CALIFORNIA DIVING news

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As seen in the August 2003 issue

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Gear Review: **BY DALE SHECKLER**

Aquatec Air-3

Streamlining underwater for the diver is always desirable. Movement through the water is easier. Management of equipment is also simplified. As California divers, however, streamlining is not just something to do to make diving easier, it is a necessity. Every extra gauge, hose, console, inflator, or regulator, hanging from our bodies underwater is a potential snag point in the thick kelp. This is at a minimum quite annoying — in some cases dangerous. We MUST streamline.

Devices that combined a safe-second regulator ("octopus") and the power inflator to the BCD have been around for some time being widely accepted as a way to eliminate at least one hose and device from the regulator assembly.

Many divers also now dive with a signaling horn for emergency signaling on the surface. Some dive operations even require the use of these devices. So add another device to your regulator assembly.

Aquatec has introduced a device that combines all these devices into one solid tough unit with the added bonus of an underwater signaling device. At first glance the Aquatec Air-3 looks like a lot of the safe-second/power inflators combos now on the market. But the most obvious difference is the patented signalling horn that works both on the surface AND underwater.

On the surface the horn sounds much like a very loud duck call. While not quite as loud and piercing as other air horns, the volume of this horn is certainly loud enough to get the attention of somebody from several hundreds of yards away. Underwater the sound is different and more subdued but loud enough to get the attention of a buddy that has wandered off. Underwater the sound quality is more that of a metallic rattle, like an engine with a very bad ping. And the horn requires very little air to operate.

You need to do some serious streamlining. The Air-3 is a good place to start with the bonus of surface and underwater signalling.

Other than the fact that so many useful devices have been combined into one ergonomic and easy to use unit, perhaps what impressed me most about the Air-3 is it's solid construction. The housing is high strength reinforced plastic polymer which provides durability without extra weight.

Additional features include a high quality "comfort-bite" mouthpiece and a steel stainless steel pin in the air outlet to connect to BCD's "pull dump" feature.

Adding it to your BCD is simple and takes only a few minutes. It fits nearly all BCDs. The corrugated hose on the BCD must be 1 inch, pretty much standard for most BCDs. The air supply hose from the first stage is larger than standard inflator hoses but is included.

I found the Air-3 a joy and easy to install and use. The regulator breathes smooth and easy. The buttons (inflate, deflate, horn) are easy to identify by color, location and touch.

If you are going to be doing any kelp diving soon, and most California divers do, you need to do some serious streamlining. The Aquatec Air-3 is a good place to start with the bonus of surface and underwater signalling.

For more information, visit the Aquatec website at www.aquatecusa.com.

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