

**ACTIVITY:** Spearfishing

**CASE:** GSAF 1985.05.08 / SA-336

**DATE:** Wednesday May 8, 1985

**LOCATION:** The incident took place in the Indian Ocean on Selection Reef off Umdloti, KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa.

**NAME:** Sikketho Denge

**DESCRIPTION:** Denge, an experienced spearfisherman and has been diving since 1968, mostly at Selection Reef. He is a 1.6-metre tall, 39-year-old male.

#### **BACKGROUND**

**MOON PHASE:** Full Moon, May 4, 1985. Third Quarter, May 11, 1985

**NARRATIVE:** Sikketho Denge was spearfishing on Selection Reef when he shot a queen mackerel, *Scomberomorus plurilineatus*, and placed it on the end of his float.

When a 30-kilogram shark attempted to take the snoek, he shot the shark. The shark became “frenzied”, said Denge, and bit him.

**INJURY:** The shark tore a hole in the diver’s wetsuit and he sustained puncture wounds in his right arm.

**SPECIES INVOLVED:** The diver was unable to make a positive identification of the species of shark involved, but thought it may have been a dusky shark, *Carcharhinus obscurus*.

**NOTE:** This was a provoked incident. The diver was bitten by the shark *after* he shot it.

**INVESTIGATOR:** Marie Levine



*Sikketho Denge*

# Divers in brush with big shark

**Own Correspondent**  
DURBAN — Two young skindivers had a night-mare encounter with a giant Great White shark off Tinley Manor Beach on Sunday when the 4.5 m long predator swallowed the fish they had speared — and came close to swallowing them too.

Gary Wakeling (19), a Durban University student, today described the terror that he and his black diving companion felt. His diving companion was a young Pondo man known only as Skitool who has been diving since 1962 and lives at Umdhlo-ti.

"I had just speared a bronze bream and was pulling it in when suddenly I felt this tremendous pressure on my line and I saw it go taut. I knew immediately my fish had been taken by a shark, but when I saw it come cruising below me, I could hardly believe my eyes. "Skitool swam towards me and we kept dead still

in the water as the shark slowly moved toward us." Gary said he then backed his speargun and dropped slowly away, while Skitool kept his speargun aimed at the shark's head. as he backed away he saw it open its mouth and lunge towards the fish which Skitool had speared and were dangling from his float line.

"As it took Skitool's fish he pulled out his knife and used it to cut his float line free. Then as I watched, I saw the water boil around Skitool and I thought "He's had it." "But when the water settled I saw Skitool was all right. We managed to swim back to the ski-boat."

*Star 4/1/72*

8 June 1986

# Spearfishing Sikketho wants revenge on shark

DAILY NEWS REPORTER

Sikketho Dongo stood with seawater dripping off him on to Umfoloti Beach, a sea pike and snake at his feet, and claimed he was the first and only African spearfisherman in the country.

Falling out his wet suit to warm up in the winter sun the fit young Pondoland was not boasting when he made this statement — he was attempting to answer curious questions about Africans being reluctant to swim underwater.

"I started diving in 1968 and I have never met another African who spearfishes — although some dive for crayfish," said Sikketho.

After a harrowing encounter with a 4m long Blue Point shark last weekend which gobbled nine fish off his float, he was still more than eager to spend three hours in the water at Selection Reef yesterday with Natal diver Mark Roxborough.

"I am going back to that place to find that shark next weekend, and if I see him again I am going to shoot him with a spear with no barb."

Some people might think Sikketho crazy, but diving is his life, and when talking about the sea his eyes light up as he gesticulates to recount his underwater experiences.

Although not fully articulate in English, Sikketho managed to convey his passion for shooting fish. He works as a general handyman in Umfoloti but spends a few hours in the water every

day, and on weekends spearfishes with Durban divers who take him deeper out to sea and up the coast in a skiboat.

Born not far from the sea in the Pondoland magisterial district of Bizana "about 12 years ago", Sikketho started off as a conventional rod fisherman.

But that changed when he moved to Natal and saw a short film by Vegliam about spearfishing.

"I saw the diver go under the water and shoot the fish he wanted, and after that I thought rod fishing was stupid."

So Sikketho sold his fishing rod and bought his first speargun from a Durban sports shop, but he still had a lot to learn.

In the beginning it was difficult. I was not frightened of the water because I used to catch crayfish. But going deeper — one foot, two feet, three feet — it was slow."

His first victim was a lemonfish shot off the Franskel coast. A modest start, but now Sikketho goes out with the best of Natal's underwater ages.

"I can dive 15 metres deep now and have five spearguns. If I don't go home to Pondoland to visit my wife and twin children next month, I might go spearfishing to the Cape with a friend.

"I hear the water is very cold, but the fish are very big."

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**SOURCE:** Durban Daily News, June 8, 1986