

ACTIVITY: Surfing

CASE: GSAF 1990.10.30.b

DATE: Tuesday October 30, 1990

LOCATION: The incident took place in the Atlantic Ocean at Melbourne Beach, Brevard County, Florida, USA.

NAME: Robert Spratt

DESCRIPTION: He is a 50-year-old male from Melbourne Beach, a chemistry and physics teacher. He had been surfing for 20 years.

BACKGROUND

MOON PHASE: Waxing Gibbous, 86% of the Moon is illuminated. Full Moon, November 2, 1990.

ENVIRONMENT: At this time of year migrating bait fish in the surf attract sharks inshore according to Lt. Roger Cutter of the Florida Marine Patrol.

DISTANCE FROM SHORE: 75 feet

TIME: 16h55

NARRATIVE: Spratt was surfing by himself. He dipped his hand in the water, and his hand and forearm were grabbed by a shark. "When my arm came up, there was a shark on the end of it," he said. "[The shark] thrashed six times back and forth." It happened so fast he wasn't sure what made the shark let go. He remembers paddling towards shore and that teeth marks pierced his wetsuit on both sides of his arm and wrist.

INJURY: The dorsal surface of Spratt's hand was severely lacerated, tendons were damaged, a nerve was partly crushed and a bone was scraped.

FIRST AID: Another surfer fashioned a tourniquet from his surfboard leash and an off-duty paramedic fishing nearby bandaged the wound before Spratt was taken to the hospital.

TREATMENT: The surfer underwent surgery at Holmes Regional Medical Center to repair the damage and remove two tooth fragments of the shark. A hospital spokesperson said that two more teeth which remained in his arm would be removed if they caused infection.

SPECIES INVOLVED: Not identified. The shark was reported to be six feet in length.



SOURCES: Susan Jacobson, Orlando Sentinel, November 1, 1990, page B.1; St Petersburg Times, November 1, 1990, page 23; Toledo Blade, November 1, 1990, page 13

Six-foot shark grabs paddling surfer by the arm

Associated Press

MELBOURNE — A surfer paddling out to catch a wave was grabbed by a shark that "shook him like a pit bull" and left him with a severely damaged arm.

Robert Spratt, 50, of Melbourne Beach was attacked Tuesday afternoon, said fellow surfer Mike Quintal.

"All of the sudden, he went to take the last paddle and a shark about 6 feet long grabbed on to his arm," Quintal said. "It broke the bones and almost bit his arm in half. It was unreal, like watching a movie. It just came up and latched on and wouldn't let go."

The shark thrashed his tail out of the water while Spratt struggled to get free, Quintal said.

"The shark apparently came up and shook him like a pit bull," said Brevard County Fire-Rescue spokesman Mark Francesconi. "Apparently he had to punch it two or three times before it released him."

Quintal helped Spratt to shore, and an off-duty paramedic who was fishing nearby bandaged his arm.

Spratt was taken to Holmes Regional Medical Center in Melbourne where he underwent several hours of surgery. He was in stable condition Wednesday.

Earlier Tuesday, an 18-year-

old surfer in Indian Lagoon, less than five miles north, received minor cuts on his left foot in a shark attack, a city spokesman said. Mark Evans was treated and released at Holmes.

"This time of year they come in close following the bluefish that are migrating," said shark expert Woody Woodrum of Melbourne Beach. The former East Coast Shark Club president tags sharks for the National Marine Fisheries Service.

"Most of the shark bites come about this time of year when the water is murky and they come in close to give birth," Woodrum said.

2 Florida surfers hit by sharks in separate attacks

MELBOURNE, Fla. (AP) — Two surfers were recovering from separate shark attacks that left one man hospitalized after a shark took his arm in its jaws.

Robert Spratt was paddling into position to catch a wave when he was attacked Tuesday afternoon, fellow surfer Mike Quintal said yesterday.

"All of the sudden, he went to take the last paddle and a shark about six feet long grabbed on to his arm," Mr. Quintal said. "It broke the bones and almost bit his arm in half. . . . It just came up and latched on and wouldn't let go."

The shark thrashed its tail while Mr. Spratt struggled to get free, said Mr. Quintal.

"The shark apparently came up and shook him like a pit bull," said Brevard County fire-rescue spokesman Mark Francesconi. "Apparently he had to punch it two or three times before it released him."

Mr. Quintal helped Mr. Spratt to shore and used his surfboard tether as a tourniquet until an off-duty paramedic fishing in the area arrived and bandaged the wound.

Mr. Spratt, 50, of Melbourne Beach, Fla., was in stable condition yesterday at Holmes Regional Medical Center in Melbourne after surgery for severe lacerations to his arm, hospital official said.

About five miles north, another surfer suffered minor cuts on his left foot in a separate shark attack earlier Tuesday, a city spokesman said. Mark Evans, 18, was treated and released.

"This time of year they come in close following the bluefish that are migrating," said shark expert Woody Woodrum.