

GET LUCKY! and pool your resources

says **Pat Morrissey**

What do I mean by 'getting lucky'?

Well, it's not, in this case, an invite to make a follow-up to John Travolta's famous film, nor to take out a contract on one of the lesser-known Dwarves. 'Lucky' is a state of mind, formed beforehand by a number of contributory factors; 'being lucky' is more often than not the entirely practical benefit derived from preparation in advance. It was either Jack Nicklaus or Arnold Palmer who, on being asked whether he ever relied on luck on the golf course, said 'Yep - and the more I practise, the luckier I get'.

People who decide to take expensive camera gear under water - ostensibly, the most hostile environment imaginable for delicate, technical machinery - owe it to themselves to remember those words. Living in England, I have the benefit each winter of a few months when there's very little incentive to go outside or think about the practicalities of underwater photography at all; these are the weeks when it's just too easy to indulge in armchair diving, drooling over coffee tables laden with glossy books of submarine tropical beauty. It's an entirely understandable temptation; but there's far more to be achieved by using the time in Pool Practice.

Even if, like myself, you're a far-from-enthusiastic member of a SCUBA club, you'll have that all-important access to a swimming pool on a regular basis - and while others are honing their dive skills for the nth time, or fitness training, you can be playing with an underwater camera. And it should be playing, in my opinion, since nothing kills creativity more quickly than over-regimentation. I dive for pleasure, and I take photographs for the love of it - so, do I really want to lose this buzz by making it an onerous task or sheer hard work? Answers on a postcard, I don't think...

Look at the benefits: firstly, there's no need to have to learn from scratch all over again about your own gear the next time you exit the dive boat - it'll be second nature to you, an extension of your essential dive equipment.

Secondly, you can utilize pool sessions to familiarize yourself with new equipment or lenses, experimenting in your own leisure time rather than in the hothouse atmosphere of a dive holiday when taking time out 'to see what happens if I do this...' means you lose lumps of expensive vacation time.

Thirdly, you will inevitably start to surprise yourself with the photographs you take during the weekly club night pool sessions - no one can take the same pictures over and over again forever, and you will be forced to become more creative - especially if you normally tend to stick with a particular strobe set-up or favourite lens, which you can also begin to vary as you



wish.

Fourthly, you will become able to respond more rapidly to new photographic situations as they occur in open water by regularly building up 'muscle memory' in your fingers and automatically 'reading' the scene without hesitation. And finally - perhaps most importantly of all, when you're going to be away from underwater photography for a while - regular pool practice keeps your eye 'in', your brain alert and your instincts focussed.

Is there a down side? I haven't found one yet, and in fact the local swimming pool allows us to exhibit pool photos from our Monday night sessions, which both advertises the club and promotes public awareness and appreciation of underwater photography. It's a winning system that every dive snapper and SCUBA club should adopt, so - get in there and BE LUCKY.

Pat Morrissey