

On Saturday, June 14, 2003, David VanZandt, Cindy LaRosa, and Kevin Magee did their first dive of the season in Lake Erie off Cleveland. They were aboard Dave's boat "Sea Dragon," which is based in Cleveland, OH. The boat had just been put in the water the previous day, and they were underway after a late start for some final work on the boat and repairs to Kevin's dive equipment. The wreck visited was the "117th Street Wreck." Heavy rain and continuous storms for most of the spring have made the lake appear muddy close to shore, but this wreck was far enough out that there was only green water around it. It was too late in the day to run farther, so it was decided to see how this wreck appeared. Weather conditions were hazy but bright with no wind and flat seas, and the air temperature was 70 deg F. It was one of the first decent diving days of the year except for the millions of midges which soon coated every surface of the boat. Squished midges were soon all over the dive gear and people as well, but at least the biting black flies from previous years were nowhere to be seen.

After hooking into the wreck, everyone suited up and entered the water. Surface visibility was about 5' with a water temperature of 60 deg F. Upon descending, it was discovered that visibility went to maybe 2'-3' and it got dark below 25'. Upon reaching the bottom at 45', the anchor line was found to be completely slack from the lack of wind, and almost no visibility or ambient light existed. A couple of wooden boards were seen, and reels were run in an attempt to see more of the wreck. Dave went one way, but Kevin and Cindy couldn't find him or his line in the bad viz, so Kevin hooked off his reel and went in another direction. Maximum visibility away from the anchor increased to maybe 2'-3' at best, but almost nothing was seen. Everyone arrived back at the anchor line at about the same time, and the dive ended. Bottom temperature was about 55 deg F, but no thermocline was detected.

After attempting to pull up the anchor, it was discovered to be stuck in the wreck. Fortunately, we divers are equipped to deal with this little problem, so Dave suited up and went back down. The slack line was discovered to have wrapped itself around several timbers and underneath at least one board. He freed the line and slowly rode the anchor up to the surface after giving three tugs on the line. The sun was setting in a beautiful sunset, and it was decided to head back to port. The water conditions still need to improve before the dive season really begins - at least for the near shore wrecks. Maybe the viz is better farther out....