

The Story:

I hadn't been underwater in a few years, so I'm always more cautious on my first dive of the trip. This day, the wind off the Florida coast in late February was gusting to 20 mph / 12.5 kph and the seas were rolling with 3- to 4-foot / 1-meter-high waves. I jumped in to follow a divemaster and six divers to a depth of 85 feet (25.5 meters) on a drift dive.

My mask fogged up entirely when I hit the surface. I tried to clear it, but I couldn't. I submerged a few feet and took it off, wiped it, and put it back on. It was still almost completely fogged.

With the surging surf, the visibility was about 30 feet (9 meters); I could see only the bubbles of my companions. As I descended, trying to follow the bubbles, I thought to myself, "This is a potentially dangerous situation. I'm alone. The divemaster doesn't know I'm up here; he can't see me and I can't see him. My dive buddy can't see me either. And if I surface too late, the boat won't be able to spot me because of the strong current and the waves."

I also thought of my wife and daughter who were with me on the vacation: they were the most important reason not to let anything happen to me.

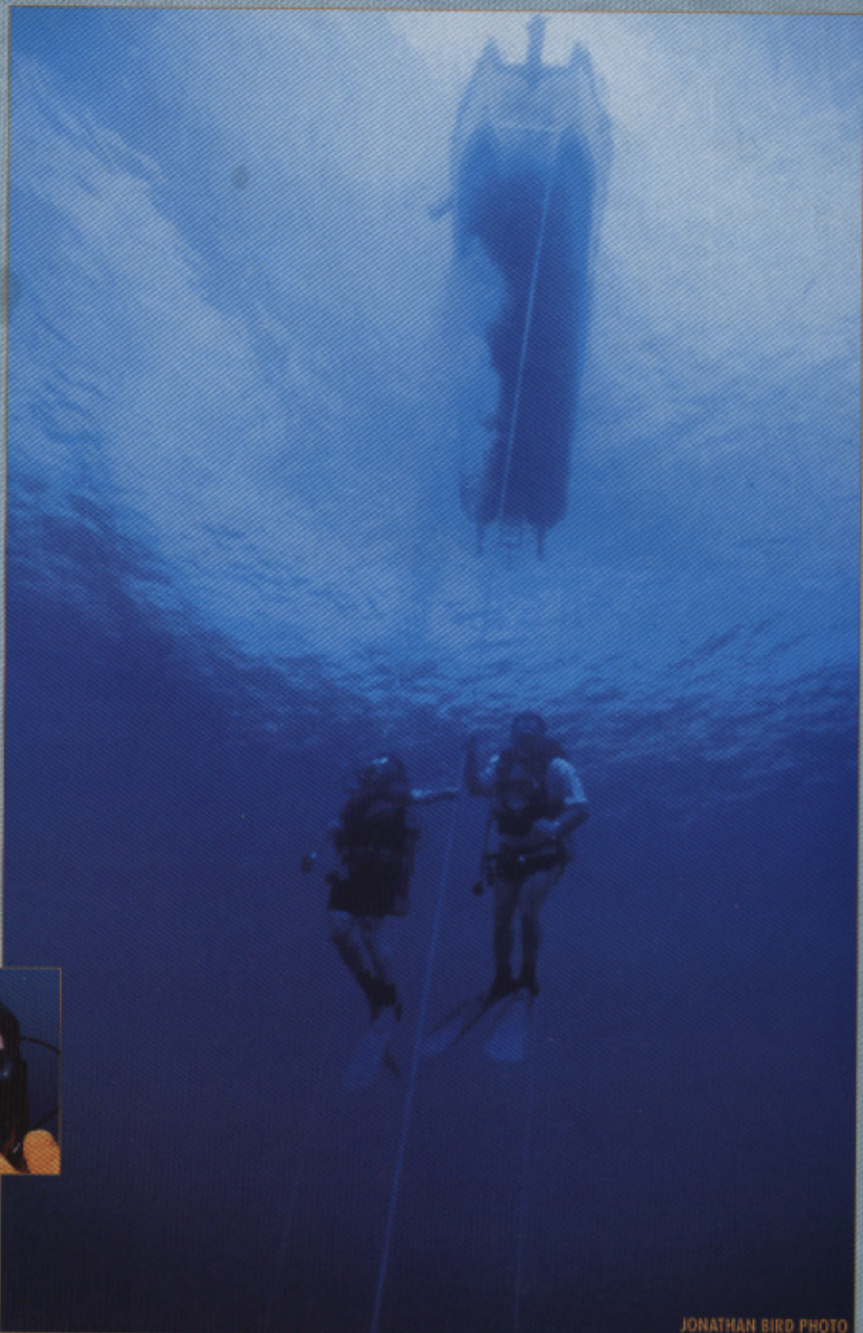
After 10 minutes of trying to find my group, I aborted the dive. The boat motored right over to me. I climbed on. And that was it. I was safe, not sorry. About 90 minutes later, I took my second dive with the group, and it was wonderful.

— DAN Member Gil Zeimer

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DAVID HAAS PHOTO



JONATHAN BIRD PHOTO