

ACTIVITY: Surfing

CASE: **GSAF 2007.11.03**

DATE: Saturday November 3, 2007

LOCATION: The incident took place in the Indian Ocean at Bonza Bay, Eastern Cape Province, South Africa.

NAME: Lee Mellin

DESCRIPTION: He is a 37-year-old male from East London. He returned to East London after spending about six years in London, and he is the son of retired Daily Dispatch photographer Rob Mellin.

BACKGROUND

WEATHER: At 09h00, East London recorded overcast skies and visibility of 6.2 miles [10 km]. The air temperature was 66.2°F [19°C], dew point 60.8°F [16°C], humidity 83%, sea level pressure 29.74 inches [1007 hPa], and wind direction was SW at 13.8 mph [22.2km/h].

MOON PHASE: Last Quarter, November 1, 2007; New Moon, November 10, 2007

SEA CONDITIONS: Buffalo City marine services chief Siani Tinley reported that the water was “clean and cold”.

TIME: 08h45

NARRATIVE: Mellin and his friend, Leigh Stolworthy, were riding the waves when they saw a ‘big fish’ close by. “There was nothing we could do,” said Mellin. “It just popped up between us. There was this massive shark bursting out of the water, real Jaws-like. It obviously gave one look at Leigh thinking he didn’t have enough meat, so he went at me. It was a flippin’ big thing. I was still on my board and it came for me. I just felt its jaws sinking in. I think the shark’s teeth got stuck in the surfboard. It then took another bite, but by then I let go of my board. It just bit the board again.”

Mellin, said he started to panic and remembered screaming and shouting at Stolworthy: ‘Help me!’ It all happened in



Nigel Louw

Lee Mellin



Phillip Nothnagel

Lance Parnet from Netcare 911, with part of the surfboard, after Bonza Bay was closed.



Phillip Nothnagel

Leigh Stolworthy with all that remained of Lee Mellin’s surfboard

seconds,” he said.

“You never leave a friend behind. After [the shark] had bitten Lee, it disappeared for a while, resurfaced, then it was gone,” said Stolworthy. The two men paddled back to shore.

Bonza Bay, Nahoon and Gonubie beach were closed for the remainder of the day with a shark warning, but re-opened after 08h00 on Sunday.

INJURY: The shark bit Mellin’s left lateral thigh. The diameter of the wound in Mellin’s left thigh was 38 cm. The widely-spaced lacerations made by the shark’s individual teeth are typical of the bite of a white shark

DAMAGE TO BOARD: Mellin’s surfboard was bitten in two and teeth marks were evident on both sections of the board.

FIRST AID / TREATMENT: Mellin walked to Stolworthy’s bakkie and phoned his parents to alert the hospital that he was on his way. The two men drove to St. Dominic Hospital where Mellin was admitted and his injuries surgically repaired.

SPECIES: The two surfers believe the shark was about three metres long, and Mellin reckoned the dorsal fin was about 40 centimetres. Teeth impressions in Mellin’s thigh and the surfboard confirm that the accident involved a white shark.

Buffalo City marine services chief Tinley said measurements and tooth patterns indicated a shark around four metres.

“It wasn’t really a powerful attack,” said Mellin. “It was almost as if it was testing what it was biting first.” Mellin, who has been surfing most of his life, said it was simply a case of being at the “wrong place at the wrong time”.

SOURCE: Chandre Prince, East London Daily Dispatch,
<http://www.dispatch.co.za/2007/11/05/Easterncape/aalead.html>