

ACTIVITY: Body-boarding

CASE: GSAF 1998.06.22 / SA-432

DATE: Monday June 22, 1998

LOCATION: The attack took place in the Indian Ocean at Gonubie Point, 13 kilometres northeast of East London Harbour, Eastern Cape Province, South Africa.

32°56'S, 28°02,1'E



NAME: Anton de Vos

DESCRIPTION: The body-boarder, a 20-year-old male, was a third-year student at Saasveld, a section of Port Elizabeth Technikon's forestry department.

BACKGROUND

WEATHER: It was a fine and mild day. There was a moderate westerly to southwesterly breeze. Air temperatures ranged from 7.5°C to 20.5°C, humidity was 50% and the barometric pressure was: 1021,3 hpa (falling). Wind direction (at 14:00) was SE at 15 knots.

MOON PHASE: Waning Crescent with 4% of the moon's visible disk illuminated. New Moon on June 24, 1998 at 05:51 (Universal Time + 2h).

SEA CONDITIONS: The sea temperature was 18,5°C.

ENVIRONMENT: East London Aquarium curator Willie Maritz said that he called the city's chief lifeguard 30 minutes before the attack to alert him that "there was great white shark activity in the area." Maritz said Gonubie spearfisherman Frank Scholtz had contacted on Sunday night to say that he had seen a shark in the area.

DISTANCE FROM SHORE: 50 metres

TIME: 09h55



Anton de Vos

NARRATIVE: Witness Foden Saunders said he arrived at the scene saw DeVos splashing in the water. "The shark lifted him out of the water and we could see its upper body as Anton tried to punch it," said Saunders. "The shark looked like a torpedo. It was like something out of the movies." Saunders said DeVos called for his brother, lifesaver Paul DeVos. Paul and another man dashed into the water and pulled the injured body-boarder to the beach, where Dr. Brent Kelly assisted them.

INJURY: Fatal. The body-boarder was bitten on his right calf and left thigh, where an artery was severed. Both of his hands were lacerated.

FIRST AID: Ambulance and police personnel arrived shortly after DeVos was taken from the water. While on the beach, he suffered cardiac arrest, but was resuscitated by medical personnel and then transported to St. Dominic's hospital in East London.

TREATMENT: At the hospital, the patient received a blood transfusion after an emergency call on local radio stations for blood donations. That afternoon, his left leg was surgically amputated above the knee. However, "due to the massive loss of blood, the patient

developed a bleeding disorder and was put on life support.” On Monday evening, the hospital spokesperson reported that his condition was “extremely critical and unstable”. He died at 16h15 the next day.

SPECIES INVOLVED: The attack involved a white shark, *Carcharodon carcharias*.

COMMENT: East London Recreational Services chief Henk Els ordered all municipal beaches closed when informed of the attack. Warning signs advising people to stay out of the water were erected at Gonubie, Bonza Bay, Eastern Beach, Nahoon and Orient Beach. Els said that beaches would remain closed “for the next day or two” until the authorities felt confident there would be no further danger.

SOURCE: Daily Dispatch (East London) June 23, 1998
<http://www.dispatch.co.za/1998/06/23/>

CASE INVESTIGATOR: Andrew Gifford, Shark Research Institute-South Africa

NOTE: The attack on De Vos brings to six the number of people injured by sharks in the past five weeks in the Eastern Cape. The first attack occurred at Keurbooms beach in Plettenburg Bay on May 16 when South African bodyboard champion Neal Stephenson lost his right foot and suffered serious injuries to his left leg. Doctors later amputated Stephenson’s right leg above the knee.

A week later two surfers were attacked within hours of each other. Jan Hendrik Opperman, 16, was attacked at Jeffrey’s Bay and Marc Junker, 15, at Sardinia Bay near Port Elizabeth.

On May 30, Jamie Harrington was attacked at Pollock Beach in Port Elizabeth, and on June 5, Danny Bravier was tossed from his board by a shark in Jeffrey’s Bay.