

ACTIVITY: Swimming

CASE: GSAF 1985.01.27 / SA-0335

DATE: Sunday January 27, 1985

LOCATION: The incident took place at Struisbaai, in front of the Struisbaai Hotel. Struisbaai is 20 kilometres from Cape Agulhas in the Western Cape Province, South Africa.

34°49'S, 20°03'E

NAME: Marius Botha

DESCRIPTION: The swimmer, a 15-year-old male, is 1,72 metres tall and was wearing black PT shorts. He wore no jewelry and had no injuries before the incident. He is a Standard 7 boarder at Napier High School.



Marius Botha

BACKGROUND

WEATHER: The sky was overcast and there was no wind. Temperature was 25°C.

MOON PHASE: First Quarter, January 29, 1985

SEA CONDITIONS: The sea was calm and the estimated water temperature was 18°C. The water was turbid with no more than 30 centimetres visibility. No channel was present and it is not known if there was any current. High tide was at 19h00.

ENVIRONMENT: The beach, backed by low scrub-covered dunes, slopes gently into the sea. Sharks are frequently observed in Struisbaai Harbour and great white sharks have been seen in the shallows. In January 1987 the author worked with nine white sharks within sight of Struisbaai, and raggedtooth sharks, soupfin sharks, milk sharks, catsharks and shysharks are common in the area.

At the time of the incident a fishing boat was harbouring approximately 100 metres from the beach.

DISTANCE FROM SHORE: Unknown

DEPTH: "Shallow"

TIME: 18h15 – 18h45

INCIDENT NARRATIVE: Marius Botha was visiting friends who lived on a farm in the Struisbaai area and joined them for a swim before returning to school. Two people were on the beach and four were in the water, one person was seaward of Botha, the other three were closer inshore and within three metres of him. He was body-surfing, facing shorewards, when the shark bumped his left side. Next, he felt two tugs on his leg and was pushed through the water. The entire incident lasted no more than five seconds. Botha says that he felt no pain but, curious about the tugs on his leg, he swam to the beach. As he neared shore he realised that he was injured.

INJURY: The posterior of Botha's right calf was lacerated, and there were tooth marks on the dorsal surface of the ankle. There were tooth marks outside and slightly below the kneecap of his left leg.

FIRST AID: Botha was taken in a private car to Bredasdorp, 25 minutes from Struisbaai, arriving there at 19h20.

TREATMENT: He was initially seen at Bredasdorp Hospital by Dr W.P. Schonker, who described the injuries as similar to those inflicted by a dog. No X-rays were taken. Outpatient care was continued by Dr Pieterse of Napier.

SPECIES: Photographs of the injuries indicate that the incident involved a small shark. The wounds are consistent with those inflicted by a raggedtooth shark.

SOURCE: Interview with Marius Botha'

CASE INVESTIGATOR: Marie Levine

