

**ACTIVITY:** Paddle boarding

**CASE:** **GSFAF 1998.03.08**

**DATE:** Sunday March 8, 1998

**LOCATION:** The incident took place in the Atlantic Ocean at Loggerhead Park, Palm Beach County, Florida, USA.

**NAME:** Rick Welch

**DESCRIPTION:** He is a 32-year-old male and has been a county lifeguard for eight years.

**BACKGROUND**

**MOON PHASE:** First Quarter, March 5, 1998

**ENVIRONMENT:** The incident took place near the Juno Pier.

**DISTANCE FROM SHORE:** 180 to 200 yards

**TIME:** Morning



**NARRATIVE:** Welch was stroking on his paddle board well-outside the guarded area, part of a daily training exercise. Suddenly, the shark leapt from the water, spun above the surface, and crashed onto his back. "I heard a big splash and he was on top of me," Welch said. "He caught his teeth on me as he landed. I remember thinking for a split second, 'Get off me and don't bite'. It wasn't a deliberate attack. I'm sure he was just as startled as I was. It was, in no way, an aggressive move."

Welch managed to signal a partner nearby that he was coming in and paddled his way to shore.

**INJURY:** The lifeguard sustained six tooth marks to his left calf. One tooth hit the muscle of his calf. The shark did not close its jaws. "It would have been a lot worse if he had clamped down on something like my Achilles tendon," said Welch.

**FIRST AID / TREATMENT:** Within 10 minutes, Palm Beach County Fire-Rescue paramedics were on the scene and transported him to Jupiter Medical Center. Welch received 20 stitches and was released three hours later. It was expected he will be able to return to work in about two weeks.

**SPECIES:** According to Welch, the incident involved a five-foot spinner shark. "Spinner sharks are numerous here this time of year, and I've had a half-dozen jump within 10 feet of me in the last few years," said Welch.

**SOURCES:** Jeff Alexander, Jupiter Courier, March 11, 1998, page A1; Palm Beach Post, March 10, 1998, page 4B