

ACTIVITY: Windsurfing

CASE: [GSAF 1995.09.28](#)

DATE: Thursday September 28, 1995

LOCATION: The incident took place in the Pacific Ocean off Davenport Landing (24 km north of Santa Cruz), California, USA.

37°00.2'N: 122°12.3'W

NAME: Michael J. Sullivan

DESCRIPTION: He is a 25-year-old male. He was clad in a black wetsuit with purple accents.

WINDSURFER: A clear Mylar sail and trimmed with a red and black margin.

BACKGROUND

WEATHER: The sky was clear, the result of a strong 20-knot wind blowing from the northwest.

MOON PHASE: Waxing Crescent, 17% of the Moon was illuminated.

SEA CONDITIONS: As result of the wind, the water was rough with two- to three-metre "wind waves" on the sea surface.

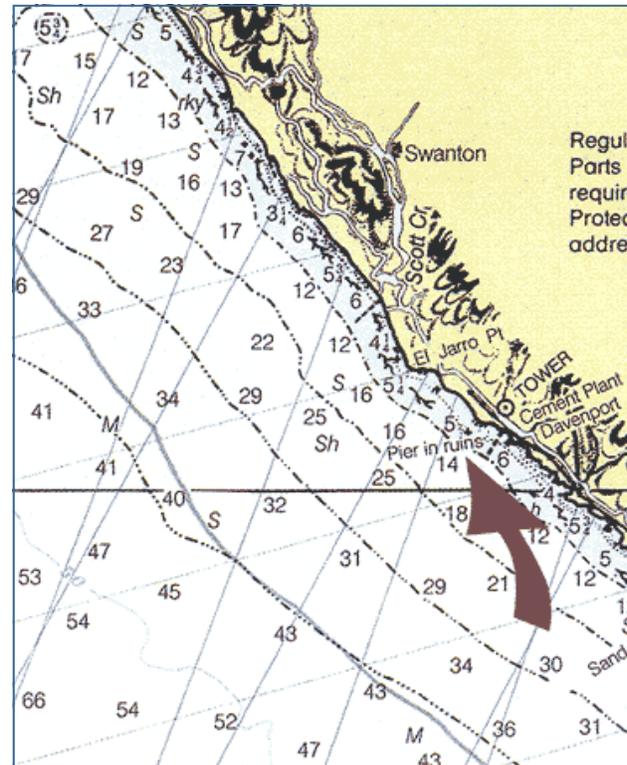
ENVIRONMENT: No pinnipeds were seen in the area, although, according to Sullivan, they are usually in the area. Several dense kelp canopies were 100 m south and shoreward of the attack location, but there were no kelps in the immediate area of the incident. This was the fifth white shark incident at this location.

DISTANCE FROM SHORE: One kilometre

TIME: 17h30

NARRATIVE: Sullivan and about a dozen other wind surfers were near the lower reef at Davenport Landing, enjoying the excellent sailing conditions. Sullivan had been sailing about 45 minutes. The wind had begun to let up, so he turned to head back toward the beach. This maneuver reduced his forward speed to about 6 knots. There was a light "thump" to the back of his board as it lifted up underneath him.

Sullivan recalled, "I thought I hit a whale or maybe a seal. The board coming up out of the water caused me to lose my balance, and I fell into the water. I had dropped my sail in the process of falling right on top of the shark's back. The shark began slapping its tail wildly, causing the water to be thrown up in the air, maybe 15 feet [5 m]. I literally crawled off the shark's back and swam about 30 feet [10 m] before I stopped to look back in the direction of my board."



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A wind surfing companion rode toward Sullivan, instructing him to get back on his board. The water was swirling all around the board following the shark's hasty departure. Sullivan swam to his board, which was upside down and oriented away from the beach. He righted the board, climbed back on it, and headed for shore.

INJURY: The wind surfer's only injury was an abrasion to the top of his right foot.

SPECIES: Michael J. Sullivan and several who witnessed the incident thought the white shark was about four metres in length.

CASE INVESTIGATOR: Ralph Collier