

Accident in Grand Cenote, Tulum, Mexico as of 26 Nov. 2016

(original, NOT corrected text, as written and filed by the instructor, highlighting and introducing empty lines for structuring and for the sake of easier reading was made by Beat A. Mueller, Swiss Cave Diving)

To: IANTD

From: Alessandro Morano

Bellow is the report of the accident did happen on November 26 th 2016 in Grand Cenote , Tulum Mexico.

On November 26 th, my self and Amy Maria Arriaga went to do a fun dive in the Sac Aktun cave system starting at Grand Cenote and returning to the same point. She did ask me to take some pictures and videos during the dive to show to family and friends back in USA what she was doing. Would like to state here we did around 30 dives together since she did finish her Intro to Cave on November 2015, I did teach her Open Water Sidemount course and the Full Cave Course, also a day of Intro to Cave course refresh plus all the Cave Course dives and she performed very well, we did finish the training on November 24 th 2016.

On the dive planning were explained and agreed she would be diver number 1 all the time however the loop was completed on a single dive or not. The plan was follow the up stream line, on the end of this line we would use a reel to connect to Cuzah-Nah Loop line and just few minutes ahead another jump to the right to connect to the end of the loop line. Was agreed if we did reach the Cuzah-Nah jump line using the rule of thirds we would remove the jump and head to the exit following the line.

On the dive briefing (planning)I did remind her how we would proceed in the circuit, same as she had practice on the last days of her cave training like on the circuit in Cenote Minotauro on the 23 rd. Was also reminded to her the Cenote Hotul, positioned very close to the beginning of the Cuzah-Nah loop gap could always be used by divers as emergency exit and the cenote could be locate by the natural light coming trough the cenote opening. Also further ahead, on the left, has another small cenote named 'No Name' ,not so easy to spot from the line as the Cenote Hotul but possible to spot it covering the primary lights.

During the planning we did agree on maximum depth of 12 meters / 40 feet and if we didn't reach our jump reel installed on the beginning of the loop using one third of our gas we would turn around and return following the same line used to go into the cave. Amy did check her tanks pressure and took notes of the return pressure, estimated time, depth on her slate, We did our gear match on surface and as agreed before she would be the leader the whole dive as I was doing the videos for her. Would like to state, the 'lost diver' drill was revised in her Cave Course and was emphasized to head out if she didn't feel confident conducting a search for the other diver.

The dive did start 11:26 am, I did install our primary reel from open water around the cavern line to not disturb the divers doing the cavern tours, we were the first team going into the cave, don't have any other line connected to the cave line before ours. I did place a cookie on the line and did aloud Amy to assume the leader position as agreed in the pre-dive planning, minutes after that we did arrive to the arrows on both directions placed were the line does a 90 degrees angle and has the Passo del Lagarto jump, we did place a cookie confirming our exit.

Few minutes late, around the minute 25 into the dive we did arrive to the line gap, at this point I did show her the natural light coming from the Cenote Hotul. She did ask me for the gap after check her air supply, depth and time and I did answer her signal with the go ahead signal after check my air, time and depth. She did connect the gap, I did install a cookie with my initials 'A.M.' canceling the arrow on the end of the line and start lay line towards Cuzah-Nah Loop, she did connect the line and placed a cookie on it. Few minutes latter we did arrive on the loop jump.

She did check air pressure, time and depth and did ask me for the jump and after I do my checks I did agree. She did place a white arrow with her name before the cave arrows and did attach her jump orange line on it. She did connect her line straight to the end/start of the loop line, did install a cookie and asked me Ok getting a Ok signal back; we started to follow the line loop on the counter clockwise direction. When we did arrive to the double arrow pointing the closest way out I did ask her for her pressure to decide if we would need to mark it or would be able to complete the loop on a single dive.. She answered her pressure was 2300 psi and 2200 psi, my pressure was about the same and I told her to proceed as planned in the pre dive planning.

When we did pass by Cenote No Name I did call her attention, did cover the lights to be able to see and video record the natural light coming from the cenote. We have the cave line on our left side and the No Name Cenote on the right, she was between my self and the wall but when I look around I couldn't find her or see her light, Having a 90 degrees turn in the line around a formation blocking the view I did swim around expecting to see her just around it.

As I didn't spot her I follow the line imagining she was ahead. Arriving to our jump line still no sign of Amy, in my mind she did follow the line out and left the jump to be recovered by me as planned. I did wait 2 or 3 minutes there awaiting another time lay his line and still no sign of her, did recover the markers and line as I was sure she was ahead. As we just have discussed in her training to not stay searching for to long because usually the other diver will be out side, that means, never jeopardize her own safety.

On the jump have another jump reel installed with yellow line side by side with ours connected to a REM marker from other team I did remove our reel and the cookie what was my big mistake and I assume it and take the responsibility and consequences for my act. I still regret deeply, no words can describe it but on that moment in my mind I was sure she was ahead of me. I did remove the gap reel and cookie and leave the primary reel in place as I want to check the quickest is possible if she was ok outside as was very worried at this point because I didn't catch up with her till this point

Went to the surface and didn't see her, very worried asked a blonde girl appearing to be a guide if she saw a female diver with blue helmet come out of the cave. Right away did submerge again and head back to the cave back tracking out steps the fastest as possible, my air pressure on the start was about 1600 / 1700 psi. As I saw some lights on the short cut I went on this direction to check it and realize was the other team I saw before doing the loop jump. I did ask them using his slate if they saw a girl in sidemount wearing blue helmet alone in the cave.

They did answer 'yes' 'solo' , I did wrote 'were' and they did told me to follow the short cut and take left on the cave line on direction a Hotul using hand signals.

I did swim the quickest is possible till the gap where did check around for signals of a diver and anyways went to the cenote surface, did yell her name about 3 times, not having answer submerged again and returned to the gap where I did realize my air pressure was low about 1000 / 700 psi what did force me to live the cave.

As soon I get on the cenote entrance looked for her and she wasn't there. Got out of the water and start search for someone with tanks to borrow, got my cel phone and did try contact a fellow diver Fernando as the call didn't go trough left my cell and my pick up keys with a guide and get one of his tanks, the left one with 3000 psi and the right one from one of the members of the team I did ask for Amy on the shortcut, this tank had around 2300/2400 psi at this point have around 1:47 minutes of bottom time.

Went down again alone around 14:13 and follow the same route planned with Amy, did connect the gap and jump and also install the markers, this time did jump from the permanent marker. Follow the loop on the counter clockwise direction as initial planned with Amy.

After the restriction, very close to Cenote No Name I found the body facing up laying in her back close to the line with one of her cookies installed in the line aside of her. She didn't have the regulator in the mouth and tanks were empty; the mask was in place, I open her mount and placed my long hose into her mouth and did try push air down. She didn't have any response to it, and have some foam coming out of her

mouth. Take her to Cenote No Name surface, drag her head out of the water in the sand, remove the helmet and mask and try resuscitation but no response again, two divers in back mount configuration did arrive and one of them also tried CPR then arrived a third diver in sidemount stating he was former rescue diver and want to help.

He start give instructions and did ask me to follow him and the other guys carry the equipment out. Arriving to the jump he lose buoyance and one of Amy's fins got entangle in the cave line. At this moment I did ask the diver to handle me the body and he follow me, he did agree and I took the body to the Grand Cenote surface after 35 minutes of dive.

Arriving to the surface have cops and fellow instructors awaiting, at this moment I handle the body to the authorities and wait to do my statement.

Me, Alessandro Morato declare all the facts stated are truth.

Alessandro Morato