

ACTIVITY: Body boarding

CASE [GSAF 1994.12.30](#) / SA-415

DATE: Friday December 30, 1994

LOCATION: The incident took place in South Africa's Western Cape Province at Tergriet, Mossel Bay. Mossel Bay is located at $34^{\circ}10,5'S$, $22^{\circ}08,3'E$

NAME: Fritz van Zyl

DESCRIPTION: The body-boarder, a 26-year-old male is 1,8 metres tall and weighs 75 kilograms. He was clad in a short-sleeved red, green and black wetsuit and wore black swim fins. He had a black leash attached to his right arm, and had no injuries prior to the incident.

BODYBOARD: The upper surface of the board is grey, its undersurface is red.



Fritz van Zyl with his body board

BACKGROUND

WEATHER: It was a sunny, hot and windless day; the air temperature was 35°C and the sky was cloudless.

MOON PHASE: Waning Crescent, 6% of the Moon was illuminated. New Moon, January 1, 1995.

SEA CONDITIONS: The sea was calm; there were no currents or channels at the attack site. The water was green and visibility was about a metre. Sea temperature was estimated to be about 20°C .

ENVIRONMENT: "About 500 metres from the beach there is a reef," reported Van Zyl, "and according to airline pilots they saw a lot of sharks behind this reef, but they never seem to come over the reef closer than the beach. I sighted a shark at the same spot where this incident took place about two years ago, but managed to get out quickly."

DISTANCE FROM SHORE: 130 metres

DISTANCE FROM ROCKS: 100 metres

DEPTH OF WATER: Unknown

TIME: 16h00

NARRATIVE: Van Zyl had been in the water for about 30 minutes. He was holding onto his board, facing seaward, and waiting for waves. The bodyboarder was alone in the water when he noticed "a two- to three-metre" shape circling him. At first he thought it was a porpoise, but "then I noticed a long grey-white coloured fin and knew it was a shark," he said. "The next thing it dived and I knew it was coming for me." Van Zyl crouched on his board when he saw the shark come up underneath him. "I pulled my legs up and tried to keep the board between me and the shark. The bump from the shark lifted me and the board clean out of the water. I shoved the board in the shark's mouth, it grabbed it and swam out towards the sea." Van Zyl was dragged by the leash on his arm that was attached to the board, and had to rip it off before making his way slowly to the shore.

INJURY: No injury

DAMAGE TO BOARD: The shark made a single bite on the board, removing a large arc of material. The board washed up on a beach in the Great Brak River area.

SPECIES INVOLVED: Examination of the board indicates a white shark, *Carcharodon carcharias*, about 5,5 metres in length, was involved.

CASE INVESTIGATORS: Marie Levine and Mark Marks, Shark Research Institute