

Editorial

Teamwork in competitions

The title of this section may seem a little odd but, as usual, please bear with me.

The original idea came about when I went on a short press trip with Charles Hood to Iceland way back in 2005 (UwP24 to be precise). We were diving the Silfra Crack and only had a couple of dives allocated on a long weekend trip. The first dive was an amazing experience but photographically frustrating as I didn't want to 'waste' my dive time posing for Charlie and he almost certainly didn't either.

Over an evening aperitif we both independently came to the conclusion that the only way we were to come away with good diver images was to work '10 on and 10 off' i.e. I would pose for him for 10 minutes and then he'd pose for me. The end results were nothing short of amazing. We both knew what shots the other was taking so knew not to duplicate them and as a result we both got a different and therefore non competing set of images.

I got to shoot some special panoramas; one of which was chosen as the front cover of UwP25 and Charlie had me pose between the two tectonic plates with arms outstretched - America on one and Europe on the other. This was used on the cover of Time magazine so it proves how effective 'teaming up' can be. Point made?

Competitions in underwater photography tend to be an individual pastime. True the entered shot might, for example, have been a collaboration between model and photographer but the resulting, submitted image is usually the work and choice of

an individual.

On the Day competitions are probably a prime example of such solo photographic activities but I'm going to suggest an alternative approach which, if I'm right, will be the subject of an article in UwP105.

Ok. Here goes. Let's imagine that an 'On the day' style underwater photography competition has been announced. It's based in one location, but to all intents and purposes, it could be a national competition as long as it's an 'On the Day' format.

A group of underwater photographers start chatting about the up and coming event and feel that they would have a better chance of reaching more varied subjects if they went out on a boat rather than by shore diving. Good idea number one. Split the boat costs by having a small group of underwater photographers on board but this is where the plan can backfire.

Each photographer will more than likely be diving the same site as the others and as a result could well return with some very similar shots. My suggestion is for the group to accept that the competition can only be won by one image. That's it's very nature. Sure there are second and third places but, when the gloves are off, first place is the only place.

With that in mind the group needs to start thinking as a team whose sole aim is to 'win' the competition by entering shots that do not compete with each other. This idea is nothing new and is based on the correctly observed saying 'United we

stand, divided we fall'.

Basically there's no point in entering two similar shots, however good they both are, because they will split the vote. It's very unlikely that a judge will include two similar shots in the winners enclosure. The same is true for 'technique' shots i.e. those which attract because of their unusual style such as long exposure blurs, radial zooms etc etc.

The crucial part of this teamwork is honesty and therefore trust. You have to be honest about the type of shots you are after, i.e. the subjects, the techniques, the lenses and the lighting. I know this goes completely against the grain but it will end up with a much stronger and potentially much more successful entry because you will be eliminating firstly duplicates and secondly only the strongest image will get through.

If everything goes to plan and one of the group wins, they acknowledge the team and the others still get a sense of accomplishment at having been part of the team.

I'll let you know how it went in UwP105.

Recycled lead weights

There's something very satisfying about the SeaShepherd scheme to make dive weights out of the lead used to weigh down captured illegal fishing nets :-)

Peter Rowlands
peter@uwpmag.com

www.uwpmag.com