

Breaking Barriers : How I Traded my Life Ring for GUE Fins



After finishing my Bachelor's in Marine Sciences at Alexandria University, I was drafted into military service as an officer. I felt like a fish thrown into the middle of the desert. The moment I was out, I knew I had to get back to the blue.

[The "Life Ring" Phase](#)

I started a marine biology diploma with "Dr. Ahmed Shawky," a true pioneer who suggested I take my PADI Open Water course (the "First Star") to get closer to my passion.

It wasn't easy. Actually, it was a comedy of errors. It was winter in Hurghada—cold water and high waves. I was so terrified that I jumped into the water wearing a 5mm wetsuit, a life

jacket, and a life ring. I wouldn't let go of the boat ladder! But the drama didn't end there: During my first dive, I panicked and almost "killed" my instructor by pulling the regulator right out of his mouth!

[Finding My Path in Dahab](#)

I didn't realize then that it was just the beginning. A few months later, I joined "Thalassians" as a community engagement officer in Dahab. That's where I found Scuba Seekers dive center. I started joining cleanup dives led by Cap. Cristina, whose pre-dive briefings I admired so much. I was fascinated by how she could glide backward underwater while managing a whole group of us collecting plastic.

Determined to improve, I finished my Advanced and Rescue courses with Cap. Amr Zakaria, who helped me find my confidence. At the center, I'd watch Cap. Mahmoud Esmat practicing land drills and finning techniques with his students and think to myself: "These people are true aliens."

[The GUE Scholarship](#)

Financial constraints led me back to academia for a Master's in Environmental Management of Climate Change, but I never lost sight of the GUE "aliens." My first scholarship application in 2024 was rejected, but I applied again the next year. This time, I was chosen as one of the top 10 applicants for the 2026 class of the GUE Legacy Project

After an inspiring mentoring session with Jenn, I was offered a GUE Fundamentals course with Cap. Mahmoud Esmat at my favorite home base, Scuba Seekers. It felt like a family reunion, especially seeing Capt. Sameh Sokar, the owner, who has been incredibly supportive.

[Survival of the "Basic Fundies"](#)

Don't let the name "Basic" fool you. GUE Fundamentals was one of the most intense experiences I have had.



- * The Schedule: 4 days starting at 7:30 AM and ending at 7:00 PM.
- * The Gear: A completely new setup—wing and long hose.
- * The Training: 6 dives and hours of theory on nitrox and decompression.

The video reviews were useful. Watching yourself on camera while Mahmoud provides surgical feedback is the best way to learn; he has a way of putting his finger exactly on your weak points. I managed every skill except the frog and backward kicks, earning a "Provisional Certification."

[The Final Push](#)

I wasn't going to stop there. With the help of Capt. Mohamed Banna, @miragedivers I did another 4 dives of non-GUE training, practicing until I finally mastered the backward kick, even in a countercurrent!

[Gratitude & The Road Ahead](#)

I am deeply grateful for the financial support from GUE. For many, financial hurdles are the only thing stopping them from making a real impact. This scholarship removed that wall and gave me a professional tool—not just a hobby.

This isn't the end; it's the beginning. Diving isn't just "for fun" for me anymore. Mastering these elite skills allows me to lead impactful projects, engage in citizen science, and raise awareness among local communities to protect our precious marine environment.

I am already making plans to return to Scuba Seekers soon for my GUE upgrade to a full pass. I'm ready to keep pushing my limits and refine my skills to the highest level.



Huge thanks to GUE, Jenn,
Cap. Sameh Sokar, Cap.
Mahmoud Esmat, and the
Scuba Seekers family for
believing in the guy who once
wouldn't let go of the ladder.

See you in the blue! 🤿 EG

