

This Synchronized Swimmer and Diver Carries More than a DAN Card

By Scott D. Jones

An avid diver, Jennifer Lexa has been in — and under — the water since she was 11, when she first learned to swim. For three decades she has been a competitive synchronized swimmer. Last year she became a scuba-certified diver, trading in-water pirouettes for giant strides and underwater spins for fin pivots.

“I’ve always been a water person, spending three days a week training in the pool,” she recalls. “I can’t tell you how many times people would ask me if I was a scuba diver or suggested I get certified. Diving was always an option, but not one near the top of my list.”

That all changed when she joined her mother for a Caribbean cruise that included several diving spots. She soon discovered the advantages scuba diving. “I love scuba because it’s the only sport that I do that isn’t competitive,” she said. “I get to just be me and not worry about winning.”

“It’s certainly a welcome change to NOT be judged for my underwater form and technique.”

A seven-time national champion who spends nearly eight hours a week in the pool, Lexa now competes for the Multnomah Athletic Club near her home in Portland, Ore. She answers jokes and snickers about



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synchronized swimming, claiming her water skills can easily rival those of casual swimmers and even expert divers.

“It’s standard for us to tread water with our hands over our heads, swim upside down and spin,” she said. “That’s tough to do. And, of course, we always have to smile and look our best.” She jokes that she’s also become a master of waterproof make-up.

As most avid Northwest divers do, Lexa adapted to her locale, buying a drysuit and

taking regular trips north to Puget Sound.

“Cold-water diving requires extra equipment and a little extra patience, but it’s worth it,” she said. “I enjoy getting to know the other divers on my weekend trips. Everyone is helpful and understanding. Complete strangers are willing to help me zip up my drysuit. It’s a great experience.”

In her synchronized swimming competition, she has to hold her breath, often for extended periods. “Holding your breath is what you don’t want to do when you dive,” she said. “Being able to actually breathe underwater is one of the things that makes scuba

diving most appealing to me.”

A computer programmer and information technology specialist, she said her “technical side” quickly merged with her “scuba side.”

“Diving technology certainly appeals to me,” Lexa said. “Since I am in IT [information technology], a dive computer was one of my first purchases. I love having all the data at my fingertips. I even sync my computer with my Palm Pilot so that I can look at the graph of my dives and test myself so that I never set off any of the alarms.”

Of course, all the practice in the world can’t prevent unforeseen situations. “OK, I admit that I did set off the rapid breathing alarm when I saw my first shark in Honduras — but I’m working on it,” she said.

Carrying the DAN Card Adds Up Benefits

One of Jennifer Lexa’s first major decisions after becoming certified was to become a DAN® Member. “We were diving in some remote locations, and it was important to be prepared,” Lexa said. “The cost of evacuation would be way too high in the event of an accident if I did not have insurance.”

“I felt much better carrying the DAN card in my gear bag.”

That wasn’t the only DAN card Lexa started carrying. A true supporter of DAN and its mission, she also signed up for a DAN credit card.

“I stopped using my checking account and started making all my purchases using the DAN credit card,” she said. “Every month I pay it off in full. It’s absolutely amazing how quickly those points add up. I already have enough for a trip to the Caribbean. Now the only question is, where do I want to go diving?”



SCOTT D. JONES has been working in the dive industry as a journalist and marketing professional for nearly 20 years. He is currently the president of DiveNewswire Networks, a web-based dive information service. He also publishes www.DiverWire.com for certified scuba divers.

About The Author

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