

# You In Shape

## Diving force

This pro scuba instructor never gave up on her goal to get paid for her passion, and she still continues to follow her dreams.

By Mallory Creveling  
Photographs by Dustin Snipes



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*“As a pro female diver, I’ve had to work twice as hard to be appreciated half as much.”*

Szilvia Gogh was 13 when she plunged into the world of orienteering diving, tempted by a friend who was also interested in trying it out. The sport is a kind of underwater scavenger hunt: Players (individually or in teams) use scuba gear and compasses to race to locations below sea level, never surfacing to get their bearings. “I loved it from day one,” says the native Hungarian. “I was great at navigating lakes, even in the worst visibility conditions, and taking that first breath underwater made me feel like I could do anything.” Five years and 500 dives later, Szilvia, who’d become certified for advanced open-water and rescue scuba, took her first dip in the ocean on a trip to the Greek island of Corfu. Exhilarated by the experience, Szilvia returned home determined to make diving her profession and become a full-time instructor. But her mom, worried about career prospects, urged her to go to college and pursue scuba as her hobby.

**NAME:** Szilvia Gogh

**AGE:** 37

**PROFESSION:** Scuba diver, stunt double

**HOME:** Los Angeles

**SHAPE READER:** 10 years

## DEEPLY SERIOUS

After attending jewelry-making school, Szilvia enrolled at a university in Budapest. But she continued to dive in her free time, and as part of an internship during her last semester, she attained the first level of scuba-teacher certification offered by the Professional Association of Diving Instructors (PADI). After graduation, Szilvia traveled the world acquiring the credentials necessary to become a top-tier instructor. Finally, in 2002, she was accepted into the only U.S. PADI program that certifies divers as course directors, the most prestigious pro ranking. Two weeks after she began classes in Newport Beach, CA, she completed the course—making her, at age 25, the youngest female ever to earn the title. This enabled Szilvia to teach scuba skills to anyone, including other pros, and officially elevated her passion from “hobby” to full-time career. “People were skeptical I could make money as a diver,” she says. “But that only pushed me more.”

## DOUBLE TIME

Soon after Szilvia became a course director, she got a job at a scuba store in Burbank, CA, a hot spot for film studios. There, she met a movie executive and got work as a diving extra. Before long, she was teaching stunt coordinators and playing a stunt double in features like *Big Miracle*. Around the same time, Szilvia launched miss-scuba.com, a site designed to unite women from around the world who share an enthusiasm for scuba adventures. She also started an accessories line at goghjewelrydesign.com that incorporates gems she picks up globe-trotting. Szilvia’s love of diving even helped her find the love of her life: In 2002, she met her husband on an expedition. “Sharing my career with him makes it all the more fulfilling,” she says.

## AQUA WOMAN

When Szilvia isn’t working, she’s doing yoga and playing with her 6-month-old son. But she’s still always up for opportunities to “get wet.” Since her first dive 24 years ago, Szilvia has descended into the waters on all seven continents. “Only 35 percent of pro scuba divers are women, so I’ve had to work twice as hard to be appreciated half as much,” she says. “But I put in the time and effort and made my dreams come true.”