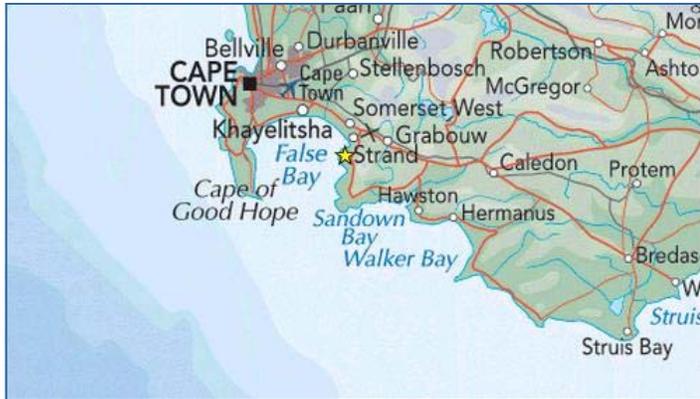


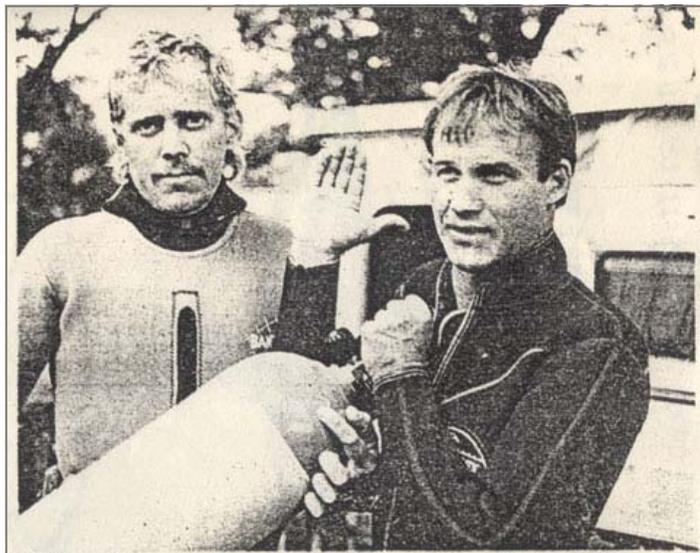
**ACTIVITY:** Scuba Diving  
**CASE:** GSAF 1991.05.19 / SA-499  
**DATE:** Saturday May 19, 1991  
**LOCATION:** The incident took place in the Indian Ocean 130° off Gordon's Bay Harbour on the eastern shore of False Bay 146 kilometres from Table Bay harbour, Western Cape Province, South Africa.  
34°09'S, 18°52'E.



**NAMES:** Coen Marais and Louis Jordaan

### BACKGROUND

**WEATHER:** The sky was clear  
**MOON PHASE:** Full Moon, May 17, 1991  
**SEA CONDITIONS:** The water temperature was estimated to be about 15°C and underwater visibility was about six metres.  
**ENVIRONMENT:** The incident took place on a rocky reef.  
**DISTANCE FROM SHORE:** 1.5 kilometres  
**DEPTH OF WATER AT INCIDENT SITE:** 15 metres  
**TIME:** 13h30



**SURVIVORS . . .** Mr Coen Marais (left) points out the scratches made on the scuba tank by a Great White shark. Mr Louis Jordaan shows how he pushed and punched the shark. Picture: BENNY GOOL

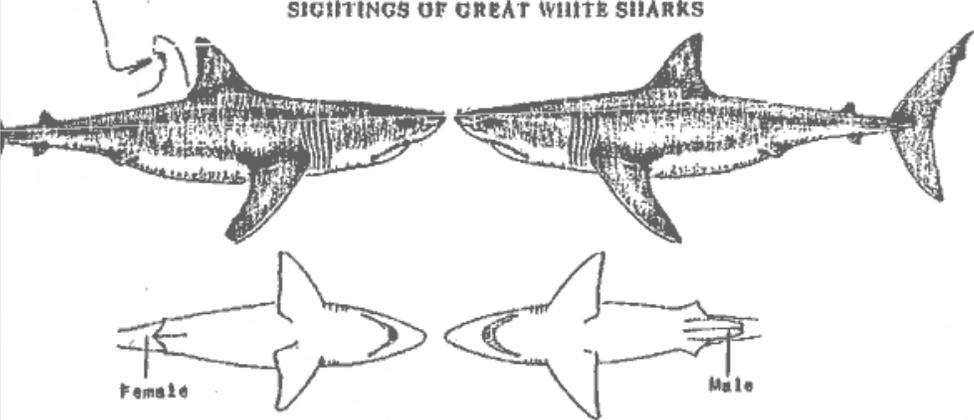
**NARRATIVE:** Minutes before the shark appeared Coen Marais and Louis Jordaan had been cutting redbait off the rocks and feeding it to myriads of fish. They had 17 minutes of bottom time when Marais was bumped from behind by a shark and his mask was flooded. "When I cleared (my mask) I saw Louis pushing the shark away with his hands," said Marais. "The shark, a 3,5-metre female white shark with serrated bite marks on her first dorsal fin, circled one and a half times and then swam directly at us. This happened six or seven times". As the shark made repeated passes the two divers held on to each other, screamed at the shark and took up defensive positions back-to-back. Each time the shark came in slowly. "Her movements were not very fast; she seemed to be inquisitive." Each time the divers were able to duck out of her way. Although Marais took out his knife he made no attempt to stab the shark but pushed the fish away or punched her lower body as she swam past. Finally the divers swam after the shark aggressively and she swam away. The divers' air was low due to hyperventilation, nevertheless the pair remained submerged for several minutes; they felt ascending would have made them more vulnerable if the shark returned.

**INJURY:** Neither diver was injured, but Marais' yellow scuba tank was scratched by the teeth of the shark.

**SPECIES:** The shark was subsequently identified as 'Notchfin', an individual catalogued by the White Shark Unit of the South African Museum.

**CASE INVESTIGATOR:** George Askew

**WESTERN PROVINCE UNDERWATER UNION/NATAL SHARKS BOARD**  
**SIGHTINGS OF GREAT WHITE SHARKS**



Date : ..... Time : 13130 Water visibility : 6 m  
Locality : Gordon's Bay  
Water temperature (estimated or measured)  $\pm 15^{\circ}$  Surface : ..... Bottom :  $\pm 15^{\circ}$   
Cloud cover : None Wind direction & speed : .....  
No. of sharks sighted : ..... Water depth : 15m Current : groundswell  
Was the shark/s definitely great white ? Yes Size :  $\pm 3.5m$  Sex : female  
Number of seals and their distance from sighting point :  
.....  
Details of fish shot :  
Species : ..... Time before shark sighting : ..... Fish boated or strung : .....  
Scuba diving  
.....  
Have great whites been seen here before (i.e. often, occasional, rare, never) :  
rare  
Do you think there is any link between the presence of the sharks and fish and/or seals ?  
Yes, busy feeding fish with redbait

# Divers fight Great White

Cape Times - 20 Feb 1991

By PETER DENNEHY

TWO Stellenbosch divers barehandedly fought off a Great White shark which attacked them seven times near Gordon's Bay on Saturday, its razor-sharp teeth clearly visible in its gaping jaws.

According to Mr Coen Marais, a partner in the Stellenbosch-based TCS Dive Centre, they punched the shark, shoved it away, ducked out of its way, and screamed at it. He and his diving companion, Mr Louis Jordaan, escaped unharmed.

Mr Jordaan said he remembered the teeth quite clearly, as he had focused on them each time the shark attacked with its jaws open. He demonstrated how wide open the shark's mouth was. It seemed wide enough to have bitten his head off.

Mr Marais has a few new scratches on his air tank, which he believes were made by the teeth of the 3.5m shark when it first bumped him from behind. He had no doubt about it being a Great White.

"We could actually see its black eyes go

grey at the last moment as he got to us," he said. "A membrane went over its eye. One of his pectoral fins hit me."

He said its eyes were as big as one rand coin.

The two men had been diving for 17 minutes at lunchtime on Saturday at a reef 1.5km off Gordon's Bay harbour. Minutes before the attack they had cut redbait off the rocks at a depth of 15m and fed it to myriads of fish — which disappeared before the shark arrived.

## Screamed

"Something knocked me from behind and my mask was flooded. When I cleared it I saw Louis pushing away a shark, twice our size, with his hands," Mr Marais said.

In the next six or seven minutes the two divers held onto each other and screamed together, or took up positions back to back, as they braced themselves to fend off repeated sorties by the shark.

"We were hyperventilating, and our air was running low. It was only after the third attack that I thought we had a chance of getting out

alive."

Mr Marais took out his knife, but he did not try to stab the shark in case he enraged it. Both men punched the shark — mostly in its lower body — or pushed it away each time it came at them.

It came in surprisingly slowly, they said, and it was possible to duck out of its way. During the last attack they swam after the shark aggressively, and it swam away.

They waited a couple of minutes to see if it would return before daring to ascend to the surface, as they felt rising made them more vulnerable.

Mr Marais, a veteran of over 200 False Bay dives, said he would not stop diving, but on the other hand he would no longer do night dives at that reef, as he used to.

• Shark expert Mr George Askew, who interviewed the two yesterday, said they were lucky to be alive, but the incident also showed that Great Whites were not the "crazed blind killers" they were often made out to be. He and the two divers approve of the recently-imposed ban on killing Great White sharks.