

Weather...

*Whether the weather is windy, or whether the weather is not,
We'll weather the weather, whatever the weather, whether we like it or not.*

Today I went to a sandstone promontory that overlooks the north, ocean side of the island. It has a soft, flat top above the sea that is perfect for yoga, pranayama and meditation. Looking out over the Atlantic ocean from the top of the rock I saw what has been plaguing the Vertical Blue freedivers for the last several weeks. A huge groundswell, large not so much for its height as for its massive girth, was rolling into and over the reef. From my angle above the sea I could see that each wave is as thick as two normal waves placed side by side, and this sheer weight of water is churning up the sand bed on the northern side of the island, ripping algae off the bottom, and silting the water.



photo courtesy Kahryn McPhee

It's not the only thing that's been making training difficult. It would appear that the entire sargasso sea has emptied from the Atlantic into the Caribbean. Huge slicks of seaweed are pushed by the wind and waves into the lagoons and bays on the north side of the island, carpeting the surface of the water and banking up the beaches with mounds of seaweed up to 4 feet high. Last week an excavator and dump truck took countless loads of seaweed off the beach, and we managed to net up the majority of what was in the blue hole, but a new cold front and strong easterly winds brought a fresh crop of sargassum into the bay, and now the surface of the blue hole is a frothy brown blanket about 30cm thick.

It has been worse - in February there were patches where the weed was 2m thick, and birds walked on its surface. Not even the oldest fisherman on the island can remember ever seeing such a quantity. However even at its worst Dean's is still better than most freediving locations. There have been dives to over 100m despite 4m visibility, and some freedivers are reaching personal best performances, with the last meter of the ascent a scramble through the seaweed covering.

Fortunately the winds are predicted to ease in the next 48 hours, and a few cycles of the tide should start to clean the water and empty the weed from the blue hole. It is proof that no freediving location in the world, not even Dean's, is perfect. Vertical Blue 2008 is scheduled to have 9 competition days over the first 11 days of April, so if the weather does clear it is possible that many athletes will use the first few days to complete their training before attempting their targets towards the end of the comp.

Just so we don't forget, here is a picture of what Dean's Blue Hole *can* look like, and hopefully what it is working towards in April...



photo courtesy Chris Alchin

One of the many places in this world that I'd like to visit. Liberating experience, of silence, of serenity under the deep waters.

by Christian Friborg on 2012-11-14 18:24:02