

# SWIMMING POOL TO OPEN WATER

*The swimming pool is a particularly harsh environment for kit, if it can take the punishment in the pool, it'll stand the test in open water easily.*

By James Neal

It's been a few weeks now since I embarked upon the role of UK Brand Ambassador for Huish Outdoors, and so far it's been an awesome experience. I've now had time to dive most of the new kit, but not quite all of it. I've deliberately held back a couple of cool items for next month.

I seem to have become very popular on social media all of a sudden, receiving lots

of friend requests from fellow divers all around the world. I think that's awesome and very cool indeed. I've loved seeing some of the spectacular dive sites that some of you are lucky enough to have on your doorstep... in fact I'd go so far as to say I've even been a little jealous of some of them! Consequently I've also discovered a few destinations that I'd not previously heard of; Coron island being the main one and somewhere that I have put on my 'must dive' list.



On the kit front this month I particularly wanted to tell you about the equipment I'm using in the swimming pool... why on earth would I want to pick that? Well, because that's where it all starts for most divers, and as an instructor it's where I spend a good few hours of every week.

Pool equipment tends to get neglected, which is wrong! The environment is particularly harsh and kit takes a lot of punishment when used in the chlorinated environment that is the norm for most modern swimming pools.

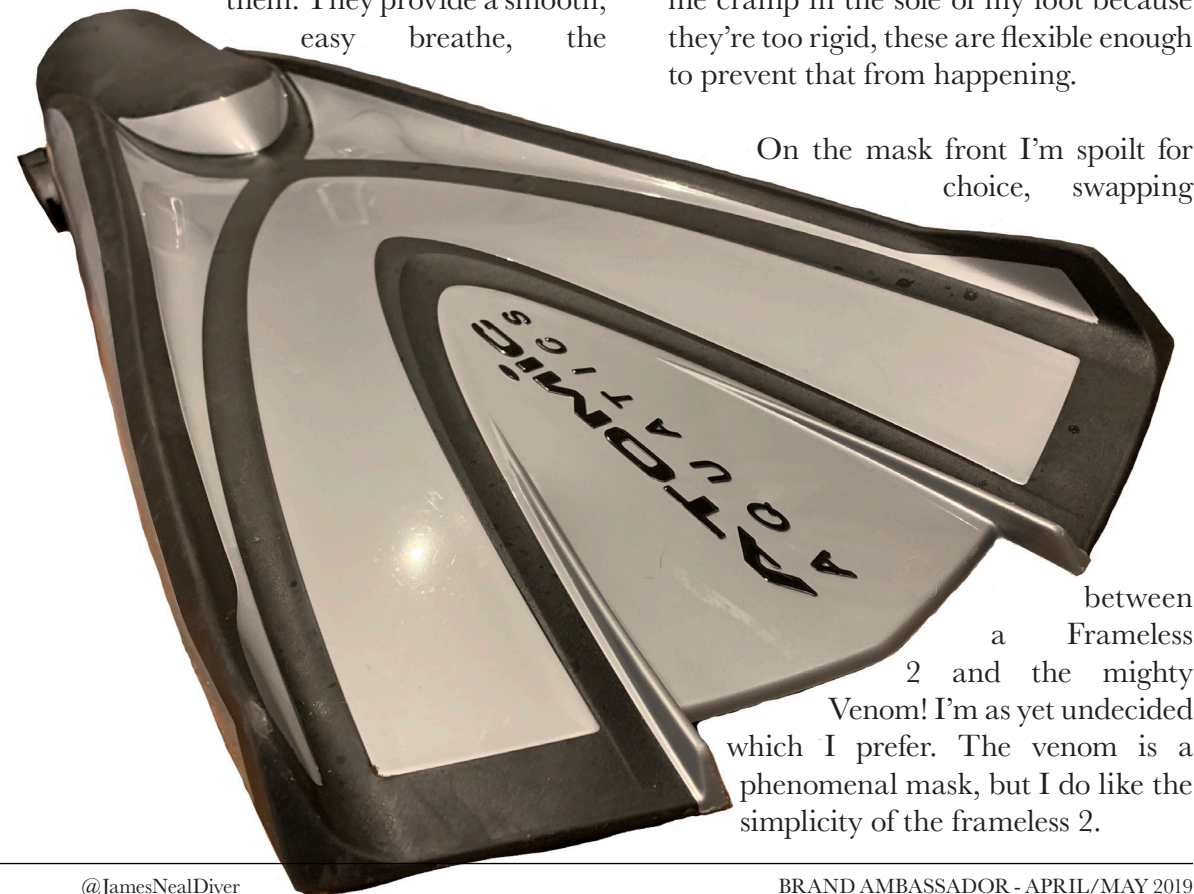
I'm using the Oceanic Alpha 10 as my primary regulator, coupled with an Alpha 8 alternate. And I must confess that I'm very happy with them. They provide a smooth, easy breathe, the

mouthpiece is comfortable and they're standing up to the rigors of instruction, being routinely forced into demonstrating freeflows by purging them deliberately to show students how to breath from them when free-flowing. They're taking the punishment in their stride.

I'm also equipped with a pair of silver and black Atomic Aquatic 'Blade' fins. These have the open heel and I compliment them with a pair of 5mm BARE Ultrawarm boots. These are fantastic.

*'The Venom is a phenomenal mask, but I do like the simplicity of the frameless 2.'*

They are incredibly warm, comfortable and flexible. A lot of boots tend to give me cramp in the sole of my foot because they're too rigid, these are flexible enough to prevent that from happening.



On the mask front I'm spoilt for choice, swapping

between a Frameless 2 and the mighty Venom! I'm as yet undecided which I prefer. The venom is a phenomenal mask, but I do like the simplicity of the frameless 2.



I like to dive a wing and consequently I'm rather spoilt by having a Zeagle Donut wing combined with a 3mm stainless steel backplate and harness. The harness has the added benefit of having two quick releases built into the webbing, making it ideal for training.

Keeping me warm during the pool training sessions is a BARE 2mm shorty wetsuit. I have to be particularly careful with any of the suits I wear as I suffer from 'contact urticaria'. It is a condition that causes an acute and immediate allergic reaction which causes swelling, redness and blistering of the skin immediately after coming into direct contact with an offending substance.

In my case I am allergic to a number of toxic glues and fragrances. Unfortunately I discovered this the hard way when a suit caused what can only be described as 3rd degree type burns to every part of my skin that came into contact with the suit. I was in agony immediately upon exiting the pool!



I'm very happy to report that all of the BARE suits are free of these horrendous industrial grade glues and I've not experienced any allergic reactions.

Topping the pool kit off is an 'Enzo' snorkel. A simple, black tube snorkel that does exactly what it says on the tin!

I like this type as it again allows me to instruct properly. Its simple design lends itself to demonstrating both the displacement and blast methods of clearing and it is also flexible enough to fold up and put in my drysuit pocket for when I am diving on a long hose hogarthian hog-loop configuration.

I have all of the pool equipment stored in two bags. The regulators are kept in a Stahlsac Molokini reg bag. This is a nice size and provides good protection from accidental damage.

The rest of the equipment I keep in a Hollis duffel bag. And it's ace!

You might think me mad for espousing the virtues of a bag... but it is genuinely awesome, I absolutely adore it, it has made my life so much easier!

I live in the beautiful Wye Valley, on a hillside, and our property has no direct vehicle access. Subsequently I have to carry all of my kit up and down, which can prove to be extremely arduous at times.

The Hollis duffel bag is fitted with padded shoulder straps as well as the standard handles, this allows the user to wear the bag in the same manner as a rucksack and so keeps both of your hands free. It is also big enough to easily fit all of the required kit, including fins, so I can now simply put all of my kit in the one bag and throw it on my back. Easy!

***'My stand out bit of kit this month has got to be the Hollis duffel bag. I absolutely adore it, it has made my life so much easier!'***

It will also prove invaluable when I next go mine / cave diving as it will make traversing into some of these sites a great deal easier. I wish I'd had one of these the last time I dived Hodge Close.

The final bit of equipment that I want to mention this month is the Oceanic OCi dive computer. I have the rather cool looking black version which I have taken to wearing all day, every day! It now

permanently adorns my wrist and has become an ever increasingly useful asset and even a fashion accessory! Again, it is being used extensively in the pool for training new divers and has proved to be something of a hit with them!

