

ACTIVITY: Surfing

CASE: GSAF 1990.04.09

DATE: Monday April 9, 1990

LOCATION: Greenmount Beach, Queensland, Australia.

NAME: Mark Fleming

DESCRIPTION: He is a 31-year-old male, a nurse. He surfed "religiously" every morning. Fleming had been surfing for six years, but his board was only two weeks old.



BACKGROUND

WEATHER / ENVIRONMENT:

Stan Frampton of the Queensland Surf Rescue said the overcast and rainy weather made it difficult to spot sharks. Frampton said the shark nets broke from their moorings in rough seas and contractors had difficulty getting to them in the weather and sea conditions. Mr Alan Regan also noted the fresh may have flushed rubbish out of the river and the sharks were coming in to eat, and said this was the first incident inside the shark nets since 1962. Patrol officers yesterday checked the nets near Greenmount but found no holes.



MOON PHASE: Full Moon, April 10, 1990

TIME: 05h40

NARRATIVE: Mark Fleming was sitting up on his board when the shark rammed it from behind and biting off a piece of the board. "I climbed back on to the board and he circled me and came up underneath me and threw me into the air. I landed on my back on the board and he started circling me again. He rammed me again and grabbed the board." The shark pushed the surfboard, with Fleming still attached to his board by a leg rope, through the water for about 27 metres. Fleming estimated the shark circled and attacked his board for about five minutes before he was able to disconnect the leg rope. Then he swam to the rocks at the point and yelled out to a woman passer-by who called an ambulance. Radio SEA FM surf reporter and surfer Andrew McKinnon was doing his surf rounds when he saw Fleming lying on the rocks, quivering and in shock. "It really mowed me down; I thought I was finished," said Fleming, but noted the shark was more interested in the surfboard than in him. Fleming added, "This should be a warning to everyone not to surf early in the morning."

TREATMENT: Fleming was treated at Tweed Heads hospital for lacerations and abrasions and released.

SPECIES: The incident involved a tiger shark, three metres in length. "After it hit me the first time I knew it was a shark. I got a good look at it because it was circling me the whole time," said Fleming.

SOURCES: Sydney Morning Herald, April 10, 1990, page 2
The Herald, Tuesday April 10, 1990, page 4
Courier-Mail, Wednesday April 11, 1990, page 1
Sun, Wednesday April 11, 1990, page 13
Pacific Stars and Stripes, Thursday April 12, 1990



Fleming's wife greets him and his shark-bitten board.

Shark attack injures surfer

BRISBANE, Australia (AP) — An Australian surfer escaped with only minor injuries Monday after a large shark bit a chunk out of his board.

"I wasn't going to let him make a meal of me. He'd already had a taste," said Mark Fleming, 31.

The attack took place at Tweeds Heads, 75 miles south of Brisbane.

Fleming said the shark dragged his board — to which he was attached by a tether — through churning water, returning repeatedly and attacking the board, tearing pieces from it.

"He's got a surfboard fin in his stomach — and I hope it hurts," Fleming said.

He said he finally managed to unhook the tether and swim to the shore.

Before reaching the beach, he was bashed against rocks by the waves.

The surfer was hospitalized with bruising, scratches and strained back and neck muscles, but later released.

The attack, which occurred at dawn, was the second in the area in four days. On Friday, a shark savaged the board of another surfer, snapping it in two.

Lifesavers said they believed the same shark could have been responsible for both attacks.