



ACTIVITY: Surfing

CASE: [GSAF 2014.08.01](#)

DATE: Friday August 1, 2014

LOCATION: The incident took place in the Indian Ocean, in False Bay at Muizenberg, Western Cape Province, South Africa.

NAME: Matthew Smithers

DESCRIPTION: He is a 20-year-old male from Newlands.



Matthew Smithers

Facebook

BACKGROUND

WEATHER: At 14h00, both Cape Town and the Strand (located on False Bay) reported 9.9-mile visibility and air temperature of 62°F, and sea level pressure of 30.04 inches. Cape Town registered dewpoint of 52°F, humidity 64%, and sea level pressure of 30.04 inches and wind direction was WNW at 4 mph. Dew point at Strand was 55°F, humidity 81%, sea level pressure 29.89 inches, and the wind was variable, no gusts. Muizenberg recorded no wind.

MOON PHASE: Waxing Crescent, 27% of the Moon was illuminated.

ENVIRONMENT: Craig Lambinon, National Sea Rescue Institute spokesperson, said at the

time of the attack the Shark Spotters were flying the Black Shark Flag (indicating poor water and weather visibility conditions - a misty haze). A bystander had approached the shark spotters to inform them that they had seen a shark fin in the water and, according to initial reports, the incident happened when the Shark Siren was in the process of being activated. Pringle and other surfers on the scene said the shark siren sounded only after Smithers had been brought ashore. "The info I have is that the siren was sounded *after* the attack took place," reported Greg Oelofse, head of environmental policy and strategy for the City of Cape Town.

SEA CONDITIONS: At 14h00, Muizenberg recorded sea surface temperature of 60°F and waves were SSW at seven feet. Mean low tide occurred at 11h59.

DISTANCE FROM SHORE: 200 to 300 metres

TIME: After 14h00 (2:00 pm).

NARRATIVE: Matthew Smithers was opposite the Muizenberg Pavilion when the shark came from below and hit the bottom of the board, sending him spiralling three metres into the air, according to veteran surfer Julian Pringle. Then the shark bit him, apparently gashing both his legs badly. Smithers managed to scramble back on to his board.

"I was surfing out at Muizenberg for about half an hour when I was facing towards the back line, the shark attacked me from underneath, behind me, and attacked my board and both legs," said Smithers. "The shark bit into me and I flew off my board and looked at the shark, it circled me once and then left me alone and proceeded to paddle back on my board to the beach."

When Pringle and Brendhan "Jock" Kannemeyer reached the injured surfer, the shark had not left, and was circling Smithers. Kannemeyer said of Smithers, "He was totally calm. I tied a leash around him and saw that he had a wound at the back of his knee." He and Pringle then helped him ashore.

The City of Cape Town announced in a press release the closure of the beach as a precautionary measure. The beach will be reassessed on Saturday morning.

INJURY: Multiple lacerations to his lower limbs (some of which are deep lacerations) and an avulsion to the left thigh. "No bone damage was done," reported Smithers. "I only suffered four quite deep wounds in each leg, but seems all right, I feel fine, happy and grateful."

FIRST AID / TREATMENT: Lambinon said a member of the public tied the surfboard's leash around the man's leg to stop the bleeding. Smithers was transported via Skymed helicopter to Vincent Pallotti Hospital in Pinelands in a stable condition, and is expected to make a full recovery.

SPECIES: Bite marks indicate the incident involved a white shark, and eyewitness accounts suggest the shark was 3.8 metres in length.



*Julian Pringle, right, and Brendhan Jock Kannemeyer, left, who brought an injured Matthew Smithers safely back to shore, work with paramedics on the young man
Picture: BRENTON GEACH*