

ACTIVITY: Spearfishing, Free diving

CASE: GSAF 2011.06.06.b

DATE: Monday June 6, 2011

LOCATION: The accident took place in the Pacific Ocean off Childrens Pool, LaJolla, San Diego County, California, USA.

NAME: Justin Schlaefli

DESCRIPTION: He is a 28-year-old male.

BACKGROUND

WEATHER: At 14h53, San Diego recorded clear skies and 10 mile visibility. The air temperature was 70°F, dew point 48.9°F, humidity 47%, sea level pressure 30.03 inches and wind direction was West at 12.7 mph. By 16h53, the air temperature was 68°F, dew point 52°F, humidity 56%, sea level pressure was 30.00 inches and wind direction was WNW at 13.8 mph.

MOON PHASE: Waxing Crescent, 25% of the Moon was illuminated. First Quarter, June 8, 2011.

DISTANCE FROM SHORE: 300 to 400 feet

DEPTH: 20 feet

TIME: 14h30 or 17h00



Photo courtesy Ramon Castro

The wetsuit Justin Schlaefli was wearing when the shark bit his calf.

NARRATIVE: Schlaefli and 30-year-old Roman Castro and another spearfisherman were diving near Children's Pool and Wipeout Beach. Castro shot a calico bass, *Paralabrax clathratus*, and Schlaefli attached the fish to his stringer because Castro had forgotten his. It was about then that he noticed the shark. Schlaefli told the others to form a protective circle and keep their eyes open for the shark should it approach, because "something in the body language of the shark screamed 'danger,'" he said. When the shark didn't reappear, the three began to head back to shore.

"I feel this sudden pressure and movement on my calf. I looked down and the shark had my calf in its mouth and bit down three times," said Schlaefli. He described the bites as "test bites" that weren't full-down chomps. "I hit it in the nose with my spear gun in my hand and it let go. It swam right for my friend who was with me. He ended up shooting the shark and wounded it. That's the last we saw of that. . . "I really think it was a case of mistaken identity. I had that fish on my leg. I think that's what the shark was after," said Schlaefli.

The shark then turned toward Castro, who shot it when it got within two to three feet of the tip of the gun. Castro said he let go of the gun, and the shark made a hard left and swam into the deep, taking the gun with it.

Castro said they headed straight for the nearest lifeguard tower and told lifeguards about the incident.

INJURY: The diver's calf was bitten but his wetsuit prevented any injury. "[The shark] left a few marks in my wet suit and gauges, but it didn't hurt me," said Schlaefli.

SPECIES: The incident reportedly involved a sevengill shark, about six to eight feet in length. The shark left the area with a spear shaft and spear gun attached to it.

NOTE: The shark was obviously after the diver's fish and the diver's leg got in its way. This incident was not a shark "attack".

SOURCES: LaJolla Light,
<http://www.lajollalight.com/2011/06/08/diver-unhurt-when-shark-bites-through-his-wetsuit-off-la-jolla/>

Signon San Diego,
<http://www.signonsandiego.com/news/2011/jun/08/shark-bites-spearfisherman-unconfirmed-report/>

CASE INVESTIGATOR: Ralph Collier, GSAF



Ramon Castro holds up a fish he caught off the La Jolla shore Monday. The fish was hanging off the belt of his dive buddy when a shark approached.