

ACTIVITY: Treading water

CASE: [GSAF 1986.03.15](#) / SA-346

DATE: Saturday March 15, 1986

LOCATION: The incident took place in the Indian Ocean at North Beach, Durban, KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa.

29°51,1'S, 31°02,4'S



NAME: Anton Bouwer

DESCRIPTION: He is a 26-year-old male, 1,92 metres tall and weighs 102 kilograms. He was blonde, lightly tanned, and clad in navy blue PT shorts. He had no injuries before the incident.

BACKGROUND

WEATHER: The day was sunny, hot and humid. Temperatures ranged from 24° to 31°C and at 16h15 it was estimated to be about 27°C, and humidity was approximately 75%. At 15h00 there was 2/8 cloud cover and a light six-knot easterly wind was blowing.

MOON PHASE: First Quarter, March 18, 1986

SEA CONDITIONS: A north-to-south current was flowing, there was a metre swell, the water was slightly murky, and the sea temperature was estimated to be 25,6°C. Mean high tide was at 18h09.

CONDITION OF THE SHARK NETS: All of the Durban shark nets were serviced and found to be in good order on the morning of March 14th. No sharks had been caught. After the incident bathing was banned and two additional nets were laid. (These nets, used when a shark incident takes place, have a smaller mesh than the nets routinely used). On the morning of the 17th, the bathing ban was lifted; no sharks had been caught in any of the nets laid at Durban.

ENVIRONMENT: No dolphins were seen.

DISTANCE FROM SHORE: 30 metres

DEPTH: Two metres

TIME: 16h15

NARRATIVE: About 200 people were on the beach, 80 were in the sea. Some bathers were inshore, many were further seaward of Anton Bouwer. He had been in the water for an hour and was hanging in the water, facing seaward, waiting for a wave when he felt something grab his right foot. "It wasn't painful at all, it just felt like a blow; like something hit my foot with stones on both sides," said Bouwer. "There was a swirl of water around me but I didn't see anything. I could feel there was something alive down there. I immediately swam back to the beach."

INJURY: The injury was confined to the top of his right foot. There was a deep three-centimetre [-shaped laceration above the instep and behind the first toe. Adjacent to the laceration were several shallow closely-spaced scratches. On the outside of the foot there

was a cluster of closely-spaced lacerations. These lacerations suggest that a small shark less than a metre in length was responsible.

FIRST AID: Life-savers disinfected and placed a temporary dressing on the wounds. Afterwards he was taken to Addington Hospital; he arrived there about ten minutes after the incident.

TREATMENT: Bower was not admitted to the hospital; he was treated on an outpatient basis. His wounds were cleaned and dressed, he was started on a course of antibiotics, and was referred to his own doctor.

SPECIES INVOLVED: In view of the numbers of small carcharhinid sharks normally found in Natal's inshore waters at this time of year and the similarity of bite patterns produced such sharks it seems likely that a small carcharhinid shark less than a metre in length was responsible for Bower's injury.

SOURCE: Interviews with Anton Bower

CASE INVESTIGATORS: Marie Levine and Ellen Kerns, Natal Sharks Board.