

**ACTIVITY:** Standing

**CASE:** [GSAF 1995.07.28.b](#)

**DATE:** Friday July 28, 1995

**LOCATION:** The incident took place in the Atlantic Ocean slightly south of Ponce de Leon Inlet, Volusia County, Florida, USA.

29.1°N, 81°W

**NAME:** Eric Kozak

**DESCRIPTION:** He is an 18-year-old male from Winter Park, a freshman at the University of Florida.

### **BACKGROUND**

**MOON PHASE:** New Moon, July 27, 1995

**DEPTH OF WATER:** Waist-deep

**TIME:** 14h30

**NARRATIVE:** Eric Kozak had been surfing and just finished riding a wave. He was standing in the water. "I was just trying to retrieve my board, and I felt something bump me on the side. I thought it was my board. Then I felt something on my leg and it pulled me down. I shoved my board down to bring me back up . . . I lifted up my leg and saw a huge gash." Another surfer helped Kozak ashore.

**INJURY:** There was a three- to four-inch gash which extended around the lower right leg and smaller scrapes along the anterior ankle.

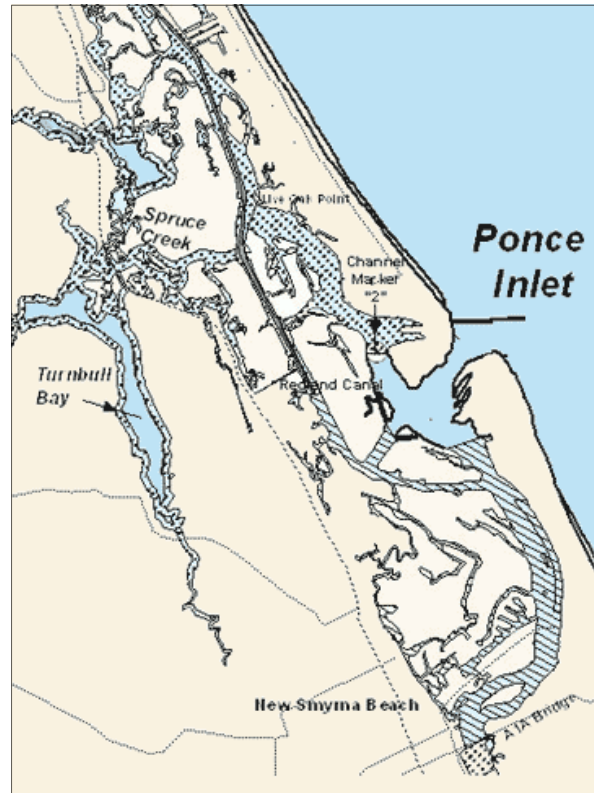
**TREATMENT:** At Fish Memorial Hospital in New Smyrna Beach, Kozak's injury was repaired with eight stitches and he was sent home.

**SPECIES INVOLVED:** Not identified

**NOTE:** Two other surfers were bitten within 100 yards of him within 15 minutes.

**SOURCES:** Palm Beach Post, July 30, 1995; Corey Lancaster & Mark Losey, Orlando Sentinel, July 29, 1995 edition, page A.1; Gainesville Sun, Tuesday August 1, 1995, front page; Pat LaMee, Orlando Sentinel, August 12, 1995, page D.1.

**CASE INVESTIGATOR:** Captain Scott Petersohn; Morris M. Vorenberg



SUNDAY, JULY 30, 1995

## Sharks bite surfers near New Smyrna

The Associated Press

### NEW SMYRNA BEACH

— Three surfers were attacked by sharks at a rocky spot where fish congregate, attracting the hungry predators.

The surfers weren't seriously injured.

The trio was bitten on their legs Friday afternoon probably by sharks prowling for fish, Volusia County lifeguards said.

"It probably was a school of sharks," said lifeguard Capt. Paul Pivec. "It was nothing severe, but it's something to be concerned about."

One surfer, Eric Kozak, was taken to Fish Memorial Hospital and received eight stitches to close 3- and 4-inch wounds on his legs. He had just finished riding a wave and was standing in waist-deep water when he was bitten.

The sharks bit the surfers and quickly let go. Sharks bite usually because they mistake legs for fish, lifeguards said.

Up to 10 people are bitten each year off Volusia County beaches, officials said.

# In the grasp of a shark

## Attack gave UF student the fright of his life

By DAVID GREENBERG

Sun staff writer

**E**ric Kozak was "beyond scared" Friday when he looked down and found his right leg in the mouth of a shark.

The attack on Florida's east coast was one of about 10 or 15 a year in this state, of a total of about 45 worldwide.

Kozak, 18, an Incoming University of Florida freshman from Winter Park, was surfing in waters off New Smyrna Beach with his friend, Tony Chetti, when something bumped into his leg.

"I had caught this wave and had just finished riding when my board shot out from under me," Kozak said. "As I went to retrieve it, I felt something hit me on the side — strong. It was enough force to spin me around."

Kozak, who had seen some big fish that he thought were sharks far out in the water a little earlier, thought he had been bumped by a shark. But it wasn't the first time he'd been bumped, and he didn't think much of it.

"As I tried to jump on the board, it bit," Kozak said. "It had my entire leg in its mouth. It pulled and nearly submerged me. I started thrashing and acting aggressive, and it let go. It thrashed about for a bit and swam away."

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STEPHEN MURFIN/The Gainesville Sun

Eric Kozak shows the stitches on his right calf Monday, two days after being bitten by a shark in the surf off New Smyrna Beach. Kozak was standing in waist-deep water with his surf board when the shark bumped him and then bit his leg.

"Nothing can compare to this. It scared me out of my mind that this thing was going for me. I kept thinking that I had to get out of there."

ERIC KOZAK

### Sharks in this area

A look at the species most common in waters hip deep or shallower off Cedar Key, Crescent and St. Augustine beaches.

Major attacking species in Florida waters, but not very dangerous. Attacks on humans are generally mistakes, leaving small wounds.

#### Blacktip Shark

Length: 2.8 ft



#### Spinner Shark

Length: 3 ft



#### Atlantic Sharpnose Shark

Length: 1.2 ft



Not known to attack humans.

#### Blacknose Shark

Length: 2 ft



Least common to attack, but most dangerous.

#### Tiger Shark

Length: 3 ft



#### Bull Shark

Length: 3.7 ft



SOURCE: George H. Burgess, Director of the International Shark Attack File, Florida Museum of Natural History

JONI SCHMIDT/The Gainesville Sun

# SHARK.

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"Fear," said Kozak, who has been surfing about four years, was a mild description of what he was going through.

"Nothing can compare to this," he said. "This thing is as big as me. It could have taken my leg off. It scared me out of my mind that this thing was going for me. I kept thinking that I had to get out of there."

Kozak got out of the water, covered his cuts with a shirt and had Chetti take him to the hospital. He received eight stitches and went on to his parents' house.

Kozak told his story on Monday from his UF dorm room, where, hanging from the wall next to surfing posters, is the jaw of a blacktip shark.

George Burgess, a biologist at the Florida Museum of Natural History and director of the International Shark Attack File, said the jaw hanging from Kozak's wall may be similar to the jaw that had his leg last Friday. And, he said, this kind of attack is typical.

"This is very common," he said. "Shark attacks are not a rare phenomenon in Florida. We tend the world in the actual number of attacks in a given year."

Most attacks — up to 80 percent — occur just like this one. They are on the east coast of Florida and involve a young, white male standing in about hip-deep, murky water. There's often some injury, but usually it's just cuts.

"There's a lot of people in the water here, and a lot of them are young, white males — usually surfers," Burgess said.

He said attacks are usually a case of mistaken identity.

"The sharks — usually blacktips or spinners — make the mistake that the splashing human being is a food item," he said. "Once they discover that the mullet they grabbed doesn't taste like a mullet, feel like a mullet and is far too large to be a mullet, they let go."

Ed McManus, the general manager at Inland Surf Shop, has been surfing for 27 years. He said it only takes common sense to avoid attacks.

"When you see one, the best thing to do is get out and wait for them to clear out."

Kozak's recent incident won't keep him away from the water.

"No way," he said, when asked if he was finished with surfing. "I'll be in the water as soon as I get my stitches out Friday. Nothing's going to hold me back, but I do have new respect for the ocean. I'll probably get out of the water next time I see them."



**COOPERATIVE SHARK RESEARCH & ATTACK DATA CENTER**  
4500 Poinsettia Avenue D-12 West Palm Beach, Florida 33407  
(407)845-6636

Sunday eve

Marie.....

FYI - - - Local newspaper reports three surfers attacked/bitten by sharks at a rocky spot off New Smyrna Beach (Volusia County, Fla). None seriously injured but one (Eric Kozak) received eight stitches to close 3- and 4- inch wounds on his legs. [Hospital was Fish Memorial in, I assume, New Smyrna Beach]. He was standing with the others, in waist-deep water after having just ridden a wave into shore. "The sharks bit the surfers and quickly let go." Lifeguard, Capt. Paul Pivec, [again assuming New Smyrna Beach] said that "It was probably a school of sharks. Nothing severe but something to be concerned about."

Have the Dr. Faulkingham and other material photocopied but am looking for the slides of Samples injuries and some other pieces to send. Will get it all off during the week. Also trying to get my records' in some sort of workable condition before doing any basic reports. Still think the 'book' is a good idea???????

MAY (stress MAY) have my WinFax working. You can try it out (number 1-845-6636). Will leave it on auto receive between 3:30-4:30 PM tomorrow PM. With the weather were having I don't like to leave the PC on when I'm away.

Take care.....

Morry V.