

ACTIVITY: Free diving and spearfishing

CASE: GSAF 2000.12.03

DATE: Sunday December 3, 2000

LOCATION: The incident took place on Sykes Reef, 10 nautical miles from Heron Island off central Queensland, Australia. Sykes Reef is part of the Great Barrier Reef.

NAME: Chris Hogan

DESCRIPTION: The diver is a 38-year-old male from Coffs Harbour. He was holidaying in Gladstone and was part of a spearfishing party.

SUPPORT BOAT: The 24-metre charter boat *MV Booby Bird*

BACKGROUND

MOON PHASE: First Quarter, December 4, 2000

SEA CONDITIONS: The average sea temperature on the reef is 22°C.

ENVIRONMENT: Dr. Harvey Hunt, a member of the helicopter rescue team said there were many sharks in the area but they were usually timid.

DEPTH OF WATER AT INCIDENT SITE: "Shallow", according to the diver. The average depth on Sykes reef is 11 metres and its maximum depth is 18 metres.

TIME: 09h30

NARRATIVE: Hogan and a friend were watching a smaller (1.8-metre) shark in front of them when a large bronze whaler shark came from behind and tried to grab a fish that he had hooked to a tag line attached to his body. "There was a lot of blood in the water, I was trying to swim to them (his mates) and my heart was racing," said Hogan. "In the back of my mind, I knew that the shark wouldn't come back for me but I thought he might and I was getting very weak. It seemed to take forever to get to the boat and my arm was throbbing," he said.

INJURY: The diver's left forearm and elbow were lacerated.

FIRST AID: The boat's crew sent out a distress call to Gladstone Coast Guards, who relayed the message to Capricorn Helicopter Rescue Service. Mr Bourke, Dr Hunt and a

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crewman left Rockhampton for the 60-minute flight to the boat. At the same time, Heron Island resort dispatched a nurse, Mr Matthew McMahon, and several dive masters in a speed boat. They treated the victim and ferried him to Heron Island, where they were met by the helicopter crew almost two hours after the incident. "The nurse from Heron did a fantastic job, but he had lost a lot of blood and looked very pale," Mr Bourke said. Dr Hunt administered first aid and replaced lost blood while the helicopter flew to Rockhampton.

TREATMENT: Microsurgeons at Gladstone Base in Rockhampton worked for 10 hours to repair blood vessels and nerve endings in the lower arm and repaired severed muscle and tendons above and below his elbow

SPECIES INVOLVED: According to the diver, the incident involved a bronze whaler shark about 2.5 metres in length.

SOURCES: Nick Leys; Daily Telegraph, December 4, 2000, page 3; Illawarra Mercury, December 5, 2000, page 7