

# The Sra Keow Controversy

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I was recently one of the 2 deep divers to look for the bottom of Sra Keow, a cave system in Thailand. That was the 3rd expedition I did on the deeper part of this cave system. Questions were raised about the maximum depth I reached during this dive. Some people who weren't even there questioned on various Internet forums we never reached the depth we mentioned on our press release (240m/785ffw).

I normally don't participate in this kind of useless discussions, as people are more interested by the fight than by the actual facts. These Internet fights end up nowhere. They require plenty of time, a big load of aggressiveness and a full time Internet connection. I have none of them. I spend most of my time on dive boats or traveling. In this case though, some of my friends and students convinced me to clarify the story. If people want to have an objective opinion, they need both sides of the story. Reasonable and wise people can't judge someone's action without that.

As Ben Reymenants, the other deep diver in Sra Keow, stated at the beginning of his dive report, before the exploration, all the deep divers agreed on a strict policy about public communication: the deepest depth reached by any diver will be the official maximum depth without distinction between the deep divers involved. This policy, already used by several teams of deep divers, has a very simple goal: avoiding useless competition, stress and unnecessary risk-taking within the team, to avoid any diver to try to be more "under the spotlights" by being the deepest one.

By not publishing the maximum depth reached by every single diver, we thought that it'd be the most reasonable decision to increase safety in an already risky exploration. The mission was to efficiently explore the bottom of the cave, not to encourage any "cow-boy attitude".

Why did we decide to do that? Because during previous expeditions, some team members went deeper than others and it created bad feelings. So we decided about this communication policy. I'm sure it was a very good way to reduce the stress level within the deep divers. Solo explorers don't have to do that but I think it's a wise attitude when it's a team of deep explorers.

It wasn't a record dive. All the equipment we used (rebreather, deco software, etc) has been used much deeper by other people so there was absolutely no benefit in

presenting wrong information.

I went to 226m/741ffw as proved by my F1 depth gauge.

Ben went to 239m/784ffw but doesn't have any proof of that. His F1 depth gauge that worked on the bottom suddenly failed during the ascent and doesn't keep any record of this dive.



But who actually cares! Only cave explorers can really understand the passion we can have in looking for the end of a passageway in a cave system only a few divers explored.

Unfortunately Internet forums are too often used to solve personal conflicts or to be aggressive, safely protected by a computer screen. Being an Internet Forum "Crusader" is sometimes a way to deal with affective problems (recent divorce, mid-life crisis, tech diver jealousy, vanity, etc).

Fortunately, for many divers, Internet forums are used to get information about diving or to share one's passion for this wonderful activity.