

ACTIVITY: Surfing

CASE: GSAF 2000.09.25

DATE: Monday September 25, 2000

LOCATION: The attack took place at Black Point, five kilometres north of Elliston. Elliston is 170 kilometres northwest of the tuna-fishing town of Port Lincoln, South Australia. The attack site is 120 miles from Cactus Beach where Cameron Bayes was killed by a shark the previous day.

-32.9833N, 137.7167E



NAME: Jevan Wright

DESCRIPTION: The surfer was a 17-year-old male from Port Lincoln. He was wearing a black wet suit and a light blue Gath helmet, a brand of surfing helmet.

SURFBOARD: The surfer was using a 6'2" board.

BACKGROUND

WEATHER: The sky was overcast.

MOON PHASE: Waning Crescent, 10% of the Moon's visible disk was illuminated. New Moon, September 28, 2000.

ENVIRONMENT: Black Point (a.k.a. Blackfellows Point) is a lonely expanse of kelp-studded sea at the entrance to Anxious Bay. Swells roll in from the icy south, hit a rock shelf and rear into a left-hand break. Some abalone divers believe large white sharks are being drawn inshore by warmer than usual currents. Graham Keith Chapman, 40-years-old and the father of Jevan's girlfriend, said there were a number of dolphins and a particularly friendly seal in the area where they were surfing.

DISTANCE FROM SHORE: 50 metres

DEPTH OF WATER: Three metres

TIME: 13h00



NARRATIVE: At around 10h30, Mr. Chapman saw Jevan getting changed to go surfing. When he returned at about 11h40, Mr. Chapman saw that Jevan was still surfing so he and two other men, Craig "Nugget" Pringle and Kym Castley, paddled out to join him. At about 12h45, Chapman, Castley and Jevan decided to return to shore. Castley caught the first wave in toward the cliffs, and Chapman saw that the seal followed him in. Jevan caught the next wave and was almost to the cliff face [where surfers enter and leave the water] when he disappeared.

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"I was scanning the water and couldn't see him anywhere and I turned to Nugget and asked if he could see Jevan," said Chapman. "Nugget couldn't see him either. The sea at the time was flat and a short time later a wave came and lifted us both up and I could see the back tail of the shark sticking out about two feet out of the water. I could also see quite a bit of the length of the body of the shark's tail, and Jevan's board was inside the shark and the board looked quite small. ... I saw Jevan's helmet and his right arm sticking out of the shark's mouth as he was being pushed under the water. ... When the next wave lifted us up again the shark was still there, with its tail sticking out of the water, thrashing from side to side. Jevan must have still been attached to his leg rope because the board was still right alongside the shark."

Chapman and Pringle paddled their boards into the rocks and stood on a partly submerged reef about 10 metres seaward from the spot where Jevan disappeared. Unable to accept what they had seen, one of them yelled to people up on the sandstone cliff, "Where's Jevan?" Then half of Jevan's surfboard popped to the surface and started floating out on the rip current. The two surfers paddled out, recovered the portion of Jevan's board, and raised the alarm.

INJURY: Fatal. Constable A. L. Trager of the Elliston Police Station spoke with Mr. Chapman and Mr. Castley and organized a search of the area throughout the rest of the afternoon and the following three days. A small piece of Jevan's board was found by Mr. David Bascomb who had been assisting in the search on his board. The piece measured six inches by four inches and was found a kilometer northwest of the surf-break. The surfer's body was not recovered. A Memorial Service attended by 400 friends was held on October 7, the day that would have been Jevan's 18th birthday.

The surfboard and the fragment found by Mr. Bascomb were examined by Dr. Jane Taylor, Forensic Odontologist. Dr. Taylor was unable to reach a firm conclusion that the damage evident in the surfboard and the fragment was caused by a shark since the fracture line was irregular in nature and showed none of the characteristic markings of a shark bite.

In view of the evidence, particularly the testimony of Mr. Chapman, the court ruled that there was little doubt that Jevan Wright died as result of a shark attack. The precise cause of death could not be determined since no body was recovered, but death was obviously due to multiple injuries.

SPECIES INVOLVED: The attack involved a large white shark, *Carcharodon carcharias*.

SOURCES: Newcastle Herald, September 27, 2000, page 17; multiple interviews with witnesses; Inquest taken on behalf of our Sovereign Lady the Queen at Adelaide in the State of South Australia, on the 2nd and 22nd days of February, 2001, before Wayne Cromwell Chivell, a Coroner for the said State, concerning the disappearance of Jevan Wright, aged 17 years, late of 26 Sinclair Street, Port Lincoln.

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