

ACTIVITY: Diving

CASE: [GSAF 2004.03.06](#)

DATE: Saturday March 6, 2004

LOCATION: The incident took place in the Indian Ocean on a reef five nautical miles off Cervantes, Western Australia.



NAME: Greg Pickering

DESCRIPTION: The diver is a 47-year-old male from Ocean Reef. He was clad in a wetsuit. Pickering has been a professional abalone diver for almost 34 years. A champion spearfisherman, he holds the world-record for the largest yellowfin tuna taken by a free diving spearfisherman for a 140-kilogram fish he speared off Mexico, and the world-record for the largest southern bluefin tuna, a 28-kilogram fish he speared off Ceduna.

BACKGROUND

MOON PHASE: Full Moon, March 7, 2004.

SEA CONDITIONS: According to the diver, the water was murky and visibility was poor.

ENVIRONMENT: Cervantes is a quiet fishing village located 245 km north of Perth, and Jurien Bay lies to the north.

The boat was anchored and the divers had just cleaned their catch of Spanish mackerel and pink snapper.

DEPTH: 15 metres (submerged)

NARRATIVE: The shark came in fast and started aggressively bumping Greg Pickering's dive buddy, who was still in the water despite the remains of the freshly butchered catch. After the shark swam past Pickering's dive buddy a few times with its agape, Pickering jumped in the water to help him fend off the shark. Instead, the shark turned its attention to Pickering, biting his lower leg twice in quick succession. "The shark grabbed on, released and bit again in the same spot," said Pickering. He ascended to the surface and was pulled into a boat by three fellow fishermen who wrapped his injured leg in towels and tried to stem the bleeding while they headed for the shore at top speed.

INJURY: The diver's right shin took the brunt of the bite. Although some tendons were severed, the diver said he was very fortunate there was no nerve damage and even more lucky given the remote location that an artery was not severed.

FIRST AID: Mr Alan Ogden, a Cervantes local, said he had been at the town's main beach when a boat carrying the diver and three mates came speeding into shore. "Somebody said: 'Is there a medical centre around here?' and that's when I realized someone had been hurt," said Ogden. "He looked pretty pale, as you'd expect, but apart from that he was pretty calm about it really. The bloke was alright though – he was more worried about losing his mate's speargun to be honest. I said 'is it hurting bad?' and he said 'No, it's not as bad as I expected'". Pickering was carried from the boat to Mr Ogden's car with a towel wrapped around the lower leg of his wetsuit. Blood was seeping through the towel. "The towel was soaked through and there was a bit of blood on the carpet of my car," Mr Ogden said. The diver was taken to Jurien Bay nursing post before being transported by ambulance to Joondalup Health Hospital in Perth.

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TREATMENT: The injury was sutured and recovery was uneventful.

SPECIES INVOLVED: According to the diver, the incident involved a 1.5-metre bronze whaler shark.

COMMENT: Pickering does not regret jumping in to help his friend as this same dive buddy came to his aid about 12 years ago when a large tiger shark made itself unwelcome during another spear fishing trip off the nearby town of Dongarra.

SOURCES: Sunday Times (Perth), March 7, 2005 edition

CASE INVESTIGATOR: Terry Peake, Global Shark Accident File





Andrew Brooks

Mr Pickering, left, with fellow abalone diver Barry Hockaday after their boat was swamped at Ceduna.