

Book reviews

Mastering rebreathers

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My general impression of this book was that it is well researched and covers a comprehensive array of topics from the history of rebreathers, through explanations of the physics and physiology, to practical techniques and procedures. Each chapter is well structured, with set learning objectives that can be evaluated by self-test questions. The text is broken into short, easy to read sections, supported by numerous colour photographs and diagrams, and interspersed with many practical tables and charts. From the safety perspective, the inherent risks and responsibilities assumed by a rebreather diver are clearly established from page one, and safety points are emphasised throughout with real diving scenarios.

The introduction differs in style from the rest of the book and uses cartoon characters to establish the overall advantages of rebreather diving through the holiday exploits of Mary (a rebreather diver) and Marvin (traditional scuba). This light-hearted approach was, no doubt, designed to engage the reader but if you find them a little irritating you'll be pleased to know they don't pop up elsewhere.

The second chapter takes the reader on an interesting journey through time, from early concepts of men diving underwater with pig skin bladders in 900BC to the development of the first rebreather in 1878. Initially, this chapter seemed a little disjointed but on re-reading I decided it gave a good picture of the key milestones in diving history.

Chapter three is where the book starts to become informative and educational. The various types of rebreathers are explained in short paragraphs, written in easy to comprehend language and supported by many colour photographs and clear diagrams (although the rebreathers are grouped in a slightly different way to that of most other textbooks on the subject). One strength of this chapter is that the functional characteristics of rebreather design are related to their practical application and this successfully stimulates the reader to select a rebreather based on the type of diving he/she will be doing.

Wherever diving physics and physiology fit on the reader's scale of interest, both chapters give clear explanations of complex issues and use everyday concepts to make that all important link between 'theory' and 'so what', and practical aspects of rebreather function. Excellent quick reference charts are provided.

For those who really need to know all the ins and outs of their rebreather, there is an excellent in-depth chapter on the pros and cons of different scrubber canister design, counterlung location, and hose and mouthpiece design. For those who prefer a more top-line approach, you would be well informed by just reading the section relevant to a specific model of rebreather.

The sections on pre- and post-dive procedures leave the reader in no doubt that rebreather diving should not be undertaken lightly and provoke the scuba diver into re-thinking some of their practices and indeed un-learning some of those which may be hazardous when diving with a rebreather. Bozanic reinforces the importance of basic skills to cope with most of the potential 'pilot errors' that can occur. Throughout the book, the emphasis is on safety and the need for proper training courses, keeping up to date and skills practise.

What is missing? One glaring omission is that the book hardly even mentions the most widely used recreational closed circuit rebreather, the Buddy Inspiration by AP Valves. Unlike the other less common rebreathers, there are no check-list appendices or descriptive text relevant to the Inspiration, and nor is it or AP Valves listed in the 'Rebreather supporters' advertisement section or the list of useful website addresses. The reader cannot help but wonder if, sadly, diving politics may have influenced this obvious omission. Surely, any recently written book about rebreathers would be expected to include detailed reference to the most commonly dived recreational closed circuit rebreather?

In summary, this is a very practical guide providing a clear overview of the types of rebreathers, and stimulates the reader to consider many factors before deciding which type to buy. This book would help the experienced recreational diver about to venture into the new world of rebreather diving, as it serves as a valuable source of information to assist in deciding which rebreather to buy and also as a reference manual to complement the chosen rebreather training course. It would also serve as a reference book for anyone involved in working with rebreather divers.

Lynn Taylor

Key words

Book reviews, technical diving, equipment

Must be a qualified IANTD Recreational Rebreather Rescue Diver or equivalent. CPR or equivalent. Oxygen Provider or equivalent. Must be a minimum of 18 years old. IProof of a minimum of 60 logged dives and 35 hours on the rebreather to be used. What is the minimum materials requirements? For Rebreather: IANTD Divemaster Student Kit. For Open Circuit: IANTD Divemaster Student Kit. What this program must include?