

# A different approach to learning freediving

## Introduction

[NoTanx](#) is a freediving club based in London that started in 1999, with over 100 active members, 500 pool sessions a year with multiple UK and international trips based on the premise that **enjoyment is a valid goal**. Enjoy the moment, enjoy the surroundings, interact with nature: not diving on an anonymous white rope or a photo of a computer showing a disconnected depth but *Diving for the pleasure of being there*.

I met Loic Leferme in 2001, founder of AIDA, CIPA and world record holder, who invited me to dive with him in Nice, South of France; not to dive deep but just for the enjoyment. He told me that the only way to do anything within freediving was to start a club, to bring people together, to start a journey with other people. Twenty years later No Tanx has over 100 members each on their own journey progressing together. This sounds very hippie and contrived, but the philosophy is simple: if we want the sport of freediving to grow we need to be more inclusive. Inclusive of people, their goals, skills and their abilities. This opens up to photographers, explorers, teachers, experimentalists basically bringing people together who enjoy being in nature instead of focussing on personal competitive freediving.

## Training Theory & the power of the mind

Since we started formalising our training in 2001 we quickly realised that progression is hampered by a list of personal bests. Dives completed once, with great difficulty, in perfect conditions. Much more positive is an idea of a **personal worst**. A dive that can easily be replicated, on a bad day with imperfect conditions.

### Example

*Knowing how long you can hold your breath in a warm swimming pool with flouncy music playing doesn't help with doubts and daemons when you are bouncing around in a cold sea with low vis and less than perfect conditions.*

*Knowing what you can easily do on a wet Wednesday in London, with rubbish training fins, the distraction of a Toypedo and 10 seconds breath-up will give you a deep confidence in your skills.*

Soon after implementing this ideology we found the competitive members stepped up their performances. For context, we have now coached 26 members to compete at the world championships, all of whom trained in the standard club sessions playing the standard games.

We also put great heed into neurological programming and conditional hooks.

At the very simplest level this can be "I enjoyed it last time, I will enjoy it again"(as opposed to struggling with a dive which will lead to negative connotations next time the dive is approached).

We have a simple grading system, based on knowledge, achievements and experience rather than performance.

- **Yellow** · NOVICE – All new members after completing our Foundation Course
- **Blue** · INTERMEDIATE – Members understand the basic training concepts
- **Red** · SENIOR – Have a comprehensive understanding of the skills & NTX exercises
- **Black** · COACHES – Relate activities to learning outcomes & personal development

- Purple - given to those who have developed the system & inspired people



## Weekly Training & annual trips

We made a decision not to run trips that require long haul flights, rather we focus on locations closer to home. Marcus "When someone decides to fly to Bali they are responsible for one person's CO<sup>2</sup> emissions. When I make that decision it is 12x as much." The point is to appreciate what we have around us. So with the exception of our annual trip to Marsa Alam on the Red Sea, all our trips are in Europe.

Many of our dives are in places you would not expect. These first photos are in Wraysbury, near Heathrow.



## **Edge of discovery**

As we explored more locations we required new skills to allow us to access places safely. We now use abseiling to get into lakes underground. Over the past 6 years we have discovered a wealth of locations that have previously not been dived. We now teach these skills and take people to see these places that not many people have ever seen.



