



ACTIVITY: Surfing

CASE: GSAF 1997.10.21

DATE: Tuesday October 21, 1997

LOCATION: The incident took place in the Atlantic Ocean near the North Jetty, Fort Pierce Inlet State Park, St. Lucie County, Florida, USA.

NAME: Jacob McBee

DESCRIPTION: He is a 12-year-old male.



BACKGROUND

MOON PHASE: Third Quarter, October 23, 1997

ENVIRONMENT: Every October or November, about 10 species of sharks start migrating into the area from northern waters, following schools of mullet and menhaden, said Mark Perry, director of the Florida Oceanographic Society in Stuart. Sharks move in to the shallows as they follow the huge schools of baitfish, Perry said. "Mackerel and bluefish migrate down with them and they will sometimes bite, as well," Perry said. "So if you see schools of fish, get out of the water and stay out until they pass."

DISTANCE FROM SHORE:

DEPTH OF WATER: Three to four feet

TIME: 18h00

NARRATIVE: St. Lucie County Marine Safety Officer Bill McNeely said sightings of sharks have been minimal this fall, but they have been spotted near the North Jetty at the Fort Pierce Inlet State Recreation Area. That's where Jacob was practicing for a surfing competition Saturday, said his mother, Mary McBee. "He's been going a few times a week and he and his dad had been up there for a couple of hours when it happened," she said. "Saturday would have been his second competition for the National Scholastic Surfing Association.

"It was 6 o'clock and I motioned him to move back closer to where I was," Jay McBee (Jacob's father) said. As Jacob came in on the last wave, he fell off his surfboard and the shark clamped down on his foot and pulled. Jacob kicked the fish in its head and it let go.

INJURY: The boy's left foot was bitten, ripping tendons. "You could see the triangular bite marks," Jacob said.

FIRST AID / TREATMENT: Jay saw an angler run towards his son. By the time he reached Jacob, the angler had wrapped the boy's foot, but it had bled through the wrapping.

On Tuesday evening, Jacob underwent three hours of surgery at Columbia Lawnwood Regional Medical Center and received more than 40 stitches. His mother said her son's prognosis is good, and Jacob's orthopedic surgeon said he should regain full use of his foot after about six weeks on crutches.

SPECIES: The incident involved a 1.2- to 1.5-metre [four to five-foot] shark. Residents report that the most common species in local waters are blacktips, sand sharks, lemon sharks and hammerheads. McNeely said the St. Lucie County sheriff's helicopter is cruising beaches daily, giving lifeguards updates on shark sightings.

SOURCE: Fort Pierce News, October 24, 1997, page A2