

STAR CERTIFICATION

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Today was one of the young diver's birthdays. There were 14 candles on the cake in the shape of a shark fin.

Everyone gathered in a circle to get a tasty looking slice of cake. Nella said that after some years of fun in the pool and some nice open water dives, it would soon be time for the birthday boy to switch to adult diving when he turns 15. That did not sound like good news to Skubba. Could you not always stay a youth diver?

"You will still see your friends during pool training sessions and as an adult diver you are going to be allowed to do so much more", she said. He would be allowed to dive deeper and longer underwater. And he will be allowed to dive on wrecks, and do night dives, which youth divers are not yet allowed to do.

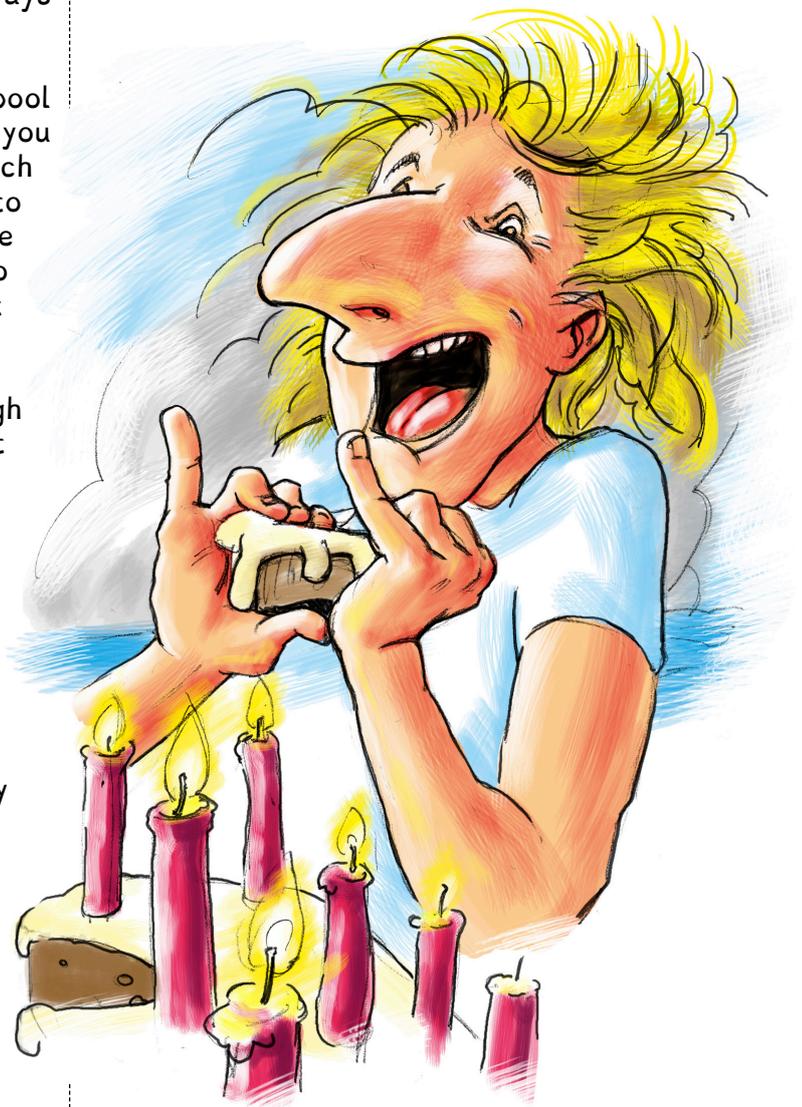
"Certifications would be earned through exams very much like the ones done at school, and tests will be done in the pool and open water. The certifications will no longer be called Dolphins, but awarded by Stars. The courses begin with one-star and go up to a four-star diver certification. If he wanted to and did his best, he could, after some years, become an instructor himself. And who knows, he could start teaching the next youth divers and be their buddy on their first dives in the water."

The birthday boy liked the sound of that, and so did his friends.

He would also no longer have to dive with a youth dive leader. He would be able to meet and buddy up with other adult divers for his dives. Of course, this did not mean that he could no longer dive with Nella or the other instructors, but he would no longer be obliged to do so.

If he made the decision to switch over straight away as he was now allowed to do, Nella would take him through some things about adult diving. After a bit of explaining, she would

exchange his Golden Dolphin into a One-Star dive certification for adults. Youth Divers are very much real divers and their dolphins have the same value of a one-star. Their logged dives are valid just the same as dives for adults. Adult divers only use another type of logbook. The one-star certificate would just be his first 'big' diving cert! This step was the beginning to new diving experiences and adventures.



Skubba started smiling again. He understood that this was not a farewell to this great group of friends, but one step further into the sport they all loved so much: diving. However, for now, he would dive with them and eat cake on his special day.