

ACTIVITY: Standing

CASE: [GSAF 1986.02.07 / SA-342](#)

DATE: Friday February 7, 1986

LOCATION: The incident took place in the Indian Ocean at Kings Beach, Port Elizabeth, Eastern Cape Province, South Africa.
33°58'S, 25°39'E

NAME: Johan Fourie

DESCRIPTION: He is a 46-year-old male. He was wearing blue swim shorts, but was not wearing any jewelry and had no injuries before he was bitten by the shark

BACKGROUND.

WEATHER: A south-westerly wind was blowing at 20 to 30 knots; however, an east wind had been blowing for several days which caused an upwelling outside the bay. When the wind shifts to the west, as it did on this occasion, the water in the bay becomes cold and dirty.

MOON PHASE: New Moon

SEA CONDITIONS: The water was very turbid. Sea surface temperatures, measured daily by beach officials between February 6 and 8, 1986, ranged from 19° to 22°C; however, the sea surface temperature measured at the accident site at 22h00 was 14,5°C, which indicates that a tongue of cold water was present for a short time. The surf height was less than a metre, and mean high tide was at 15h05.

ENVIRONMENT: The day after the incident Gordon Smart of the Summerstrand Surf Life-saving Club scouted the area in the vicinity of the incident and discovered a gully that ran from deep water into the shallows, close to the spot where Fourie was bitten. Although Fourie did not cross this gully while he was wading out, it may have been the route followed by the shark penetrating the shallows.

DISTANCE FROM SHORE: Unknown

DEPTH: 1,2 metres

TIME: 18h30, 45 minutes before sunset

NARRATIVE: Johan Fourie is a rugby coach who regularly jogs along the beach and then goes for a swim afterwards. On this evening he decided to swim in the bathing area close to the King's Beach Surf Life-saving Clubhouse. Because the sea was unusually cold no one else was in the water. He entered the sea slowly, then dived through the backline of breakers, but crossed no gullies between the shore and backline.

Fourie had been in the water only three minutes and was standing when he felt a pull on his left leg between his ankle and calf. Initially he thought that his daughter was joking with him but became alarmed when he felt himself pulled seaward. He gave the shark three blows with his fist and was released. Fourie walked out of the water and beckoned to his wife and daughter who were on the beach. Children, who were nearby, summoned lifesavers that



Johan Fourie

were in the clubhouse attending a medical lecture being given by Dr Peter Schwartz.

INJURY: There were two distinct sets of tooth impressions in the lower left leg. The teeth of the upper jaw lodged in the calf muscles while the teeth of the lower jaw penetrated the skin near the ankle. There was a series of shallow irregular parallel lacerations, each about 30 millimetres in length, in the calf and a semi-circle of puncture marks above the ankle.

FIRST AID: Fourie was treated by Dr Schwartz and the lifesavers. The wounds were cleansed and he was taken to the Port Elizabeth Provincial Hospital.

TREATMENT: Sixteen sutures were needed to repair the wounds. Fourie was discharged from the hospital after treatment.

SPECIES: No tooth fragments were recovered, but the superficial nature of the wounds and the irregular lacerations suggests that a fish-eating shark made an investigatory bite. An earlier incident (GSAF 1980.01.10) occurred at King's Beach, and as in that case it appears that a raggedtooth shark was involved.

SOURCES: Interviews with Johan Fourie, Dr. Vic Cockroft and Dr. Peter Schwartz by Marie Levine

Shark attack in shallow water at King's Beach



A doctor stitches the bite in Mr Johan Fourie's leg after he was attacked by a shark at King's Beach yesterday.

Picture: P J MATTHEUS



Mr Johan Fourie, right, and marine biologist Mr Vic Cockcroft last night.



Mr Tony Mota, chairman of Sless, who said that the municipality is to be advised to ban bathing on beaches patrolled by municipal lifesavers.

Bathing ban at many PE beaches today

E-PH

By DAWN BARKHUIZEN 9. 2. '86

A PORT Elizabeth man was attacked by a shark in shallow water at King's Beach yesterday evening.

Bathing has been banned today at all beaches patrolled by volunteer lifesavers.

Mr Johan Fourie, 46, of Hamewood, was standing in waist-deep water at about 6.30pm, when he felt something grab his left leg below the knee.

Mr Fourie at first thought someone was playing the fool but struck out when he felt himself being dragged into deeper water and after three blows managed to drive the shark off.

"It felt like an iron clamp on my leg," said Mr Fourie, a rugby coach, who regularly jogs and swims afterwards.

Mr Fourie, alone in the water at the time, said the sea was dirty and he had been unable to see the shark.

He said he walked out of the water to his wife and daughter on the beach.

Some children went to call lifesavers from the King's Beach Surf Lifesaving Club who were in their clubhouse nearby attending a medical lecture.

Mr Fourie was treated by lifesavers and the doctor giving the lecture, before being rushed to hospital by the club captain, Mr Gavin Harvey.

At the Port Elizabeth Provincial Hospital last night, he had stitches put into his left calf. He was not badly injured and said the attack would not keep him out of the water. He was discharged after treatment.

Mr Vic Cockcroft, a marine biologist from the oceanarium, said the man had almost definitely been bitten by a ragged-tooth shark which was not particularly large.

He said the shark's teeth were about three centimetres in length and the shark's jaw width was estimated at about 20cms.

Ragged-tooth sharks were not man-eaters, Mr Cockcroft said, adding that in the murky water the shark had probably mistaken Mr Fourie's leg for a fish.

Last night, a quarterly meeting of the executive body of the Surf Lifesaving Association of South Africa, coincidentally being held in Port Elizabeth, issued an instruction banning bathing on all beaches patrolled by voluntary lifesavers.

These beaches are: Bliswater Bay, King's Beach, Pollok Beach, Sardinia Bay and Van Stadens River Mouth.

Mr Tony Mota, the Sless chairman, said they would advise the Port Elizabeth municipality to ban bathing on beaches patrolled by municipal lifesavers.

Mr Gordon Smart, of the lifesavers' emergency and marine biologist Dr Graham Ross, will patrol by air today and report on conditions at all beach Radio Algaes.

The committee confirmed that a Great White Zambesi shark have been spotted in the area. If sharks were always present in the bay, they said.