

ACTIVITY: Surfing

CASE: GSAF 2004.04.05

DATE: Monday April 5, 2004

LOCATION: The attack took place at Surfers' Corner off Muizenberg in False Bay, Western Cape Province, South Africa.

34°06,6'S, 18°28,2'E

NAME: John Paul (JP) Andrew

DESCRIPTION: The surfer is a 16-year-old male.

SURBOARD: The surfboard was white.

BACKGROUND

WEATHER: The sky was sunny.

SEA CONDITIONS: Surfing first caught on at Muizenberg in the early 1960s, and it is still a main hangout. Popular with novice surfers because of its steady and calm waves, it is well-known as a good place to learn the basics of surfing. It is characterized by a slow rolling beach break, best on north to north-west winds and a large south swell. Witnesses reported that the water was murky when the attack took place. National Sea Rescue Institute spokesperson Ian Klopper said the conditions on Monday were exactly like those at Noordhoek during the last incident off the Peninsula. "The waves were small and glassy," said Klopper.

MOON PHASE: Full Moon, April 5, 2004

ENVIRONMENT: Seals were in the water, and lifesavers were warning surfers about a shark that had been spotted in the area on Sunday.

DISTANCE FROM SHORE: 150 metres

TIME: 14h00

NARRATIVE: Surfer Chris Baker of Fish Hoek was 15 metres from JP when the shark attacked.

"I was in the surf with 15 girls from the Roxy surf class and one of them said, 'There's a shark.' I said, 'No, it's a dolphin.' But then I looked across to about 50m in the backline past the surf and I saw a big fin, about 50 cm, sticking out of the water. I told the girls to paddle out. At this stage, the shark was pointing straight at the kid (JP Andrew) and by then I could also see its tail fin. It was cruising powerfully, almost like a submarine, towards him. Then I saw it knocking him really hard off his board. At this stage, a second shark came by, but I didn't see where it went. There was also a seal out there, so I don't know if it went for that. But the shark went straight for JP because it must have thought he was prey, and I began paddling to him."

At the same time, another surfer, Grant Kirkland, who had just caught a wave in to shore, saw what had happened and headed to the stricken surfer. Kirkland said:

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John Paul Andrew



Photo: Brenton Geach, The Mercury

Michael Kissack shows one half of JP's surfboard which was bitten in two.

"I got to [JP Andrew] and he said, 'I've lost my leg, please help me, I've lost my leg.' There was a lot of blood. His leash leg was taken clean off. It was as if someone had taken a cleaver and chopped it off."

Kirkland hauled JP on to his own surfboard and paddled to shore.

INJURY: The surfer's right leg was severed above the knee by the shark (seven centimetres below the groin) and he sustained lacerations to the left thigh.

DAMAGE TO EQUIPMENT: The surfboard was broken in two by the shark. Part of the board, with severed leg attached to the leash, drifted ashore in Gordon's Bay four days later.

FIRST AID: Dorian Booysen, lifeguard squad leader at Muizenberg, said they saw two surfers coming out of the water with a broken surfboard and thought they were trying to save another surfer. "When we got to the water's edge they shouted, 'Help! Shark!' We ran back to get the stretcher and when we came back we saw his leg was bitten off." Lifesavers took the surfer to the beach pool-house and initiated CPR. The group waited about 40 minutes for paramedics to arrive.

TREATMENT: The patient was transported to Constantiaberg Medi-Clinic. He went into cardiac arrest twice during a 90-minute surgical procedure. Afterwards, hospital spokesperson Gail Ross reported that the patient was in a stable, but critical condition and was heavily sedated because he had been placed on a ventilator. The patient remained in an artificial coma for more than a week. His surgeon was Digby DeVillier. The patient was discharged from the hospital on May 1.

In August 2004, JP was fitted with a prosthetic leg in Seattle that should enable him to have 95% mobility. "He will grow out of it, so he has to go back," said Terry Smith, a family friend. The prosthetic leg was donated by the Northwest Prosthetic and Orthotic Clinic in the US after its owner John Hattingh, originally from South Africa, heard of the attack. JP will be fitted with a new leg each year.

SPECIES INVOLVED: Witnesses said a second shark swam past JP at the same time as the first shark struck, and Lifesaving South Africa area manager Angelo Plaatjies confirmed that two sharks had been circling Andrew at the time of the attack. According National Sea Rescue Institute's Vaughan Seconds, a patrolling helicopter spotted the shark a short time after the attack and it was identified as a 3.5 metre white shark, *Carcharodon carcharias*.



NOTE: Some Cape Town surfers were reluctant to return to the water after this attack. By October 2004, the 17-year-old surfer had recovered and had his first surf since the attack on a custom-made body board at Big Bay. JP's first waves were captured by a German camera crew for a documentary film about his remarkable recovery.

On September 27, 2005, Grant Kirkland was awarded the Order of Mendi (silver) by President Thabo Mbeki for his heroic efforts.

CASE INVESTIGATOR: L.J.V. Compagno, Ph.D., Shark Research Institute



Photo: Brenton Geach, Saturday Argus

*JP Andrew jokes with Grant Kirkland,
the man who saved his life.*