

ACTIVITY: Spearfishing

CASE: GSAF 2001.08.16

DATE: Thursday August 16, 2001

LOCATION: The incident took place at High Rock, approximately 25 to 30 miles east of Freeport, Grand Bahama Island, Bahamas. 26°35'N, 78°26'W

NAME: Kent Bonde

DESCRIPTION: The diver, a 43-year-old Caucasian male, is 5'10" tall and weighs 195 pounds. He was wearing black Speedo swim trunks, teal blue Cressi Gara 2000 swimfins, clear silicone Cressi mask and snorkel. He was also wearing an 18" gold chain with a white shark tooth and Spanish coin pendant, and a Citizen Hyperaqualand dive watch.

SUPPORT BOAT: A 15-foot skiff with a 70 hp outboard motor, engine turned off.



Nik Wheeler, allposters.com

BACKGROUND

WEATHER: The sky was partly cloudy, and there was a 10-to 15-knot ENE breeze.

SEA CONDITIONS: There was a one- to two-foot chop on the water, and it was high tide. Underwater visibility was 20 to 30 feet.

DISTANCE FROM SHORE: One mile

DISTANCE FROM SUPPORT BOAT: 80 feet

DEPTH OF WATER AT INCIDENT SITE: 10 to 20 feet

TIME: 16h00 [4 p.m.]

NARRATIVE: Kent Bonde was accompanied by his wife, Debbie, and his friend, Reg Boer. The following was narrated by Kent:

"We took turns towing the skiff while snorkeling. The other two would engage in spearfishing using Hawaiian slings. Due to the prevalence of sharks in the area, once a fish was speared, it was removed from the water immediately and placed in a cooler on the boat. When sharks showed up, we would exit the water and motor to a new spot."

"On this particular day the drift was towards shore. My wife was towing the boat and spotting for fish while Reg and I were spearfishing. About half an hour into the second drift through the same reef area, I spotted a good sized hogfish, which I proceeded to hunt. I followed the fish away from the boat, heading into the wind. When the fish finally settled on a patch reef, I dove down and shot the fish, but could not retrieve the spear on the same breath of air. Upon surfacing, I realized that the boat was 80 feet away, which was cause for some concern. Regardless, I dove back down and retrieved the speared fish."

"On my way back to the surface, the shark hit me. It was like getting hit by a car. I felt the bite and the tearing away of left calf, after which, without breaking stride, the shark came around right in front of me for, what I assume, was the fish which I was holding in my right hand. I tossed the fish to the right, and using both hands, pushed off the shark's flank, which propelled me to the surface. The attack was instantaneous."

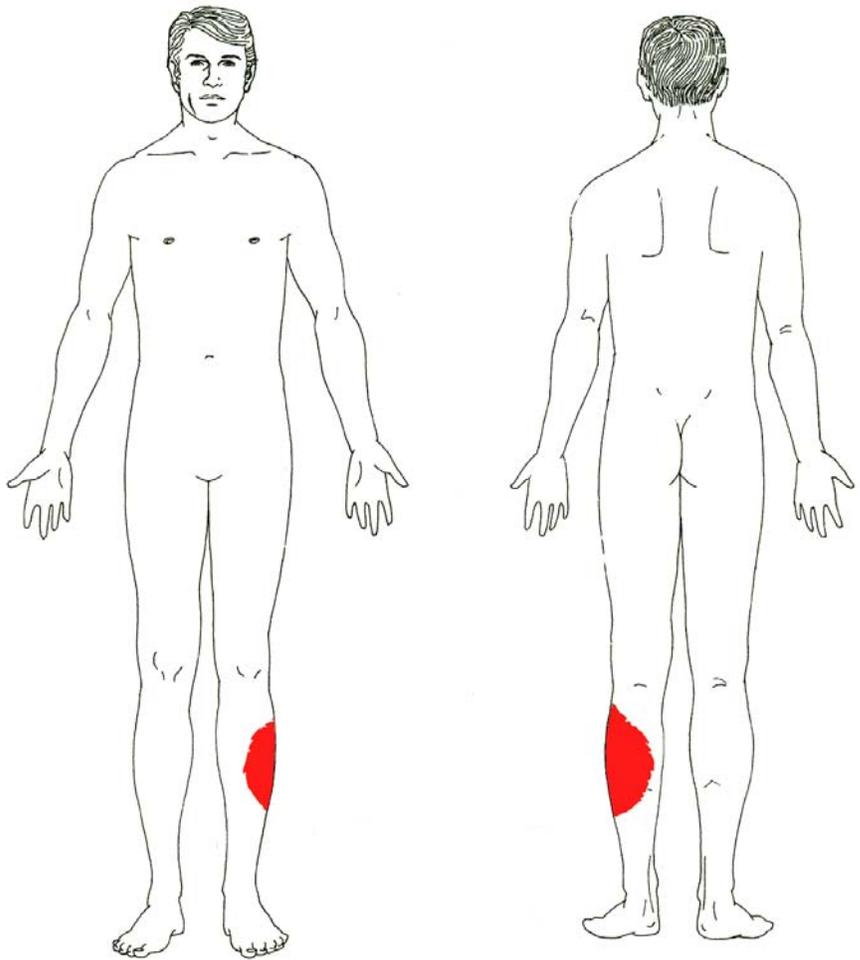
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“Upon surfacing and seeing the extent of the wound, I was afraid that an artery had been hit. I felt no pain at the time. I was also concerned that the shark was going to launch a second attack. I started swimming for the boat and calling for help. About 50 feet from the boat, Debbie realized I was in trouble and swam out to tow me back to the boat. With my last bit of energy, I managed to get into the boat with Debbie’s help.”

INJURY: The posterior left leg, from just below the back of the knee to the lower end of the medial and lateral gastrocnemius muscle, was removed by the shark, resulting in the loss of approximately 80% of the calf muscle, portions of the soleus muscle, the peroneal sural cutaneous nerves, as well as other tendons and blood vessels.

FIRST AID: Kent directed his wife to elevate his limb and apply direct pressure to the wound utilizing two nylon diveskins as packing to the injury. Kent continued applying direct pressure on the wound while Debbie started the boat engine and motored over to their friend Reg, who until this time had no knowledge of the incident. Reg ran the boat to the boat ramp (taking approximately 15 minutes, and ran the boat directly onto the beach adjacent to the ramp. Reg immediately unhitched the trailer from the Bronco, and a Bahamian fisherman assisted with the transport of Kent from the boat to the Bronco. Reg started driving the 25 miles to Freeport while Debbie rode in the back of the Bronco, elevating and maintaining pressure on the leg. Along the way and within a short distance of the boat ramp was the lodge where they were staying. They stopped long enough to have the office manager call the hospital in Freeport and ask them to dispatch an ambulance. The ambulance met them about 10 miles out of Freeport. Kent was transferred to the ambulance and transported to the hospital, arriving at Rand Memorial Hospital at 17h30 [5:30 p.m.].

TREATMENT: Kent was initially treated by Dr. Tamara Burke at Rand Memorial Hospital on Grand Bahama Island. After Kent was stabilized, the doctors decided that he needed to be airlifted to Jackson – Ryder Trauma Center in Miami, Florida. He was admitted to Jackson



at approximately 22h30 [10:30 p.m.].

SPECIES INVOLVED: The incident involved a bull shark, *Carcharhinus leucas*, 6.5 feet in length.

COMMENT: It is probable that the shark was attracted by the commotion of the divers rather than the struggling fish. However, the injured fish served as the trigger. The shark closed from behind and below Kent as he was ascending, following the blood trail of the fish. Since the fish was partially obscured when Kent was ascending, the shark bit the closest "moving object" in the vicinity of the fish. Due to the extent of the wound, exploratory behavior is questionable, but can't be ruled out since the shark did not bite into the leg but merely closed its jaws when it initially grasped Kent's leg. That the shark bit twice was a "reflex reaction" of the animal as Kent slightly jerked his leg away.

The first contact is manifested by a series of puncture wounds caused by teeth of the lower jaw and lies within the second bite. In the second bite, the edges of the tooth impressions are clean-cut, indicating that the shark did not open its mouth to release the leg but closed it and then pulled away.

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