

**ACTIVITY:** Snorkeling

**CASE:** GSAF 1998.03.15 / SA-430

**DATE:** Sunday March 15, 1998

**LOCATION:** The attack took place in Saldanha Bay, Western Cape Province, South Africa.



**NAME:** Kevin Dewey

**DESCRIPTION:** The diver, a 33-year-old male, is a commercial diver employed by Cape Diving and Salvage in Table Bay Harbour. He was wearing a seven-millimetre wetsuit, seven-millimetre cold water boots, weightbelt, mask, snorkel and "thick large fins". He was diving for crayfish and abalone, so it is likely that he was carrying a mesh bag and "ab-iron" as well. He was not wearing SCUBA.

**SUPPORT BOAT:** No mention is made of a support boat and the divers exited the water at the beach.



## BACKGROUND

**WEATHER:** The sky was overcast.

**MOON PHASE:** Full Moon, March 13, 1998

**SEA CONDITIONS:** The sea was clean and unusually warm for the area; the diver estimated the water temperature was between 15° and 17°C. "The water wasn't as cold as the West Coast (Atlantic Ocean) usually gets; its been quite warm since September," Dewey said. "The water was clear at the surface, but a thermocline was present and there was a layer of dirty water" on the seafloor. A one-metre swell was running."

**ENVIRONMENT:** Saldanha Bay, a natural harbor on the southwestern coast of South Africa, lies about 105 kilometres [65 miles] northwest of Cape Town. It is home to numerous fish canneries. Local fishermen reported that they had seen a number of sharks prior to this incident.

**DISTANCE FROM SHORE:** 100 metres

**TIME:** 17h30

**NARRATIVE:** Kevin Dewey and another commercial diver, Nico Meyer, were hunting crayfish and abalone.

"I was looking out to sea when the shark grabbed my left leg below the knee and ripped down towards my ankle, pulling me underwater. I managed to get my head out of the water for a quick breath of air. With the second pull, the shark dragged me underwater for a longer time. At this stage I was not panicked, I was kicking a lot and I managed to get free. Once I surfaced, I just started swimming for the shore. After about 50 metres I got very weak and called to Nico to come and help me. I got really scared when I was finning back to shore and ran out of energy: I couldn't kick or swim any more. That's when I thought that the shark was going to attack me again. Nico came over and helped me fin toward shore."

The shark circled the two men twice while they were swimming back to shore but did not display any aggression. Dewey was able to swim towards the beach for the first 50 yards,

and then was assisted by Meyer.

**INJURY:** The diver's left leg was lacerated, but no tendons were severed and recovery was complete.

**DAMAGE TO EQUIPMENT:** The diver's fin came off while his foot was in the shark's mouth and he ditched his weightbelt and "all the extra baggage."

**FIRST AID:** "Nico administered first aid on the rocks and applied a tourniquet to my leg, and got me out of there to a hospital very quickly," reported Dewey.

**TREATMENT:** "In the first operation, they stabilized the wound and a few days later they did the final operation and skin grafting," said the diver.

**SPECIES INVOLVED:** According to the divers, the incident involved a three-metre white shark, *Carcharodon carcharias*.

**COMMENT:** The diver, undaunted by his experience, said "I definitely have to get back into the water in the same place to find my weight belt; I definitely want to get the experience past me as well."

**CASE INVESTIGATOR:** Charles Maxwell.