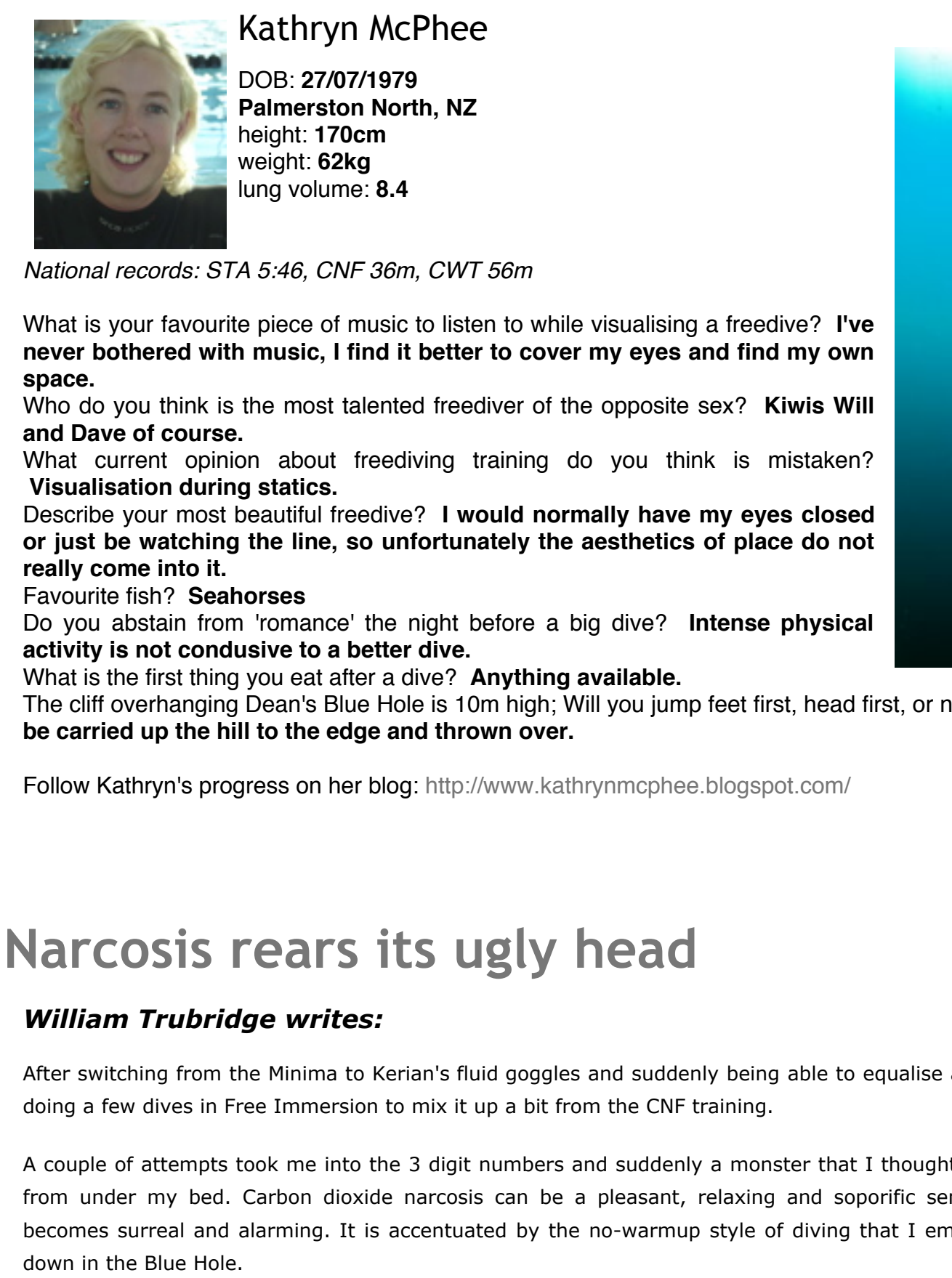
After judging Trubridge's world record in CNF in 2007 Karol is returning to Dean's Blue Hole as a competitor to lay a claim for Brazil as one of the great freediving nations. Karoline was trained by Pipin Ferreras in the 90's, but has left him, and his level of performance behind and is one of the top female freedivers in the world.



Karoline Meyer
DOB: 19/10/1968 (Libra)
Reside: Brazil
height: 171cm
weight: 63kg
lung volume: 6.9L

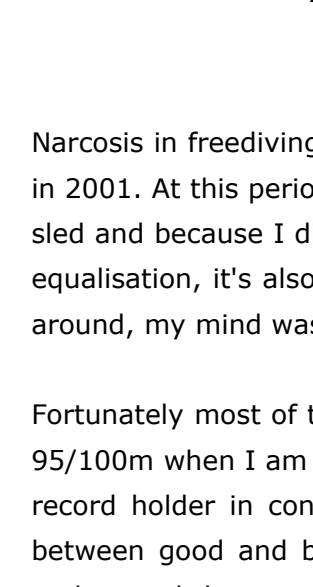
3 WR in static apnea,
1 WR No Limits Tandem,
2 continental records,
22 national /south american records.

What is your favourite piece of music to listen to while visualising a freedive? **U2 songs**
Then it was the most talented freediver of the opposite sex? **Carlos Coste**
Describe your most beautiful freedive? **Freediving with fishes, turtles and in the shipwreck "Corveta Ipiranga" - Fernando de Noronha Island - Brazil**
Favourite fish? (not to eat!) **All the groupers and the "midnight" parrot fish**
Do you abstain from 'romance' the night before a big dive? **I prefer maintain the focus.**
Describe your most beautiful freedive? **Freediving with fishes, turtles and in the shipwreck "Corveta Ipiranga" - Fernando de Noronha Island - Brazil**
What is the first thing you eat after a dive? **Carbohydrates (fruits and cereals)**
The cliff overhanging Dean's Blue Hole is 10m high. Will you jump feet first, head first, or need to be pushed? **feet first, no need to be pushed!**



William Winram - the dangerman

He's won more competitions and medals than almost any other freediver, and he's one of the few who 'all-rounders' in the sport, able to produce world-class performances in all the disciplines. Being an ex-competitive swimmer at a national level in breaststroke William has taken to the no-fins disciplines more than the others, and has attempted several times to break the world record in CNF. This iron-willed Canadian can never be ruled out, as shown during the AIDA world champs when he came from nowhere to win silver with a 75m CNF dive after being out of the water for a month with middle ear infections.

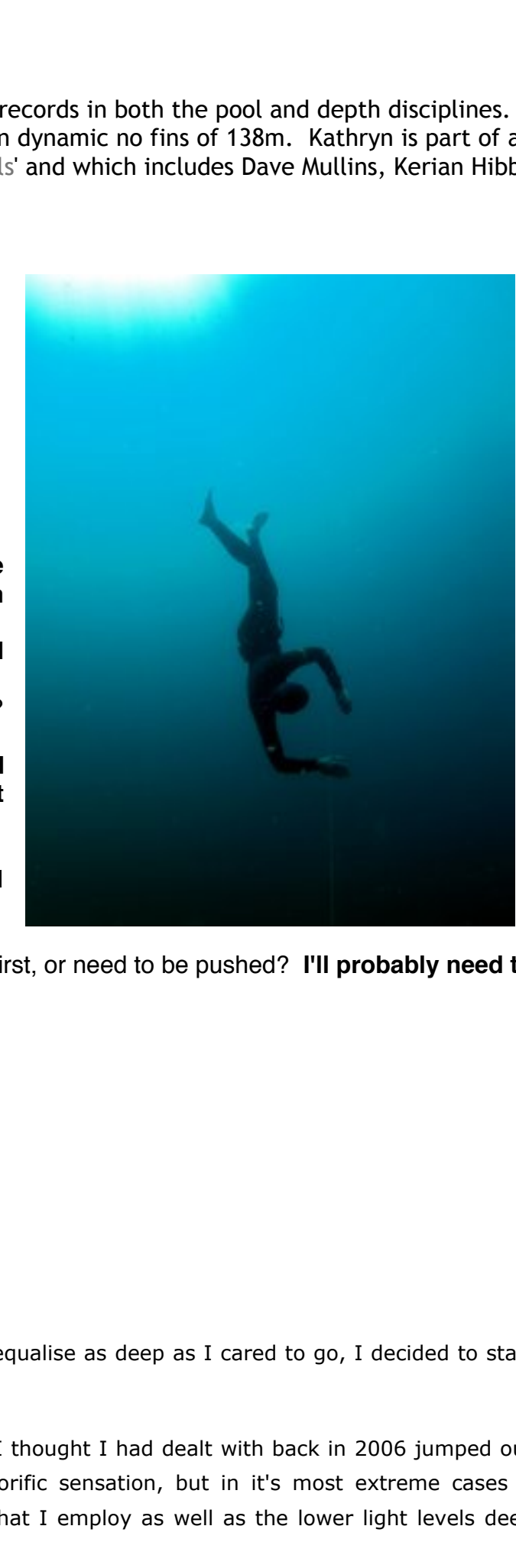


William Winram
DOB: rumours differ... sometime in the last century!
height: 187cm
weight: 77kg... 80kg after Malpelo
lung volume: unsure

1st, Triple Depth 2006
1st, Rhein-Main Cup 2006
2nd, Coupe des Calanques 2006 & 07
1st, Coupe des Dauphins 2007 & 08
2nd, MAC Cup 2007
bronze DYN (203m) and silver CNF (75m) at AIDA Individual WC 2007

First person to swim the Dahab arch without fins
National records: CWT 84m, CNF 75m, FIM, DNF, DYN

What is your favourite piece of music to listen to while visualising a freedive?
various...jazz, rock, pop...but never country.
Who do you think is the most talented freediver of the opposite sex? **Herbert.**
What current opinion about freediving training do you think is mistaken? **Not sure, I don't really follow any opinions in my training**
Describe your most beautiful freedive? **Freediving with hammerhead sharks in Malpelo Columbia**
Favourite fish? (not to eat!) **Sharks.**
Do you abstain from 'romance' the night before a big dive? **depends on what you mean by romance...a nice romantic dinner - no...an all night love making session...yes.**
What is the first thing you eat after a dive? **protein shake...fruit...meat...**
The cliff overhanging Dean's Blue Hole is 10m high. Will you jump feet first, head first, or need to be pushed? **before or after the comp or at the start of my dive?**



Vertical Blue 2008 - Pick the records competition!!

A week out from the kick-off of Vertical Blue 2008 and it's time for a challenge for the spectators at home. Which records will be broken, by whom, and by how much?

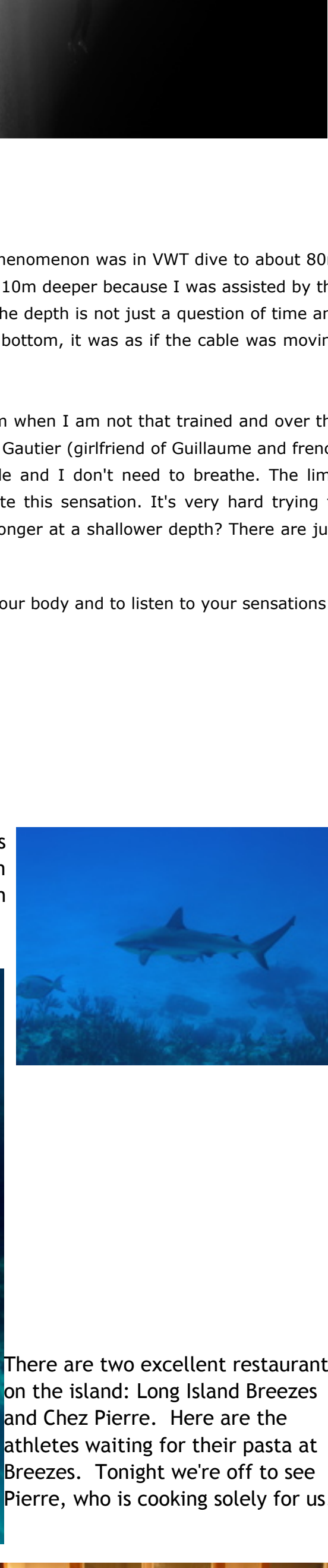
- 1. men's CNF - current record: 83m (Herbert Nitsch)
- 2. men's FIM - current record: 106m (Martine)
- 3. men's CWT - current record: 112m (Herbert Nitsch)
- 4. women's CNF - current record: 56m (Sara Campbell)
- 5. women's FIM - current record: 81m (Sara Campbell)
- 6. women's CWT - current record: 90m (Sara Campbell)

You can win a stylish Vertical Blue team long-sleeve shirt by picking the right records. Just add a comment to this post with your predictions for each record.

Each prediction should be in 3 parts, e.g.:
1. broken, David Blaine, 84m
2. stands
3. broken, Geoff Buhl, 113m
4. broken, Queen Elizabeth, 57m
5. stands
6. broken, Cleopatra, 92m

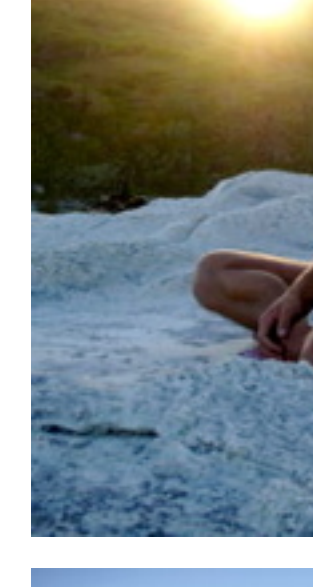
Points will be given as follows
- correct answer (broken/stands) = 1 point
- freediver with record at end of comp (if broken) = 1 point
- depth of record at the end of comp (if broken) = 1 point

Entry must be made by the end of April 31st, and it's open only to those not present at Vertical Blue 2008.



Kathryn McPhee

She is NZ's top female freediver of the moment, and has been smashing national records in both the pool and depth disciplines. Huge 8L lungs have powered her to a 7 minute breath hold and a personal best in dynamic no fins of 138m. Kathryn is part of a groundbreaking group of Wellington freedivers who call themselves the 'Lazy Seals' and which includes Dave Mullins, Kerian Hibbs and Guy Brew.



Kathryn McPhee
DOB: 27/07/1979
Palmerston North, NZ
height: 170cm
weight: 62kg
lung volume: 8.4

National records: STA 5:46, CNF 36m, CWT 56m

What is your favourite piece of music to listen to while visualising a freedive? **I've never bothered with music, I find it better to cover my eyes and find my own space.**
Who do you think is the most talented freediver of the opposite sex? **Kiwis Will and Dave of course.**
What current opinion about freediving training do you think is mistaken? **Visualisation during statics.**
Describe your most beautiful freedive? **I would normally have my eyes closed or just be watching the line, so unfortunately the aesthetics of my dive do not really come into it.**
Favourite fish? **Seahorses**
Do you abstain from 'romance' the night before a big dive? **Intense physical activity is not conducive to a better dive.**
What is the first thing you eat after a dive? **Anything available.**
The cliff overhanging Dean's Blue Hole is 10m high. Will you jump feet first, head first, or need to be pushed? **I'll probably need to be carried up the hill to the edge and thrown over.**



Follow Kathryn's progress on her blog: <http://www.kathrynmcphee.blogspot.com/>

Narcosis rears its ugly head

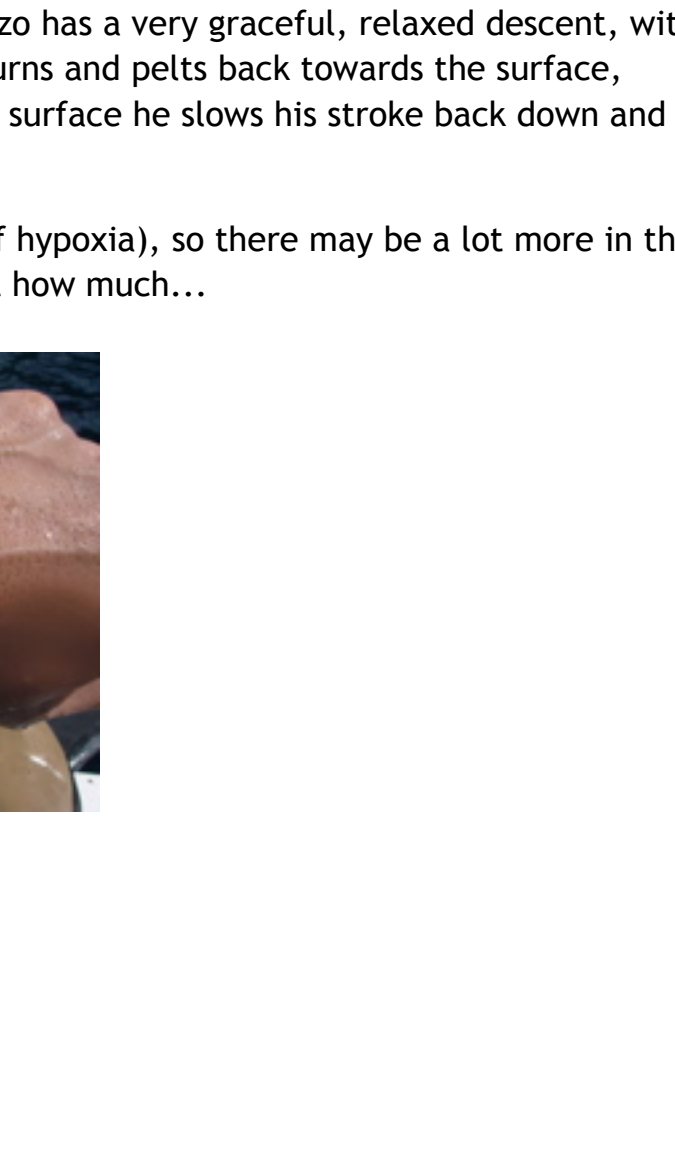
William Trubridge writes:

After switching from the Minima to Kerian's fluid goggles and suddenly being able to equalise as deep as I cared to go, I decided to start doing a few dives in Free Immersion to mix it up a bit from the CNF training.

A couple of attempts took me into the 3 digit numbers and suddenly a monster that I thought I had dealt with back in 2006 jumped out from under my bed. Carbon dioxide narcosis can be a pleasant, relaxing and soporific sensation, but in it's most extreme cases it becomes surreal and alarming. It is accentuated by the no-warmup style of diving that I employ as well as the lower light levels deep down in the Blue Hole.

The general sensation is of becoming more and more detached from your body, and an affected vision which can become hallucination. On a recent dive during the ascent I am watching my hands come up past my face, grab the line, then pull past me as the other hand crosses for its stroke. To relax I close my eyes... and see exactly the same thing. To make sure I squeeze my eyes closed so that I can feel the eyelids pressing against each other, then open and shut them but it makes no difference to what I see, which is a hallucination of what my body is doing.

Today I spent 14" below 100m, and when I turned I knew straight away that I was in for a ride. Very quickly the narcosis became overpowering and for the first time I worried about a deep water blackout caused by excessive ppCO2. Slightly alarmed I touched down on Long Island on Saturday and were straight into training with a 85m dive from Ryuzo (the deepest debut in Dean's) and an easy 40m from Tomoko. Accommodated to the strong currents of Okinawa there is no knowing how deep they will find themselves in the still waters of Dean's Blue Hole.



Now my vision is starting to white out completely, and this is something that I have never encountered before, which worries me further still. Suddenly out of the whiteness there is a human form, that of my safety diver Julie Gautier, and I wonder if I am hallucinating that as well, then I am on the surface, recovering and doing the safety protocol. The narcosis has stayed with me all the way to the surface, and the whiteness that I thought was my vision closing over was just the returning light of day.

I first experienced when I passed 60m CNF in Dahab in 2005. These days I have done so many dives in the 80's that I don't experience narcosis until past 90m, but it will be a while before I develop any kind of tolerance to the extreme level of exposure I am experiencing in a 100m+ dive.

Guillaume Nery writes:

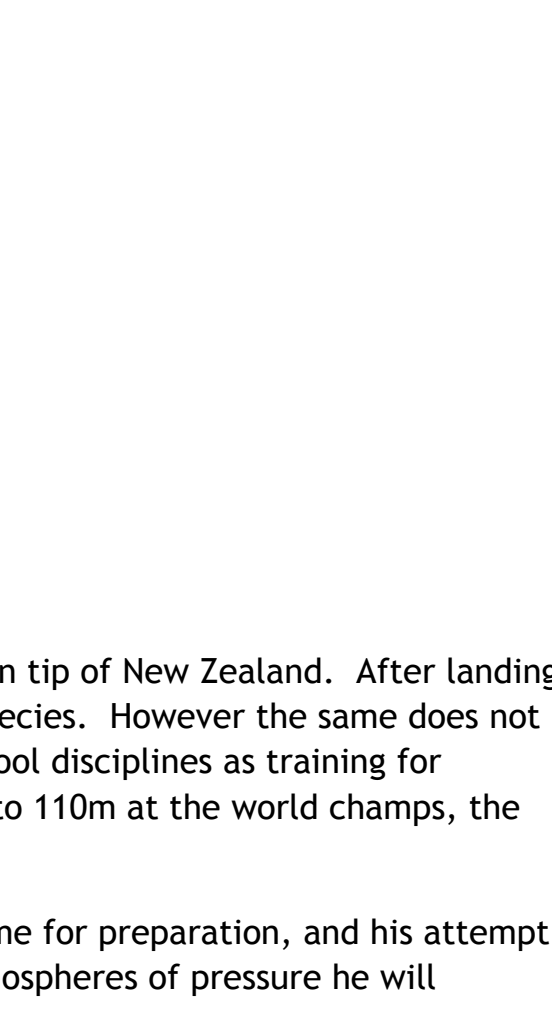
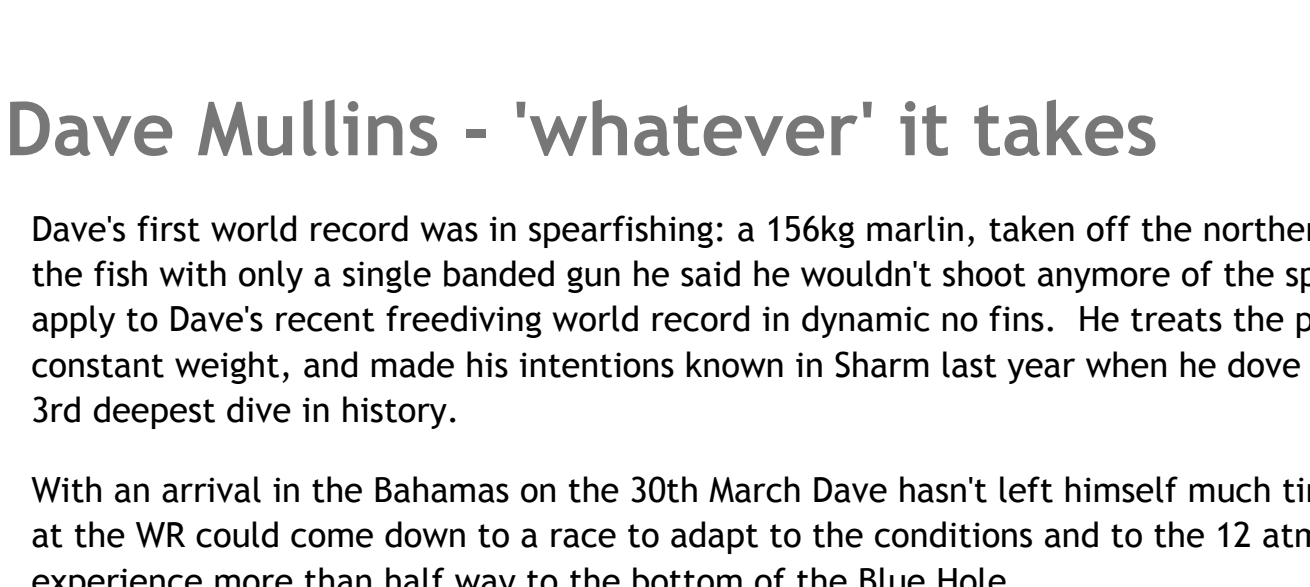
Narcosis in freediving can be our friend or our worst enemy. The first time I experienced this phenomenon was in VWT dive to about 80m in 2001. At this point I was able to dive around 70m in constant and I decided to dive at least 10m deeper because I was assisted by the sled and because I didn't have equalisation problems. I thought it wouldn't be a problem. But the depth is not just a question of time and equalisation, it's also a problem of narcosis. This dive was one of my worst dives ever. At the bottom, it was as if the cable was moving around, my mind was not clear at all and I was naked until the first breath.

Fortunately most of the time narcosis is a better experience. In CWT, I can feel it over the 80m when I am not that trained and over the 95/100m when I am close to a record or a competition. 'Narcosis is the salt of freediving' Julie Gautier (girlfriend of Guillaume and french record holder in constant weight -65m) says in a recent interview by cotton, I feel comfortable and I don't need to breathe. The limit between good and bad narcosis is very thin so it's important to keep quiet and to appreciate this sensation. It's very hard trying to understand the explain narcosis. Why is it stronger today than yesterday? Why can it be stronger at a shallower depth? There are just many reasons to reason narcosis: depth, time at depth, cold, fatigue, dehydration, etc etc...

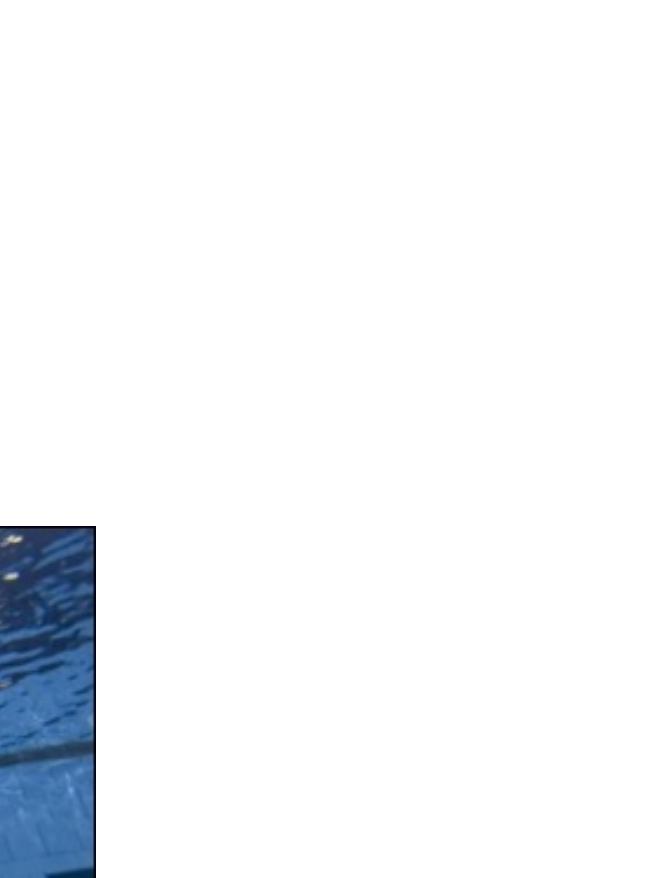
The easiest way to avoid bad narcosis is to improve step by step, to respect the adaptation of your body and to listen to your sensations.

Spare time at Vertical Blue 2008

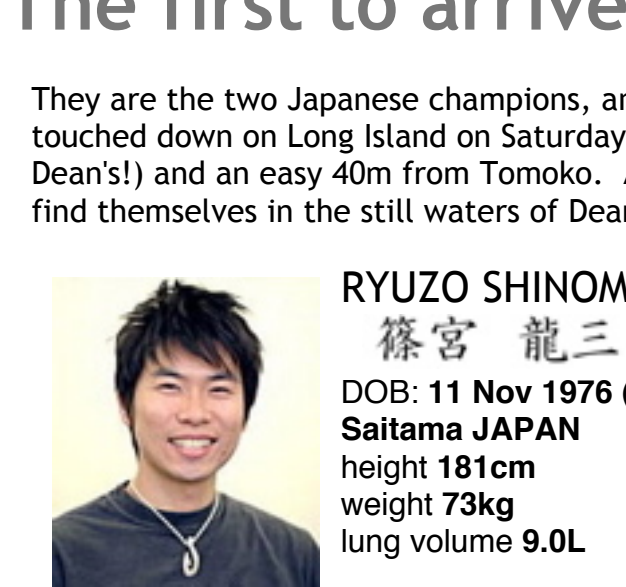
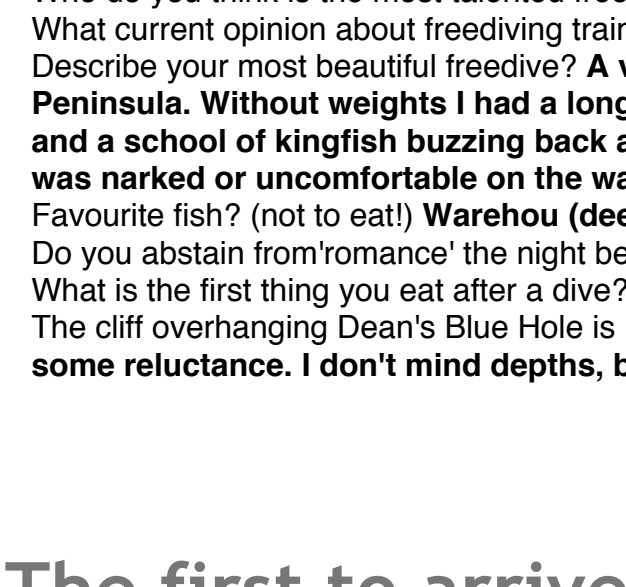
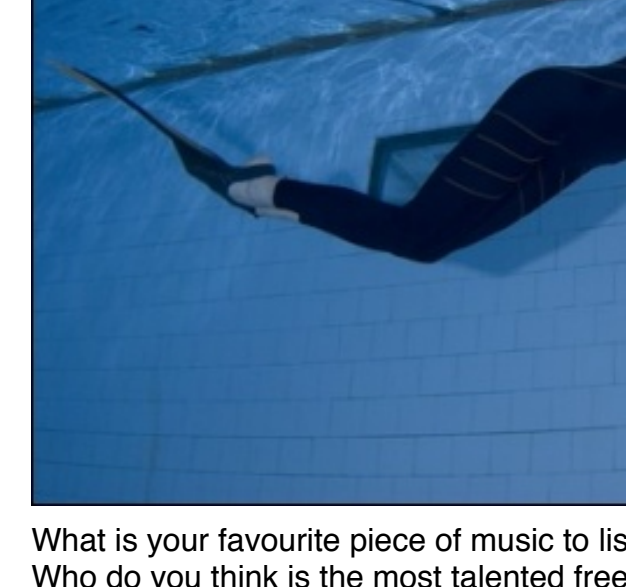
Guillaume, Leo and William went spearfishing at 'Chimney Rock', a spot notorious for aggressive reef sharks. Sure enough, 3 six-foot grey reef sharks followed them around continuously, and they spent more time trying to scare the sharks off than lining up on fish. One big snapper and a lobster were the only takings.



There are two excellent restaurants on the island: Long Island Breezes and Chez Pierre. Here are the athletes waiting for their pasta at Breezes. Tonight we're off to see Pierre, who is cooking solely for us!



At a 'secret spot' on the Atlantic side of the island there is a sandstone promontory with perfectly flat and soft hollows overlooking the ocean. William comes here with students to take evening sessions of stretching and pranayama, and Ryuzo, Tomoko and William were there recently to breathe, meditate, and unwind.

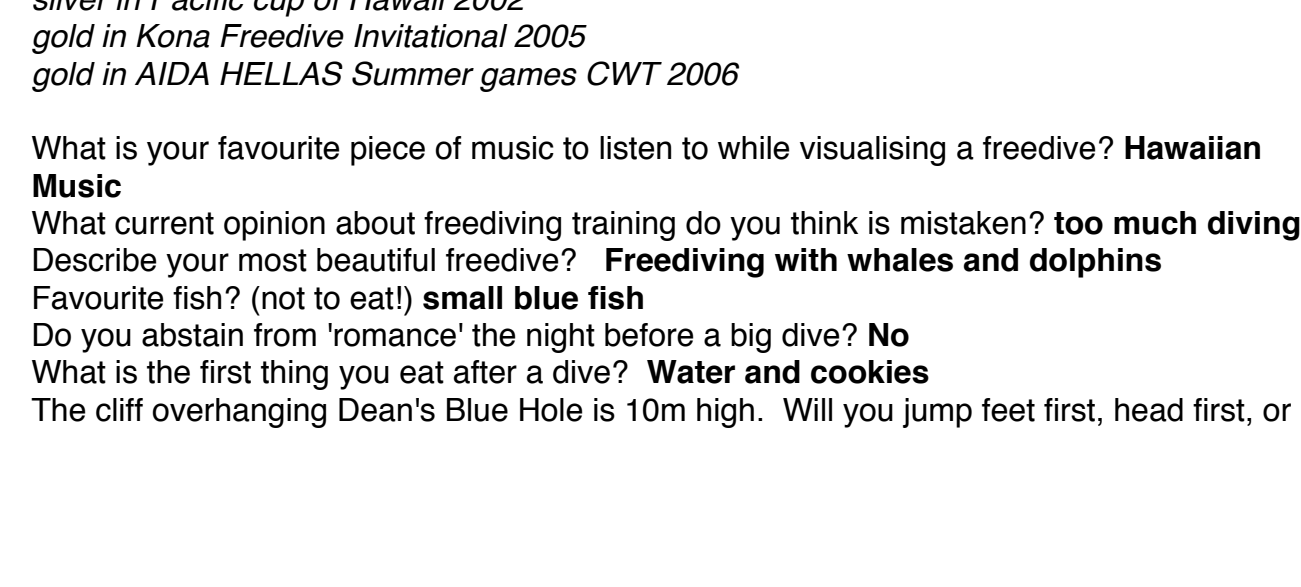


ENTER THE DRAGON!

Ryuzo Shinomiya - a new member to the 100m club!

Ryuzo became the 7th constant weight freediver in history to break the magical barrier of 100m in training on Friday.

Ryuzo has been nailing dives in the high 90's for some time, and his only limit was equalisation. That last barrier has now been overcome and Ryuzo has established himself amongst the exclusive club, where the other members are Martin Stepanek, Carlos Coste, Herbert Nitsch, Guillaume Nery, Dave Mullins and Juraj Karpi.



The dive to 101m lasted just over 3 minutes, most of which is ascent. Ryuzo has a very graceful, relaxed descent, with long and wide strokes of his leaderfin Hyper monofin. At the bottom he turns and pellets back towards the surface, covering the first 80m of the ascent in about 45 seconds. At 20m from the surface he slows his stroke back down and relaxes as he approaches the surface.

By all accounts Ryuzo stays little to no cyanosis of the lips (an indicator of hypoxia), so there may be a lot more in the tank for this rising talent - show tune to Vertical Blue 2008 to find out just how much...

Leo and Megumi

The Japanese are always a strong contingent at any competition, and Vertical Blue 2008 is no exception. Leo and Megumi round out the team of four from the land of the rising sun, although Leo is competing for America, having been a resident of Hawaii for the last 27 years.

Both Leo and Megumi are Apnea Academy instructors and were close friends of the late Jacques Mayol.

Megumi Matsumoto
松元 恵
DOB: 30/11/1957 (Sagittarius)
Kagoshima, Japan
height: 160cm
weight: 50kg
lung volume: 4.0L

National records: FIM 54m, CNF 32m

What is your favourite piece of music to listen to while visualising a freedive? **The soundtrack to the Big Blue**
Who do you think is the most talented freediver of the opposite sex? **Martin Stepanek**
Describe your most beautiful freedive? **Freediving with whales**
Favourite fish? **Pelagic fish like marlin and tuna**
What is the first thing you eat after a dive? **Fruits**
The cliff overhanging Dean's Blue Hole is 10m high. Will you jump feet first, head first, or need to be pushed? **Do not want to jump down!**

Leo Muraoka
村岡 康正
DOB: 28/7/1955 (Leo)
height: 200cm
weight: 61kg
lung volume: 5.5L

CNF 48m, FIM 66m, CWT 70m

What is your favourite piece of music to listen to while visualising a freedive? **Strong local kine music**
Who do you think is the most talented freediver of the opposite sex? **Sara? Natalia? I do not know yet.**
What current opinion about freediving training do you think is mistaken? **That static apnea is useful!**
Describe your most beautiful freedive? **A variable weight dive onto a pinnacle off the coast of New Zealand's Coromandel Peninsula. Without weights I had a long bottom time with big schools of golden snapper and pink maomao around me, and a school of kingfish buzzing back and forth. It was deep enough for a bit of a surreal feeling, but not so deep that I was naked or uncomfortable on the way up.**
Favourite fish? (not to eat!) **Wahoo (deepwater NZ pelagic). Actually I also quite like to eat them...**
Do you abstain from 'romance' the night before a big dive? **Only of the vigorous sort!**
What is the first thing you eat after a dive? **Anything I can get my hands on.**
What is the first thing you eat after a dive? **Fruits**
The cliff overhanging Dean's Blue Hole is 10m high. Will you jump feet first, head first, or need to be pushed? **Feet first and with some reluctance. I don't mind depths, but I don't like heights.**

