

Buying Used Dive Equipment

Copyright 2005 Michael Ross Ault, all rights reserved.

When I began diving a year ago I was somewhat constrained budget wise but wanted my own gear. I realized that for the short term renting equipment would be cheaper but was haunted by the thought that the sooner I bought my own gear the sooner it would pay for itself. Also, with the various strains of flu, SARs and who knows what else out there, the idea of spending a lot of time breathing through something many others had breathed through before me was not appealing.

Doing a little analysis, for new gear you can expect to spend around \$400-1000 USD for pre-configured setup including your buoyancy compensation device (BCD), weight system, and regulator assembly. You will need another \$100-200 USD for your mask, fins and snorkel. If you want a wet suit, gloves, hood and booties add another \$200-600 USD making a total of \$700-1800 USD just for basic equipment. Anymore a dive computer is also considered a requirement (although some still like using the dive charts) and can run anywhere from \$300-2000 USD depending on whether you want it to make cappuccino or not. So we are in the range of \$1000-3800 USD depending on your choice of gear.

My overall budget was around \$1500.00 so I decided to make a list of equipment I wanted/needed and start pricing.

The equipment I decided I needed was:

- Mask
- Fins
- Snorkel
- Weight-belt
- BCD
- Regulator
- Dive computer
- Compass
- Dive knife
- Dive net bag
- Dive gear transport bag
- (optionally if money held out) underwater camera gear

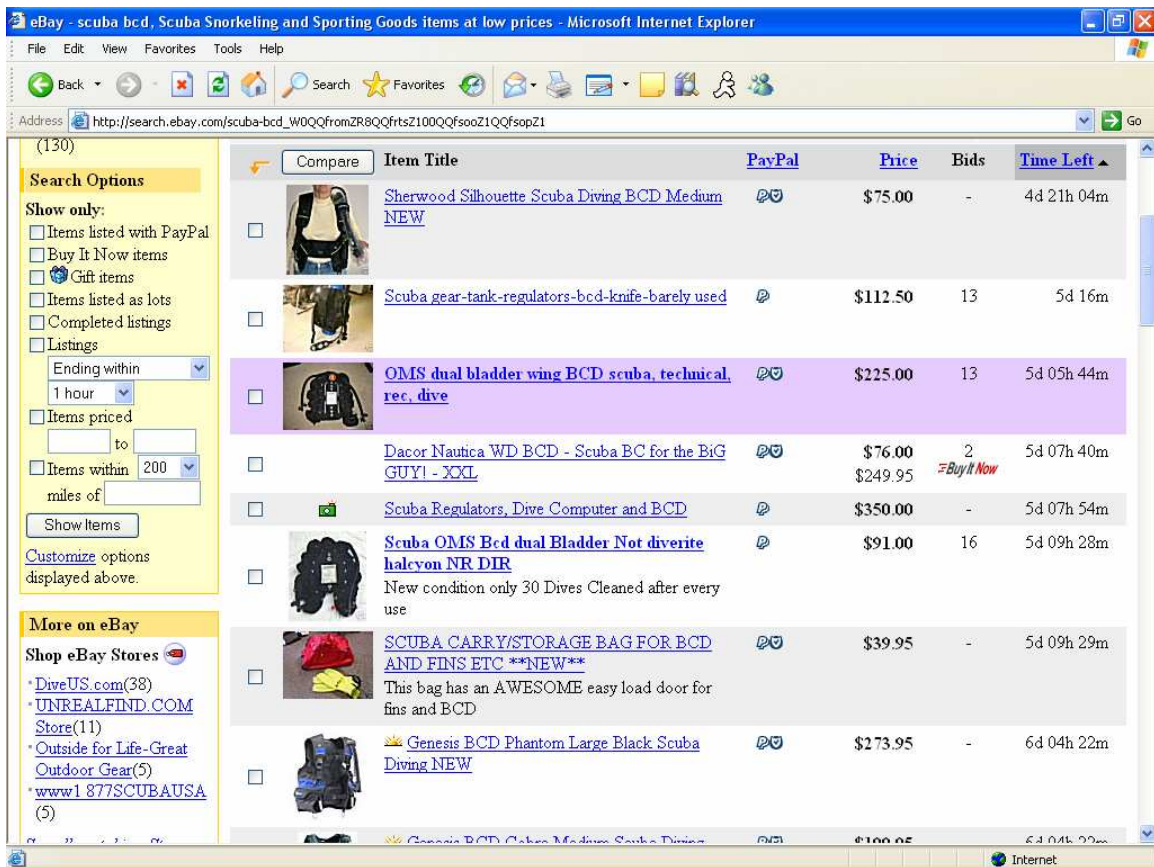
I opted to buy the mask, fins, snorkel (about \$125.00), weight belt (\$25.00) and dive knife (\$45.00) from a local dive shop since it would reduce the cost of certification to do so. I also purchased the dive net bag (\$48.00) there and the dive gear transport bag (\$89.00) from a local Samsonite outlet. These actually were the low-cost items on the above list with the total for them running about \$350 USD. I also opted to purchase a tropical Xpedition Triweight dive skin, lycra hood, reef gloves and dive booties for about \$250 USD (some how the idea of a used wetsuit that perhaps several people had sweated,

and perhaps put other bodily fluids into was distasteful). So I was now \$600 into my budget of \$1500 leaving \$900. Now I could buy a pretty nice BCD/regulator combination for that, but what if I wanted something else, say, an underwater camera setup? Also, what about the dive computer? I decided to give Ebay a look.



Here we see my store bought goodies: Lycra dive hood, dive boots, triweight dive skin, dive watch, fins, weights and weight belt, reef gloves, snorkel and mask.

For those not familiar with Ebay, it is an online website (www.ebay.com) where the world goes to buy and sell anything you can imagine, need a preserved monkey head? How about past issues of Sport Diver? Both are there. Anyway, on Ebay you locate the item you want through a search engine and it will list for you everything within your search parameters currently listed. Usually there are three types of listings, an open auction where whatever price is the final bid is what you pay, a reserve auction where the final price must be above a specific value and a fixed price sale.



Example of doing a search on “scuba bcd” on ebay, this was one of three pages of BCD entries. There were also 6 pages of scuba regulators, 3 pages of dive computers and 2 pages of scuba wet suits.

In the above figure we see examples of open bidding, reserve price bidding (notice the listing with the price but no Bids?) and a Buy it Now type auction. As a contrast, www.overstock.com had no Scuba gear at all. Once you locate your dream BCD, how should you go about buying it? You can bid along with every other diver who wants it, and probably end up driving the price up, or, you can use a bidding engine. A bidding engine monitors eBay and will place the bid you want to place just before the end of the auction, usually in the last 6 seconds. I use esnipe at <http://esnipe10.esnipe.com/> to do my bidding with a very good success rate.

Using the above service I was able to obtain a US Divers Calypso BCD with a Sherwood BruteII regulator setup with integrated octopus and BCD hose, two dive masks and a spare snorkel for \$182 USD and \$20 shipping for a total of \$202 USD. I then went after a dive computer and obtained a Mares Genius Hoseless dive computer with transmitter for \$260 USD plus \$15 USD shipping for a total of \$275. So for \$477 USD I had completed my gear list and then some. Of course I paid a local dive shop \$65 to checkout and rebuild the regulator and octopus and BCD bringing the total to \$542. That left me with \$378 in my budget.



Here we see the Calypso BCD, Sherwood regulator and spare masks, not bad for \$202.00.



Here is the Mares Genius Dive Computer with Transmitter. A \$275.00 bargain.

One of the things I wanted to do was underwater photography, so I next went hunting for some underwater camera gear. What I found was a Sea and Sea Motormarine 35 SE with two strobes (a Sea and Sea Yellow Sub 50 and an Ikelite SubStrobe M) and a mounting bracket for \$106.38 USD and \$12.50 shipping. One issue with the Motormarine 35SE is it is only good to 65 feet. So, I also bought a Nikonos IVa which is good to 160 feet for \$179 USD plus \$16 shipping and a sync cord for the Ikelite to the Nikonos for \$75. If you have been keeping up, that is \$378.88 USD for all the camera gear.



Motormarine 35 SE, Nikonos IVa, two strobes and brackets, all for \$378.88.

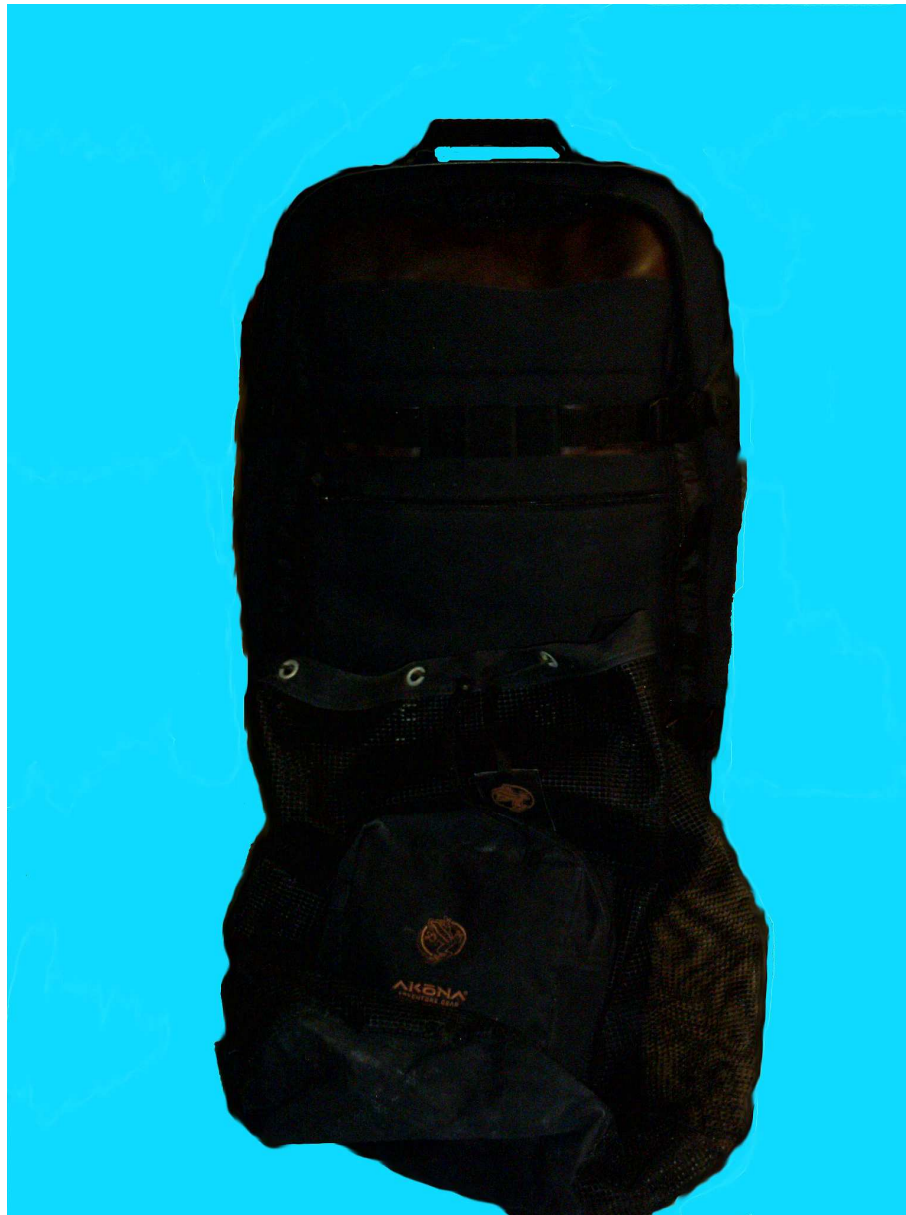
Oh, I also got a wrist compass for \$47.49 USD. I over shot my budget by \$48.37, so shoot me.

So I equipped myself with:

- Mask

- Fins
- Snorkel
- BCD
- Regulator
- Dive computer
- Weight belt
- Lycra dive hood
- Reef gloves
- Dive skin
- Dive knife
- Compass
- 2-cameras
- 4-strobes
- 1 bracket assembly (which with minor modifications fits both camera/strobe combinations)
- Dive mesh bag
- Dive gear transport bag

All for \$1547.49. I probably could have shaved the cost of the dive bags, dive skin and other items I bought new with a bit of judicious shopping on the net but hey, I liked what I saw at the dive shop.



*You need a sturdy transport gear bag and a mesh bag to carry onto the dive boat.
Total I paid for both, about \$150.00*

After about 10 dives, I replaced the high-pressure hose on the regulator assembly for about \$47.00, other than that the equipment has served me well for over two dozen dives with many more on the horizon for a fraction of the cost of all new gear.

Some might argue that since this is life support gear that buying new just makes more sense, however, all things being equal the two most important pieces of gear are the regulator, which is not a very complicated piece of machinery, and the BCD which is even less complex. As long as you have both the regulator and BCD checked out after purchase you should have no qualms about buying used. During the checkout make sure

the shop changes out all O-rings (including those in the hose joints) and checks the high pressure hose for any weak spots, bulges or obvious wear and tear.

I suggest, based on my experience, that replacing the high pressure hose during the rebuild makes sense if the used gear is over 2 years old.

I went to www.LeisurePro.com to check prices for new gear just to be sure, their BCD/regulator packages went from a low of \$299 USD to a high of \$1249 USD. The fin, mask, snorkel combinations (some included booties and gloves) went from \$49.95 to \$299.95. The equivalent dive computer ran between \$700-800 USD. An equivalent camera to the 35SE with a single strobe about \$294.00, to the Nikonos IVa with a single strobe, \$499.95. All in all I would say I did pretty well.



At LeisurePro this would run about \$100. About what I got it for with my certification class.

As you can see you don't need to spend a fortune to get reasonable dive equipment. By doing proper research and knowing prices, you can make educated decisions about the purchase of dive gear, either used, or new and fill out your kit without emptying your pocket book!

Author Bio:

Mike Ault is a 49 year old open water certified diver from Alpharetta, Georgia. Mike has about 50 dives to his credit so far in a little over a year and a half of active diving. Mike is a full time Oracle Database Consultant and author with Burleson Consulting (www.remote-dba.net) and Rampant Books (http://www.rampant-books.com/authors_ault_books.htm) .