



ACTIVITY: Spearfishing

CASE: [GSAF 1996.09.01.a](#) / SA-418

DATE: Sunday September 1, 1996

LOCATION: The incident took place at Hibberdene on the south coast of KwaZulu-Natal. Hibberdene is 93 kilometres [57.8 miles] south of Durban, South Africa.

NAME: Gyula Plaganyi

DESCRIPTION: The spearfisherman is a 29-year-old male from Westville. He was awarded Springbok spearfishing colours in 1990.

SUPPORT BOAT: None, the divers entered the water from the shore.

BACKGROUND

MOON PHASE: Waning Gibbous, 82% of the Moon was illuminated.

ENVIRONMENT: The diver was on a shallow reef.

DISTANCE FROM SHORE: Unknown, but the reef is located about 200 metres behind the backline of breakers.

INCIDENT NARRATIVE: Gyula Plaganyi and 21-year-old Barrett Harvey of Amanzimtoti were spearfishing. Plaganyi had just shot a cuckoo bass when he was approached by a white shark. He threw the fish that he had just shot to the shark but the shark ignored it. Instead, the shark turned and nudged Plaganyi's spear. With that, the spearfisherman jabbed the shark:

"The shark's head butted me quite hard and knocked my mask and snorkel sideways. I got really worried. He began pushing me around on the surface. All I could see was plenty of teeth and what looked like blackheads on his nose."

"I stabbed him in the nose with my spear and knocked some of his teeth out. He was getting more and more annoyed and tying me up in circles with my line."

"The shark was completely unafraid, bold, confident, very aggressive and very curious. I decided there was nothing I could do but shoot him. I went in just behind the eye and it was like sticking a pin into him. I thought he would grab me but he turned and swam down."

"The next thing my float (attached to the speargun) came whizzing past me like a bullet. I looked out of the water and screamed for my buddy. Then I saw the shark jump out of the water like a dolphin and I saw my float coming round back at me."

Plaganyi and his dive buddy swam to shore. From the beach, Barrett saw the shark "jump out of the water further offshore as if it were trying to rid itself of the spear."

INJURY: None.

SPECIES INVOLVED: According to the divers, the shark was a white shark, *Carcharodon carcharias*, about three metres in length.

COMMENT: Despite media reports to the contrary, this was a provoked incident. The spearfisherman, frightened by the shark's threat display, was uninjured but responded with

aggression.

CASE INVESTIGATOR: Andrew Gifford, Shark Research Institute