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Diving the Algol

September 9, 2007

Tropical storm Gabrielle was starting to churn things up off the North Carolina coast but the conditions off the New Jersey coast remained promising. Last Saturday we boarded the Independence II for our penultimate charter of the 2007 North Atlantic dive season. Captain Dan Bartone was assisted by mates Bill Trent and Dave Oldham as we left the Manasquan River and headed to the Algol. The seas were running only about two feet but we expected them to pick up during the day.

The Algol is a 459 foot “Victory Ship”. “Victory Ships” were armed transports and the Algol was built in 1943 seeing action in the Second World War, Korea and Viet Nam. The Algol was sunk as an artificial reef and is one of the largest ships to be sunk for that purpose. We chose the Algol for the dive to find some deep water. Dave Oldham tied us into the superstructure at 70 FSW. The main deck is at about 110 FSW. She is about a mile from the Stolt Degali so the sand is at about 125 FSW but next to her hull the current has washed away the bottom and we found 140 FSW. The cargo holds are wide open and we got a little better than 140 FSW but it is dark and cold and silty down there. It was not a bad day for hunting on the wreck. Dave Oldham bagged three large blackfish, Rich Connolly speared another and Tim Cherry went home with some scallops and mussels.

Adventure SCUBA is a NAUI Technical Training facility and during Saturday’s dive Joe Rogers completed his open water dives for Heliotrox certification. Heliotrox is 25% O₂, 17% helium with the balance nitrogen and along with Heli-air, 16-21% O₂, 25% helium with balance nitrogen has replaced deep air diving. The addition of the helium significantly decreases narcosis on deeper dives and is the direction NAUI Technical Operations has chosen.

Hanging on the line doing our deco at the end of the second dive we sensed the seas had picked up and indeed it had gotten pretty wild on the surface. Fortunately the Indy is a broad beamed boat with a terrific dive ladder so getting on board was not too difficult. She rides the seas well and despite seas running 3-5 feet it took only a little over an hour to get back to the dock.

This has been a very active dive season for us but we have only one more scheduled charter. Join us on Saturday, September 29th on the Independence II for more great North Atlantic diving.

