

ACTIVITY: Surfing

CASE: **GSAF 2003.08.08**

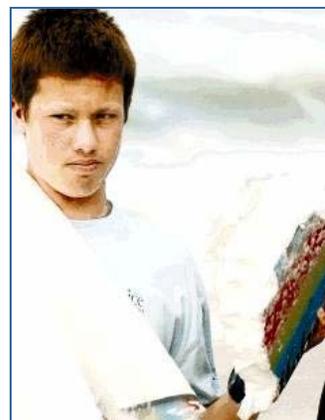
DATE: August 8, 2003

LOCATION: The incident took place in the Indian Ocean at The Point in Jeffrey's Bay, 92 kilometres west-southwest of Port Elizabeth in the Eastern Cape Province, South Africa.

34°03'S, 24°56'E

NAME: Joseph Krone

DESCRIPTION: The surfer is a 16-year-old male from Mossel Bay.



BACKGROUND

MOON PHASE: Full Moon, August 12, 2003

SEA CONDITIONS: The water was glassy and wave height was two to three feet.

ENVIRONMENT: Jeffreys Bay is synonymous with surfing and has a number of point breaks, the most famous being Supertubes. The Point is midway between Supertubes and Albatross and is the most consistent spot in the area, working best on small to moderate southwest or southeast swells, high tide and strong southwest winds.

TIME: 08h00

NARRATIVE: Joseph Krone was one of the participants in the country's most popular surf competition: the Billabong Polar Ice Junior Series, a three-day event to determine the 2003 series champions. He was in a practice session prior to the start of the first day's proceedings. "I caught a wave all the way to the bottom of the point. I was paddling back out, and stopped to rest for a minute. I was just sitting on my board and the shark hit me from beneath, throwing me off my board. "It was frightening. I did not see the shark coming and I only realized what was happening after being flung into the air. When I came up I saw the shark thrashing around on the surface, and my board was bitten in half."

Matthew Kruger, who was sitting on his board next to Krone, said, "First I saw this huge dorsal fin. then this huge tail swishing as [the shark] accelerated - making the water all turbulent - and then it took [Krone] off his board. People are saying the shark was about four metres long, but to me it looked a lot bigger. It pulled [Krone] under and he stayed under - even after bits of his board popped up. I thought he'd been killed, so I paddled for the beach, fast."

Krone, attached by his leash to the board, was dragged beneath the surface of the water, but was released when the cord snapped. Krone surfaced and began swimming towards the rocks, assisted by another surfer, Shannon Ainslie. Ainslie, whose board was bitten in July 2000 in an incident that involved two white sharks, said that he wanted to paddle in but couldn't leave Krone alone. "Everyone paddled away from him, and I nearly did, but couldn't so I paddled up to him and asked him if he was OK. He said he was. Then I paddled in next to him, and he held onto my board." When the pair reached nearby rocks, Krone exited the water.

INJURY: No injury

EQUIPMENT DAMAGE: The surfer's neoprene wetsuit was torn. The shark split his fiberglass surfboard in two and bit a 30 centimetre chunk out of it.

SPECIES INVOLVED: White shark, *Carcharodon carcharias*, about 3.5 metres in length. Brent Visser from Shark Aquarium in Jeffery's Bay, noted that the shark breached from the bottom, a tactic white sharks regularly employ when hunting seals "Approaching at an angle of about 60°, the shark strikes it's prey at a speed of about 40 to 45 kilometres per hour. This is why the bottom part of the jaw hit the board first. As the surfer was knocked off the board, the top part of the jaw closed on the board", said Visser.

NOTE: Taj Burrow, an Australian professional surfer in last month's World Series event at Jeffrey's Bay complained that his sighting of a large shark fin during his quarterfinal contest had been ignored, leading to his refusal to continue and his eventual elimination.

Krone continued to surf in the Billabong Polar Ice Junior Series over the weekend, making it to the semi-finals.

CASE INVESTIGATOR: Erich Ritter, Ph.D., GSAF



Krone, keeping his feet up

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Joseph Krone' surfboard



Photo by Garth Robinson