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No Piece of Dive Gear is Worth Your Life

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As many divers would, when Zhang Xiao Han dropped her GoPro and saw it heading for the depths, she went down after it. Sadly, she never returned.

On May 3, the 30-year-old Chinese tourist's body was recovered at 285 feet. She had been diving with Green Nirvana Resort near Kakaban Island, Indonesia.

According to a report from the *South China Post*, she was in a group of 12 divers with three guides who were returning from a dive to 30 meters. As they reached five meters below the surface, Zhang lost her grip on the camera. She decided to dive back down to retrieve it even though one of the guides instructed her not to. When she did not return soon, two guides dived to look for her, but without success.

Footage from her recovered GoPro captured her final moments as she struggled against a strong current. The video helped recovery divers locate her.

Divers take a great risk when diving deep after the end of the dive. As we'll report next month, even returning to 90 feet brings serious risks as a diver, who dropped his computer, learned when he returned with a ruptured eardrum and spent the rest of his liveaboard cruise reading books.

Guides, too, are at great risk. Charged with leading a safe dive, they honor their role and face trouble. Even a guide who returns to free the boat's anchor, armed with only the remnants of air from a previous dive, can get into trouble.

Last month, we reported that Thailand has banned new divers from using cameras because untrained divers damage the reefs. But new divers who concentrate on their cameras can also lead themselves to disaster.

Video recorders can get even experienced divers into trouble. I remember well my first baited shark dive at Sha'ab Rumi, Sudan, in 1992. Determined to get plenty of footage of the gray reef sharks swarming around me, I suddenly realized I had insufficient air to make a safe ascent to the boat with the deco stops needed. I passed a note to another diver to go back to the boat for another tank. I will always be grateful to the boat skipper for bringing that tank. The Hi8 video footage I recorded has long since been lost.

No video footage, camera kit, or item of diving equipment is worth losing your life for.

Take the loss and put it down to experience.

-- *John Bantin*