

ACTIVITY: Spearfishing

CASE: GSAF 2003.07.04

DATE: Friday July 4, 2003

LOCATION: Ten miles west of Walker's Cay, Abaco, Bahamas. Walker's Cay is the outermost island in the Abaco chain.

NAME: Benjamin Brown

DESCRIPTION: The diver is a 39-year-old male, a lawyer from Juno Beach, Florida.

BOAT: 31-foot Contender. Ben Brown's wife, Jonna, and their two children, ages 7 and 11, were on board. as were Bob Brown's wife and children from Coral Gables, Florida.

BACKGROUND

MOON PHASE: First Quarter, July 6, 2003

SEA CONDITIONS: The sea was "crystal clear" with 100-foot visibility.

ENVIRONMENT: Ben Brown and his brother, Bob (age 41), were aware that their activities might draw the attention of sharks. All fish that were speared were tossed into the boat as quickly as possible to avoid chumming the water and drawing sharks.

DISTANCE FROM SHORE: 15 metres

DEPTH: The incident occurred at a depth of 20 feet.

TIME: 14h45



NARRATIVE: Ben and Bob Brown speared a grouper and, as they went down to retrieve the fish, the shark grabbed Ben's leg. His brother, just a few feet away, saw the shark make two bites. Just as suddenly the shark turned tail and disappeared. "I never saw the shark at all," said Ben. "It came from out of the blue." His survival instincts kicked in. "You'll get to the surface one way or another; I had both my arms and my right leg," he said. His brother tried to help, but the water was so clouded with blood it was difficult to see. "He was coming up so slowly I was afraid he wouldn't make it," said Bob. Ben reached the surface and shouted to his wife who was at the wheel of the boat keeping track of the diving brothers. Ben made it back to the boat on his own.

INJURY: The diver's left calf was bitten.

FIRST AID: Although everyone was frightened for Ben, there was no panic. A tourniquet was tied on his leg and the boat headed to shore. A good Samaritan with a private plane took him to Palm Beach International Airport. (Ben could not remember the pilot's name, it may have been Dave Larson and Ben remembers that he was from Orlando).

TREATMENT: Ben was transported to St. Mary's Medical Center in West Palm Beach, Florida. At St. Mary's, he underwent four hours of surgery Friday to repair the damage. He suffered some nerve damage which may require additional surgery later in the week.

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SPECIES INVOLVED: Bull shark, *Carcharhinus leucas*, about seven feet in length

SOURCES: Associated Press, July 12, 2003; Palm Beach Post, July 7, 2003