DAN Basic Life Support & First Aid Courses Now Also Launched in the DAN Southern Africa Region

Almost six years have passed since DAN Europe first developed the DAN BLS course. This course immediately became popular amongst divers, several dive organisations, rescue teams and law enforcement agencies. The success of the course was not limited just to the DAN Europe region! Two years ago, both the DAN Europe BLS course and the DAN Europe First Aid course were adopted as part of DAN America's programme, and now DAN Southern Africa has followed suit, offering both these courses to divers in the region.

This kind of collaboration between IDAN offices is exemplary of DAN's character – that of traversing boundaries. DAN Training courses developed in one region are later taken up in other regions, in the aim of making the same courses and knowledge accessible to all divers.

For the launch of the DAN BLS and First Aid courses in the DAN Southern Africa region, Guy Thomas, Director of Training and Operations from DAN Europe, was invited to visit South Africa and introduce the new courses to the cities of Johannesburg and Cape Town. A group of twenty instructors in total (11 in Johannesburg and 9 in Cape Town) participated in a special 3-day training event and are now certified as DAN BLS and First Aid instructors.

The workshop was divided in three parts:

- The actual DAN BLS/First Aid Course
- How to teach DAN Provider courses
- Adding value to courses and marketing

What became immediately obvious to the participants, most of them already BLS and First Aid instructors affiliated with other training organisations, was the training method used during the workshop. Although many training organisations have a BLS and first aid programme, DAN Training courses focus on quality and additional course value.

DAN is not just another player in the market, but an organisation recognised as a specialist in dive medicine. Therefore, DAN Training courses maintain a high standard of quality. It is not DAN's priority to offer courses that can be taught in one or two hours; as with the DAN BLS and First Aid courses, it is the students' outcome that matters most. DAN Training courses encourage instructors to use appropriate educational tools and to make sure all students are fully competent in the subject matter by the end of the course.

Additional course value means using complete, highquality student kits and materials, and also means including specialised materials that add to the value of the course. One of the goals of DAN Training is not only to provide a solid training programme, but to make sure students feel confident once certified.

In order to do this, DAN Training recommends special educational tools; for example the "Act Fast Anti Choking Vest." This particular vest makes it possible for students to correctly practice back slaps and the Heimlich Manoeuvre on other students. When we introduced the "Act Fast Anti Choking Vest," the positive feedback from instructors was overwhelming! Most of them have been teaching choking skills for many years, but have never been able to efficiently demonstrate to their students how to properly assist a

choking person. With the "**Act Fast Anti Choking Vest**," students will find that when performing the Heimlich Manoeuvre correctly, a foreign object ejects out of the artificial airway of the vest. A plastic stomach with an airway imitates exactly what happens when the Heimlich is performed. Incredible that such a simple tool can teach lifesaving procedures in an easy and effective way, and at the same time create a fun training environment, producing competent and confident students.

The workshop candidates also appreciated the fact that the courses don't only focus on the "how" – how to provide CPR/first aid – but that the course also teaches why certain things need to be done, and information is explained in a clear and concise way.

The Workshop Itself

During the first part of the workshop the instructors were retrained in BLS and first aid and introduced to the BLS and First Aid course materials in detail. After one-and-a-half days of fun with solid BLS and first aid training, Guy Thomas introduced the DAN Training methodology – an easy, yet effective system that ensures that all DAN instructors teach skills in the same way, while allowing DAN instructor-trainers to evaluate DAN instructors using a standardised system.

DAN Europe's teaching methodology for instructors was well received by the workshop candidates, and the benefits of the system were immediately grasped. After a half-day of microteaching exercises, candidates were also comfortable and confident to teach the DAN First Aid skills.

The last day a marketing workshop was held. This workshop showed the advantages of the DAN website, and also how to organise and promote DAN courses successfully. After 3 days of hard work all candidates were certified as DAN BLS and First Aid instructors (or as instructortrainers), and were ready and motivated to start offering these new DAN Training courses in their own dive centres.

Diving in South Africa

What does a diver do on his day off in South Africa?

Although South Africa is known for its wine farms, Table Mountain, and game drives, on their day off, Guy Thomas and Morne Christou from DAN Europe and DAN Southern Africa decided to go diving in Cape Town.

Though they did not opt for just a "normal" dive. They had decided to go diving with one of the most fascinating marine animals in the world… the great White Shark! They chose a dive operator that also functions as a research centre working with these predators.

Here is an account of their experience…

It almost took a full day: First, the two-hour drive from Cape Town to get to the diving centre, and then about four hours at sea; but it was all very well-organised and time passed too quickly. Arriving to the centre, there were some refreshments to enjoy while registering for the dive.

Once all participants had arrived, there was a classroom session explaining all about the Great White and showing that, although its better not to meet the animals outside the shark cage, they are not as dangerous as shown in the 1975 Spielberg movie "Jaws," where Great Whites are depicted as real killing machines.

The reality is that these animals are heading for extinction, and that a lot of research needs to be done to protect and better understand the species and their behaviour.

The classroom session had a big educational value and took away the misconceptions many of us had. Obviously, they also explained how the dive was organised and what divers needed to do or could not do while in the shark cage.

Time to dive! All participants boarded on a big comfortable diving boat (with two powerful and impressive engines).
The unusual thing was that the boat was not in the water, but was pulled from the shore by a tractor.

The trip to the dive spot took about 25 minutes. Upon arrival, the divers began getting ready and the crew started with the preparations. This included attaching a 7m long to 1,5m wide cage to the side of the boat, and also starting with the "chumming." Chumming means using a liquid mix of fish ingredients to attract the sharks. Soon, two sharks arrived, and the divers got in the cage and were able to admire these impressive animals.

The dive in the cage lasted about an hour, during which the sharks passed close by many times. Every diver had more then enough time to enjoy the dive and admire the Great Whites. Unfortunately, the cage itself was not very comfortable and the sea conditions made the cage go up and down and left and right. Those who tended to suffer from seasickniss were having a difficult time during the dive and might not have enjoyed everything, but for all other divers it was, without a doubt, a fantastic experience.

Since there were more then seven divers onboard, and only seven divers can go in the cage at the same time, we also had the opportunity to see the sharks from the surface… and what a spectacular site! Two crew members used a bait (one, a wooden seal and the other, a fish head) to get the sharks in front of the cage. While underwater, you could see the sharks pass by closely, yet on the surface you could clearly see their astonishing mouths and teeth. Wow… what an experience!

After the dive we stopped at a place called Shark Alley and it became clear why there are so many sharks in the region. There were hundreds of seals sitting on rocks and swimming in the sea. Seals are much more attractive to sharks than humans!

The tractor pulled the boat back to shore and the day was over. We drove back to Cape Town enjoying the beautiful scenery and talking about the very special dive we just went on.

It indeed took us a full day, but it was worth it. Next time we'll go dive with the whales, but for now we are happy with this great experience!

While the BLS course incorporates skills such as CPR, recovery position, choking, severe bleeding and shock management, the First Aid course teaches how to perform an Illness and Injury Assessment and how to provide first aid for several possible medical conditions including hyperventilation, asthma, heart attack, altered level of consciousness, abdominal pain, allergic reactions, diabetic emergencies, poisoning, stroke, convulsions and alcohol and drug intoxication.

Other skills in the First Aid course are: wound treatment and bandaging, immobilisation techniques, emergency moves and temperature related injuries.

Guy Thomas
Director of Training and Operations, DAN Europe

Morne Christou
Marketing and Special Projects, DAN Southern Africa

Comments From The Students

Rodger H.
DAN has developed a first aid and BLS course of impeccable quality. DAN's approach towards improving the learners understanding of "why" rather than "just because the book says so" is an approach that will help develop competent first aiders."
"I have been teaching first aid for 13 years. First aid has been a part of my life ever since I was a young boy of around 11 or 12 and I have been exposed to a wide variety of first aid courses and instructional techniques. In the early stages of my teaching career, I have had the luxury of working for many of the larger first aid training companies that are known worldwide. DAN's approach to first aid and CPR most definitely falls into the category of "quality institutions" from what I have seen. Course materials, as well as instructor guidance materials are top quality and easy to understanding – proving helpful to instructors with years of experience as well as the beginner facilitator."

Tom C.
"I found the rating guide and the attention to detail in it, reducing subjectiveness to a bare minimum, a very useful tool. The guide will also give consistency in the application of standards. A nice clear cut set of standards."

Sean F.
"I'm involved (and have been for over 20 years) with various training and I have to say that the DAN Training programs, especially of late, are of the best, most relevant and practically applicable programs I've ever been involved with."

Maurice R.
"I really enjoyed every minute and it was very informative. The new DAN material is also very nice and can be a good incentive to promote the products."

Andre N.
"For me the best of the course was the practicality of the course. "The needer is dead, let's try to resus" and "heart compressions should be of a speed where the heart chambers can expel the blood and then be refilled to be expelled again," are some examples. In other words it explains the value of the practical."

Kyle
"I found the course informative, well-structured and most of all fun. I really like the fact that this course not only addresses how you do things but why, without going into too much medical detail. I feel that this will help students remember what they need to do because they will understand why they are doing things."

Michael J.
"Attending the DAN BLS and First Aid courses was one of the best training sessions I had in this specific field. The quality of the inputs and knowledge sharing from the other course participants and the facilitator, made the information so much more relevant with detailed specifics pertaining to the diving environment being highlighted and stressed. Well done DAN on yet another great achievement."