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Freediving Legend Molchanova Presumed Dead After Dive

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Natalia Molchanova

Freediver Natalya Molchanova, 53, is presumed dead after failing to resurface during a recreational dive off the eastern coast of Spain on Sunday.

Molchanova was descending with three friends in a routine dive to approximately 30 to 40 meters when she went missing, according to AIDA, the international association of freediving, and Molchanova's family.

> We've lost our Queen. There will never ever be another like Natalia Molchanova. Much love to her family #freediving #legend
>
> — Ben Noble (@FreedivingBenny) August 4, 2015

Yury Somov, an instructor with the Russian Freediving Federation and a colleague of Molchanova, told news portal BFM.ru that the circumstances of her disappearance were strange. According to Somov, Molchanova surfaced after her first dive, then descended again and disappeared, but the rest of the group failed to notice her and provide necessary assistance.

He pointed out that Molchanova was a great teacher and always took necessary safety precautions.

Somov also tried to put to rest any speculations that Molchanova's health played a role in the accident.

"I can tell you that her functional state was twice as good as mine, that's for sure. For Natalia, 40 meters was nothing, she went down to 70 meters the other day," Somov said, according to BFM.

> Horrible news for the freediving world. Ours thoughts and prayers go out to Alexey and his family. http://t.co/jlQPf8smQe
>
> — Ashley Chapman (@EvolveFreediver) August 4, 2015

Late Tuesday, after a two-day search, Molchanova's son Alexey Molchanov, who is also a freediver, made an announcement that she is not expected to be found alive: "It seems she'll stay in the sea, I think she would like that." Molchanov said in the announcement.

Molchanova was considered by many to be the greatest freediver of all time. After a career as a competitive swimmer, she took up freediving at the age of 40 and proceeded to break numerous records in the sport. In 2013, she became the only woman ever to break the 100-meter barrier, descending to a depth of 101 meters. She also holds the record for the deepest dive without the use of fins and for "static apnea," in which a diver floats face down in the water holding her breath. Molchanova's record was nine minutes, two seconds. An instructor at the Russian State University of Physical Education, Sport, Youth and Tourism, Molchanova was also the author of numerous instructional manuals for free-divers and her own training program.

> I can't imagine the loss that @MolchanovAlesha & his family are feeling. He had the best dive buddy....see this post from April.
>
> Posted by Tanya Streeter, TV Personality/Freediver/Environmentalist on Tuesday, August 4, 2015

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