

ACTIVITY: Surfing

CASE: GSAF 1990.11.01

DATE: Thursday November 1, 1990

LOCATION: The incident took place in the Atlantic Ocean at Spanish River Park Beach, Boca Raton, Palm Beach County, Florida, USA.

NAME: James Cornell

DESCRIPTION: He is a 24-year-old male, a junior at Florida Atlantic University. He has surfed in Boca Raton for 10 years.



BACKGROUND

MOON PHASE: Waxing Gibbous, 98% of the Moon was illuminated. Full Moon, November 2, 1990.

WEATHER / SEA CONDITIONS: strong winds and heavy seas

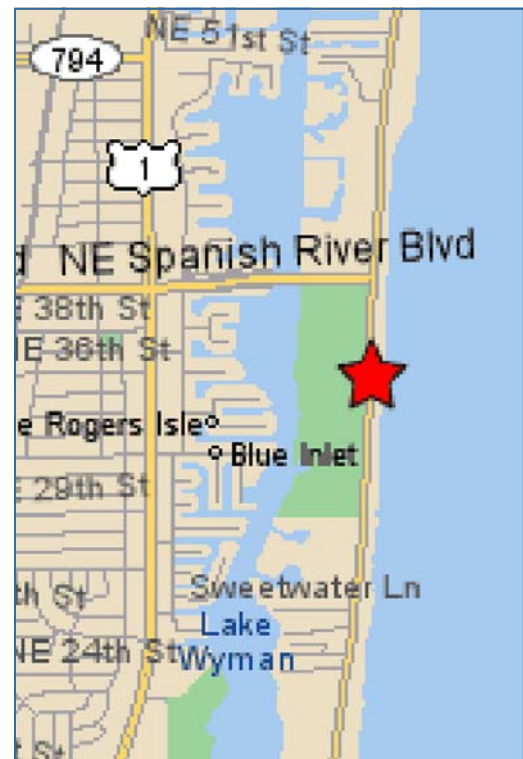
ENVIRONMENT: Spanish River Park takes its name from a shallow fresh water stream which once flowed along what is now the western edge of the park.

DEPTH OF WATER: Three feet

TIME: 09h00 or 09h30

NARRATIVE: James Cornell dived off his surfboard when he reached the shallows. "Right as I hit the bottom, the shark grabbed me on the shoulder," said Cornell. Lifeguards closed Spanish River Park beach for the rest of the day.

INJURY: The surfer sustained a six-inch laceration to his shoulder, his ear lobe was lacerated, and there were minor scratches on his hand.



FIRST AID / TREATMENT: The lifeguards dried him off, determined that the cut was not deep, and he persuaded them not to call an ambulance. Instead, he got friends to drive him to the medical office where his mother works (Boca Raton Community Hospital?). Some 50 to 55 stitches were needed to repair the laceration on his shoulder and patch up his ear lobe, and he was given the required immunizations. He was back in class the next day.

SPECIES: "They tell me it was probably a five-foot shark, only around 20 or 30 pounds," said Cornell.

SOURCES: Miami Herald, November 2, 1990; The News, November 2, 1990; Palm Beach Post, November 3, 1990, page 2B; George Vecsey, New York Times, November 25, 1990

► SHARK ATTACK

Bitten surfer needs 55 stitches

*Attack off Boca beach
first locally in 1990*

By CARL HERZOG
STAFF WRITER

A Boca Raton man suffered deep cuts Thursday morning after being attacked by a shark while surfing at the north end of Spanish River Park.

Sharks feeding on schools of southbound migratory fish are a common sight along South Florida beaches in the fall, but this is the first attack on a human in the area this year.

James Cornell, 24, was bitten when he dived off his surfboard into 3 feet of water at 9:30 a.m.

"Right as I hit the bottom he grabbed me on the (left) shoulder," said Cornell, who was also cut on the left ear, wrist and hand in the attack. He received 55 stitches at Boca Raton Community Hospital and was released.

Cornell, who has surfed on Boca Raton beaches for about 10 years, said he has never been bitten by a shark before, but that the experience won't prevent him from getting back in the water.

Most of the sharks following the schools of mullet and mackerel are less than 10 feet long. Most attacks on humans occur when sharks mistake swimmers for fish, said Bob Hueter, a shark expert at the Mote Marine Laboratory in Sarasota.

"These are not large, man-eating type predators," said Hueter. "It's a very unpredictable incident."

Two surfers were attacked in a similar incident in Melbourne on Wednesday. The last fatal shark attack in Florida



James Cornell, a 24-year-old FAU senior, got the worst of it in a run-in with a shark Thursday while surfing off of Boca Raton.

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Bob Hueter, shark expert

occurred in Panama City on the Gulf of Mexico when a bull shark attacked a swimmer in the summer of 1988.

Although blacktip sharks are the most commonly seen, Hueter said Cornell may have been attacked by a nurse shark. Slow-moving bottom feeders, nurse sharks may attack humans when stepped on or bumped.

Lifeguards say they have seen numerous schools of the fish along the beaches recently and often clear the water until the schools have moved on. □

WHAT TO DO

Sharks are often in the area of schooling baitfish.

If you see the schools, identifiable from a distance as large shifting shadows, move out of the area.

Follow the advice of lifeguards, who may clear the water if sharks or large schools of the fish are sighted.

Surfers should avoid paddling through the schools and look for thrashing in the water that may indicate the fish are being attacked.

The News (Boca Raton, Delray Beach, Boynton Beach, Deerfield Beach), Friday November 2, 1990