



ACTIVITY: Body boarding

CASE: [GSAF 1998.05.16.a](#) / SA-428

DATE: Saturday May 16, 1998

LOCATION: The attack took place in the Indian Ocean at Keurboom Beach, three kilometres north of Plettenberg Bay, Western Cape Province, South Africa.

NAME: Neal Stephenson

DESCRIPTION: The surfer, a 22-year-old male, is a S.A. Morey Team Rider and S.A. Champ scheduled to represent South Africa at the next world surfing games.

BACKGROUND

MOON PHASE: Waning Gibbous, 78% of the Moon's visible disk was illuminated. Third Quarter, May 19, 1998.

TIME: 14h00

NARRATIVE: Neal Stephenson was riding a boogie board in the surf zone when his right foot was bitten by a shark. The shark returned a second time, but he managed to repel it. Stephenson reached the beach on his board without assistance.

INJURY: Stephenson's lower right leg was bitten and the foot was severed by the shark. His left foot was also severely lacerated.

FIRST AID: First aid was administered on the beach by two doctors and a paramedic.



Neal Stephenson

TREATMENT: Following three- to four-hour surgical procedure at a private hospital in Knysna, it was believed that the surfer's left foot would be saved. His right leg was surgically amputated above the knee.

SPECIES INVOLVED: Stephenson tentatively identified the shark as a four-metre white shark.

SOURCES: Gordon Cockwell, SABA; Daily Dispatch (East London), May 30, 1998, et al

CASE INVESTIGATOR: Andrew Gifford, Shark Research Institute-South Africa.

NOTE: Following the attack, Stephenson took to wave-ski paddling and competed in the World Wave-ski Championships in 2000 and 2001; he competed both nationally and internationally at the highest level in water sports. "I don't see myself as disabled. I am competitive and only compete against able-bodied athletes," he says. He has also participated in adventure challenges such as the Robberg Express and is part of the National Sea Rescue volunteer crew. "I have learnt that with the right attitude, anything is achievable," said Stephenson.