

ACTIVITY: Surfing

CASE: [GSAF 2005.09.24](#)

DATE: Saturday September 24, 2005

LOCATION: The incident took place at Cape du Couedic in Flinders Chase National Park on the southwest coast of Kangaroo Island, South Australia.

NAME: Josh Berris

DESCRIPTION: He is a 26-year-old male from Kingscote, Kangaroo Island.

BACKGROUND

MOON PHASE: Last Quarter, 25 September 2005

ENVIRONMENT: Paramedic Dean George, who helped rescue Mr Berris, said there had been about 30-40 seals in the area. "Josh was wearing a black wetsuit and, with so many seals around, it was easy to see that a shark could have mistaken him for a seal," Mr George said. National Parks and Wildlife officer Anthony McGuire, who was on duty, said while emergency crews were notified immediately, they took some time to arrive because of the remote location. "It's a fairly rugged spot and it's a long way from Adelaide – it's not really a common surfing beach either," Mr McGuire said.

South Australian Fisheries director Will Zacharin was not surprised there had been a shark attack near the seals at isolated Cape de Couedic, near Flinders Chase National Park. "He was down at Flinders Chase National Park swimming in the water around seals; it's somewhere where you can have an interaction with a shark," Mr Zacharin said. "There are seals all along that coast. You're more likely to see a shark if you're around seals."

DISTANCE FROM SHORE: 30 metres

TIME: 12h05

NARRATIVE: Josh Berris was surfing with four friends off the remote beach and was sitting on his board waiting for the next wave when the shark hit him from underneath. "It hit him first on the leg and it came back for him a second time," said his father, Steve. "He was able to fight it off with his surfboard. Then it was grabbing hold of his surfboard and thrashing that around and dragging him around in the water with it. [The shark] came back again so he pushed it away with his hand."

Josh kicked his leg rope off, allowing another surfer to lift him onto his board and paddle



Photo: courtesy AAP

him to shore. “[The other surfer] was close by and able to talk him through it,” said his father. “He is actually in his 60s - he is a bit of a legend in the surf crew and will be more so after this. [Mr Berris] had his new wetsuit on. And a fairly new board, which is gone. It was last seen being attacked by a shark at sea.”

A witness 51-year-old Dave Dowie said, “The shark appeared to come around onto his left hand side and was right up close to his board. It stuck its head out of the water and Josh was able to push it away. Then it appeared to just go for his surfboard, started having a go at the board and sort of heading out to sea with the board. It was sort of dragging him cause he's attached to his board with a leg rope, and he was able to get the leg rope attachment off his ankle.”

INJURY: The surfer sustained lacerations to his lower legs and left hand. The injuries were not considered life-threatening.



Photo by Ben Macmahon

Josh Berris

FIRST AID: Two of his friends dragged him from the water, pulled him onto rocks at the base of a cliff, then climbed up steep cliffs to make an emergency call from a nearby ranger station. (Lewis Downie, 15, who had climbed the cliff and run more than a kilometre with brother Nathan, 17, to the nearest phone at the cottage).

Senior Constable Tim Dodds says fellow surfers helped to stop the bleeding on scene until medical assistance arrived. A team of paramedics were flown to the beach from Adelaide to assess the man's condition.

TREATMENT: Mr Berris is recovering in the Flinders Medical Centre and is expected to be released within days.

SPECIES INVOLVED: According to witnesses, the incident involved a white shark but reports vary as to its size. Witness Davie Dowie, said the shark was three to five metres [16 feet] in length.

SOURCES: Jordan Baker and AAP
<http://www.smh.com.au/news/national/mauled-by-a-great-white-another-surfer-lives-to-tell-the-tale/2005/09/25/1127586747235.html>;

ABC
<http://www.abc.net.au/news/newsitems/200509/s1467994.htm>

TVNZ
<http://tvnz.co.nz/view/page/411366/613913>

CASE INVESTIGATOR: Terry Peake, GSAF