

ACTIVITY: Swimming

CASE: [GSAF 2001.05.23](#)

DATE: Wednesday May 23, 2001

LOCATION: The incident took place in the Atlantic Ocean off Coligny Beach, Hilton Head, Beaufort County, South Carolina, USA.

NAME: Tripp Choate

DESCRIPTION: The swimmer is an 11-year-old male from Clyde, North Carolina.

BACKGROUND

ENVIRONMENT: Coligny Beach, located near the south end of the island on Coligny Circle at Pope Avenue and South Forest Beach Drive, is the island's busiest beach. Shark fishing is banned island-wide, and the town outlaws shark fishing within 400 feet from a beach.

DEPTH OF WATER AT INCIDENT SITE:

Four and a half feet

TIME: Morning

NARRATIVE: Tripp and his father, Hamp Choate, were swimming when the boy felt something tug at his leg and swimming away. "It didn't feel like a bite," said Tripp. "It hit me and went away."

INJURY: There were five or six lacerations more than two inches in diameter on his shin.

TREATMENT: Hamp Choate transported his son to Urgent Care, where a doctor and three emergency medical technicians examined and repaired the boy's wound with 37 stitches.

SPECIES INVOLVED: According to the doctors, the injury appeared to have been made by a shark four and a half to five feet in length.

CASE INVESTIGATOR: Clay Creswell, Global Shark Accident File

11-year-old receives 37 stitches after apparent shark attack

HILTON HEAD ISLAND – An 11-year-old received 37 stitches for what doctors say might have been the Lowcountry's second shark attack in as many days.

Tripp Choate, of Clyde, N.C., was swimming with his father Monday in water about 4 feet deep when he felt something tug at his leg. "It didn't really feel like a bite," Tripp said Tuesday. "It hit me and went away."

On Sunday, Dr. Michael Heidenrech got a 5.5-inch shark bite across the base of his calf while swimming off Fripp Island. While doctors confirmed Heidenrech's injuries were a shark bite, they were not sure about Tripp's injuries – five or six gashes more than 2 inches in diameter on his shin.

"The minute I saw him, I said, 'Oh my God,' " Tripp's mother, Michelle Choate, said. "It was bleeding bad and cut open." *

Hamp Choate said he rushed his son to Urgent Care, where a doctor and three emergency medical technicians said Tripp's wounds "looked like they came from a juvenile shark about 4 to 5 feet long."

But, Kelly Presnell, spokeswoman for Hilton Head Medical Center and Clinics, said there is no definitive evidence the injury came from a shark.

The Item, May 23, 2001, page 2A