

**ACTIVITY:** Surfing

**CASE:** [GSAF 1999.08.26](#)

**DATE:** Thursday August 26, 1999

**LOCATION:** The incident took place in the Atlantic Ocean near the 6800 block of Atlantic Avenue near the intersection of Pompano Avenue at Bethune Beach, Volusia County, Florida, USA  
29°N, 81°W

**NAME:** Chris Ayers

**DESCRIPTION:** The surfer is a 28-year-old white male from Orlando, Florida. He was wearing black bathing trunks.

#### **BACKGROUND**

**MOON PHASE:** Full Moon

**SEA CONDITIONS:** The water inside the surf zone was turbid; beyond the surf zone the water was clear.

**DEPTH OF WATER:** Eight to 10 feet

**TIME:** 14h30



**NARRATIVE:** Ayers was surfing with friends but nobody was within 50 feet of him when he was bitten. A shark bit and tugged briefly on his foot, and then let go. "He told me he had just put his foot in the water when he felt the bite," said bystander Jim Poulalion of Altamonte Springs. "He paddled himself in, got off his board and came in." The surfer stated that the bite was a quick jerk and release followed by an immediate stinging burning pain.

**INJURY:** The surfer sustained several 1/8" lacerations on the dorsum of his right foot proximal to his toes. He also had several two-inch lacerations very close together on the posterior heel. The most severe wound was on the dorsum of his foot, an avulsion approximately two inches in length and one inch wide in an oval shape just anterior to the apex of the ankle.

**FIRST AID / TREATMENT:** Upon arrival at the scene, lifesavers found Ayers supine on the beach while one of his friends elevated his right leg and had wrapped a towel around his right foot. Bleeding had diminished substantially. After determining the patient had an adequate pedal pulse, good capillary refill and motor function, gauze was applied around the foot to further control any bleeding and protect the injured area, and pedal pulse, capillary refill and motor function rechecked. Officer Scott Wise advised Ayers that he should be transported to a hospital via ambulance due to the unknown amount of blood loss. Ayers refused, stating he wanted to go via his friend's private vehicle. Officer Wise administered oxygen via a non-rebreather while officers Todd Snipes and Scott Dowling took vital signs. Ayers was transported to the public walkway approximately 100 yards north, where the officers assisted him into a vehicle. After getting into the vehicle, the wound began to bleed again. Officer Wise wrapped more gauze around it to control any further bleeding. Then Ayers left the scene with his friend. He was treated at Bert Fish Medical Center.

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**SPECIES INVOLVED:** Not identified, but it was said this incident involved a "small shark".

**SOURCES:** Orlando Sentinel, August 27, 1999, page D.3; Miami Herald, August 28, 1999

**CASE INVESTIGATOR:** Captain Scott Petersohn, GSAF

# Surfer gets bitten on foot by shark

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

**NEW SMYRNA BEACH --** A surfer paddling in the surf was bitten on the foot by a shark, leaving a three-inch gash.

According to witnesses and friends, Chris Ayers, 28, was bitten while surfing Thursday at Bethune Beach in Volusia County about five

miles south of New Smyrna Beach.

"He told me he had just put his foot in the water when he felt the bite," said bystander Jim Poulalion of Altamonte Springs. "He paddled himself in, got off his board and came ashore."

Ayers suffered a cut about a half-inch wide on top of his foot. He was

taken to Bert Fish Medical Center in stable condition.

This is the fourth reported shark bite of the year, according to the Volusia County Beach Patrol.

Sharks follow bait fish close to shore and can mistake hands or feet for small prey.

Ocala Star-Banner, Saturday August 28, 1999, page 1B