

**ACTIVITY:** Surfing  
**CASE:** **GSFAF 1982.09.27**  
**DATE:** Monday September 27, 1982  
**LOCATION:** The incident took place at a public beach on Patrick Air Force Base, Brevard County, Florida, USA.

**NAME:** John Cibelli  
**DESCRIPTION:** He is a 20-year-old male from Melbourne. He works for Rockwell International at the John F. Kennedy Space Center.



### **BACKGROUND**

**MOON PHASE:** First Quarter, September 25, 1982

**ENVIRONMENT:** No sharks were seen prior to the incident, but the surfer was later told that many sharks are spotted along the Florida coast near the air base during the autumn. "If I would have known I wouldn't have been out there," the surfer said.

**DISTANCE FROM SHORE:** 200 feet.

**TIME:** 13h30

**NARRATIVE:** John Cibelli was surfing with his brother, Mike. He said he was paddling on his surfboard when the shark grabbed his left leg dangling in the water and pulled him into the ocean. He said the shark released him when he punched it. "I gave a yell and swung. He let go when I hit him." His brother helped him reach shore.

**INJURY:** The surfer sustained lacerations to his left leg; there was a gash from his knee to mid-calf.

**TREATMENT:** The surfer was transported by ambulance to the base hospital and later to Holmes Medical Center in Melbourne where the injury was repaired with 70 or 75 stitches and he was released.

**SPECIES:** Not identified. According to the surfer, the shark was 1.5 metres [five feet] in length.

**SOURCES:** Miami Herald, September 28, 1982, Palm Beach edition, page 2B; St. Petersburg Times, September 19, 1982, page 18

# It will take more than a shark bite to scare this surfer; he's ready to go again

Compiled from AP, UPI wires

**COCOA BEACH** — John J. Cibelli was lying on his surfboard, ready to catch a big wave, when a five-foot shark jumped from the water and grabbed his left leg.

"He dragged it down under the water and his tail came up and hit my face when I was fighting him," the 20-year-old college student said of the Monday attack. "I turned and swung and hit him."

Aided by his brother, Mike, Cibelli paddled to shore slowly and received emergency treatment from paramedics. Later, it took 70 stitches to close several gashes in his left calf, said Sgt. Ed DePuy of the Brevard County Sheriff's Department.

**THE MELBOURNE** resident was reported in good condition after treatment at the Holmes Regional Medical Center.

*'I think it's a freak thing. I don't think it could happen again. I was just in the wrong spot at the wrong time. It'll stop me for a month, but gradually I'll get back into it. I'll be extremely cautious.'*

— John J. Cibelli

Cibelli said he expects to be kept off his surfboard for about a month because of the attack. Then he will again go surfing.

"I think it's a freak thing," Cibelli said. "I don't think it could happen again. I was just in the wrong spot at the wrong time. It'll stop me for a month, but gradually I'll get back into it."

"I'll be extremely cautious," he added.

**CIBELLI, A QUALITY** control expert for Rockwell International at the John F. Kennedy Space Center, was attacked off the shore of a public beach on Patrick Air Force Base, a spokesman for the base said.

"I got a little pain in my leg," Cibelli said. "It was a bad day, not a very good day at all."

Cibelli said he was paddling on his surfboard about 200 feet offshore when the shark grabbed his leg, which was dangling in the water, and pulled him into the ocean.

"I gave a yell and swung," Cibelli said of the attack. "He let go when I hit him."

Cibelli saw no sharks before the attack, but he was told later that many sharks are sighted along the Florida coast near the air base during autumn.