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12th MAN FLAG ‘FLIES’ UNDERWATER IN SHARK EXHIBIT AT POINT DEFIANCE ZOO & AQUARIUM
Divers take Seahawks spirit into shark exhibit for a super-cool Blue Thursday rally

TACOMA, Wash. – Imagine a squad of sharks as the Seattle Seahawks, with one darting to and fro like quarterback Russell Wilson evading defensive linemen and another making swift moves and turns akin to cornerback Richard Sherman chasing down a New England Patriots wide receiver.



Tacoma’s “Seasharks” and divers from Point Defiance Zoo & Aquarium lent huge support to the Seattle Seahawks this morning with an underwater rally in support of our world champion football team.

Volunteer diver John Weldon and Diving Safety Officer Heidi Wilken “flew” a large 12th Man flag in the zoo’s South Pacific Aquarium shark exhibit in support of the team and its legions of fans.

If fish could cheer, the sharks would have been rooting for the Hawks, too. Instead, Weldon pointed out that they’re a lot like the Seahawks: swift, agile, possessing great eyesight and always ready for action.

Zoo staff temporarily renamed the collection of 16 sharks of five different species the “Tacoma Seasharks” for the super occasion.

(We’d swear the blacktip reef shark was wearing a No. 25 jersey and temporarily going by the name Sherman – as in All-Pro Seahawks cornerback Richard Sherman. Blacktip reef sharks are often seen in schools of six to 12 individuals. They’re constantly active, and they’re known for their leaping and spinning abilities when chasing prey, sometimes leaping high out of the water. Think Sherman hurling himself off the turf and reaching up, up, up to tip an opponent’s pass or snatch the football out of the air for an interception.)

With the Big Game just three days away, the mini-rally drew a few dozen fans, many of them small children who stuck their noses to the aquarium’s huge viewing glass to get a better view.

Flying the 12th Man flag in the South Pacific Aquarium with the sharks was a labor of Seahawks love for Weldon, a volunteer diver who is a huge fan and wanted to show his Hawks Pride in an unusual way.

The rally also put the spotlight on Point Defiance Zoo & Aquarium’s sharks, which help visitors learn about the perils facing sharks in the world’s oceans. Millions of sharks are killed each year for their fins.

The zoo’s Eye-to-Eye Shark program allows visitors as young as 8 to dive in the aquarium with the sharks and learn more about these magnificent animals. No diving experience is necessary. More information about the program may be found at www.pdza.org/dive.

More information about shark conservation may be found at www.pdza.org/savesharks.

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Point Defiance Zoo & Aquarium, the Northwest’s only combined zoo and aquarium, promotes responsible stewardship of the world’s resources through education, conservation, research and recreational opportunities. The zoo, a division of Metro Parks Tacoma, is accredited by the Association of Zoos & Aquariums (AZA) and the Alliance of Marine Mammal Parks and Aquariums (AMMPA).