



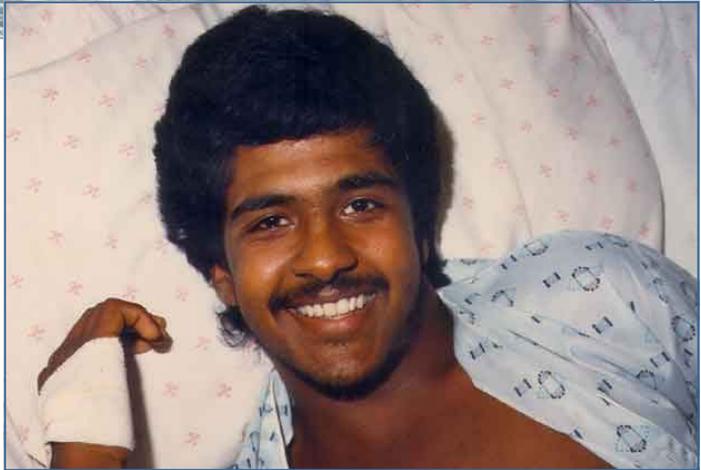
ACTIVITY: Swimming

CASE: GSAF 1989.01.20.a

DATE: Friday January 20, 1989

LOCATION: The incident took place in the Indian Ocean at Isipingo, 17 kilometres southwest of Durban, KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa. Ten months earlier, at the same beach, surfer Sastri Naidoo was bitten by a shark.

29°59,8'S, 30°57,1'E



Sudesh Hemraj Sarjoo

NAME: Sudesh Hemraj Sarjoo

DESCRIPTION: The swimmer, a 19-year-old male, is 1,7 metres tall and wearing a navy blue speedo, but wore no jewelry and had no injuries before the incident. He is a member of the Isipingo Surf Life-saving Club.

weighs 60 kilograms. He was

BACKGROUND

WEATHER: The day was very hot and sultry; at 18h00 it was 27°C, the humidity was 78%, and the barometric pressure was 1012,6 millibars. Although the sky had been clear throughout the day by 18h00 it was overcast, and there was a fresh northeasterly breeze.

MOON PHASE: Full Moon, January 21, 1989

SEA CONDITIONS: Water visibility was about two metres and a north-to-south current was flowing. Water temperature at Isipingo was not recorded, but at Durban the surf temperature was 24°C. The sea was green, but there was no floating debris.

ENVIRONMENT: No one was fishing, no shoals of fish or dolphin were seen before the incident, and no unusual bird activity was noted. The beach was not protected by shark nets

DISTANCE FROM SHORE: 150 metres, beyond backline

DISTANCE FROM ROCKS: 70 metres

DEPTH: 4 to 5 metres

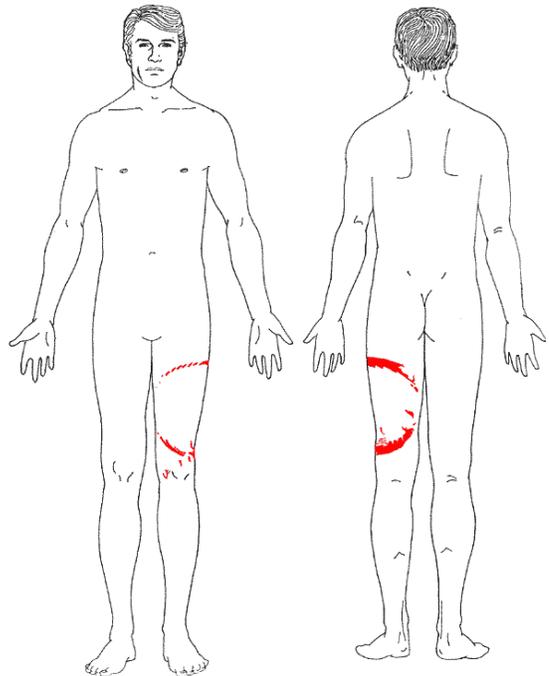
TIME: 18h00

NARRATIVE: Sudesh Sarjoo and two other life-savers, 17-year-old Sanjeev Troy Debipersadh and 21-year-old Leon Govender (Captain of the Isipingo Surf Life-saving Club), had been in the water for about 20 minutes. They had finished a training session and were body-surfing, waiting for a wave behind backline. Sanjeev was about a metre north of Sarjoo, while Leon was about five metres south of him.

Sarjoo was slightly seaward of the two life-savers, facing shoreward and treading water when the shark approached from below and bit the back of his left leg. "The shark hit with tremendous speed and power," said Sarjoo, "I was pushed upwards by impact, then dragged downward by the shark. There was no pain, but I felt a great pressure on my leg, particularly when the shark pulled me below the surface. I turned round and saw the white eye of the shark, its snout and the sweep of its jaws. I kicked out, shot to the surface and screamed."

Sanjeev had turned round, saw Sarjoo struggle as he was pulled underwater, then saw blood well to the surface. At that moment the wave was curling," said Sanjeev, "and for an instant I panicked; I just wanted to get away." Sanjeev rode the wave to shore and informed the club trainer, Moonaff Adam, who was on the beach. Meanwhile Leon thought Sarjoo had struck a submerged rock, swam to him, and started towing him to shore. As they reached the shallows Sanjeev and Moonaff reached them with a board and Sarjoo was carried to the beach.

INJURY: There was a 26-centimetre slash (avulsion injury) on the back of the left thigh which penetrated the femur and a smaller 15-centimetre gash on the back left calf, both of which were caused by the teeth of the upper jaw of the shark; a semi-circle of puncture marks, tooth imprints of the lower jaw, were present on the front of the thigh. No tissue was removed, but the sciatic nerve was severed. There was a superficial laceration on the inner thigh of the right leg which was probably made by a single tooth of the shark as Sarjoo struggled to free himself.



FIRST AID: A shark attack trauma kit was in the Isipingo Surf Life-saving Clubhouse. Although Sarjoo said he felt weak when he saw the blood, he felt no pain until he reached the beach. Moonaff used direct pressure to control bleeding and noted the absence of arterial bleeding. "The wound was very clean-cut; it was not how I had expected a shark bite would look like," said Moonaff. "When the patient's condition was stable he was taken by ambulance to R.K. Kahn Hospital.

TREATMENT: The patient arrived at R. K. Kahn Hospital at 19h05 and was met at casualty by Dr Goga. His wounds were cultured, prophylactic antibiotics were administered and he received tetanus prophylaxis. At 22h00, the patient was taken to the operating theatre where his injuries were repaired by Mr A. Goga, assisted by Dr M. Naidoo.

Mr Goga noted scrape marks, presumably caused by the teeth of the shark, on the femur and he also commented on the clean-cut edges of the wound. "There were no ragged edges," said Mr Goga, "the tissue appeared to have been severed with a sharp scalpel." The muscles were opposed in layers and, as with all cases of animal bites, the skin was left open. The sciatic nerve repair was to be done at a later date. The patient was taken to Recovery at 24h30. He was hospitalized for four weeks.

SPECIES INVOLVED: Examination of the injury reveals that the shark had large serrated teeth in both jaws. Some tooth impressions from the lower jaw of the shark were evident, but they were too closely-spaced to have been made by a white shark; the maximum distance measured between points of insertion when the leg was still very swollen was 20 millimetres. Although no tooth fragments were recovered, NSB researcher Sheldon Dudley suggested that the width of the bite, slant of the tooth impressions together with the nature of the wound indicated a tiger shark may have been responsible. This incident appears to be an investigatory response; the swimmer sustained a mouthing, rather than a predatory bite, from the shark.

SOURCES: Interviews with Sudesh Sarjoo, Sanjeev Troy Debipersadh, Leon Govender, Moonaff Adam and Mr. Goga

CASE INVESTIGATOR: Marie Levine