



**ACTIVITY:** Wading

**CASE:** [GSAF 2004.05.29](#)

**DATE:** Saturday, May 29, 2004 (The start of the Memorial Day weekend)

**LOCATION:** The incident took place in the Gulf of Mexico at Pirate's Beach on the west end of Galveston Island several miles south of the Galveston Seawall, Galveston, Texas, USA.  
29.3°N, 94.8°W

**NAME:** Ryan Eckstrum

**DESCRIPTION:** He is a 16-year-old male from Magnolia, Texas.

## BACKGROUND

**WEATHER:** At 19h45, Galveston recorded overcast skies and visibility of nine miles. The air temperature was 80.6°F [27°C], dew point 77°F [25°C], humidity 89%, sea level pressure 29.76 inches [1007.7 hPa], and wind direction was SE at 15 mph [24.1 km/h].

**MOON PHASE:** Full Moon, June 2, 2004

**SEA CONDITIONS:** Sheriff's Maj. Vic Maceo of the Galveston Beach Patrol said powerful rip tide currents created dangerous conditions and warning flags were set up along several beaches. A 12-year-old girl was rescued at Jamaica Beach and two brothers got into trouble in a section of the Houston Ship Channel on the far east of the island and one drowned.

**ENVIRONMENT:** Galveston Bay is an open body of water and a popular summer beach destination. The E.P.A. reports that between 500 and 1,000 people are on the three mile beach during peak holiday season. E.P.A. monitors the beach two to five times per month for bacteria and other pathogens as result of sanitary sewer overflow (SSO), septic systems, wildlife, and waste washing ashore. Maceo said sharks have been spotted in the bay, but attacks there are rare. There were baitfish in the area where the teen was wading.

**DISTANCE FROM SHORE:** 50 feet

**DEPTH OF WATER AT INCIDENT SITE:**

**TIME:** 19h45 (7:45 p.m.)

**NARRATIVE:** "My wife had to work, and instead of just staying around the house, I decided I would take the kids down to the beach," said J.T. Eckstrum, Ryan's father. The three left home about 2 p.m. (14h00). "We got down there about 4 p.m. (16h00) and started playing around in the water," J.T. Eckstrum said. "We were just about to leave and we were walking out of the water. I was holding my nine-year-old daughter's hand, and Ryan was about 10 feet ahead of us. As a wave passed, Ryan said the shark came up to the surface and rammed into him. "It kind of lifted my legs over the water," he said. "Then I saw a fin."

When J.T. heard his son say, "Oh, ouch" he thought he had simply stepped on a shell, until

he saw a dark figure coming toward him in the water. "It was about two feet in front of me and going about 100 miles per hour, and it just hit me right in the (inner leg)," J.T. Eckstrum said. "At that point, I didn't know what it was." Ryan then lifted up his leg, and his father could see the large wound. "We just stayed calm, and walked quickly back to shore," he said.

**INJURY:** Ryan's right shin was bitten. "It was obvious it was a shark bite," J.T. Eckstrum said. "You could see the line of teeth marks (puncture wounds on his shin) and then about six or seven inches further up the skin was peeled back (avulsion) and there were a few more teeth marks."

**FIRST AID:** Once on shore, Ryan wrapped his leg in a towel and they loaded into the family vehicle and drove to the nearest lifeguard station where paramedics dressed his wounds.

**TREATMENT:** He was later taken to the University of Texas Medical branch for additional treatment and given a heavy dose of antibiotics.

**SPECIES INVOLVED:** Based upon the bite marks, Galveston Beach Patrol believes the shark was about three feet total length. Peter Davis, an assistant director of Galveston Beach Patrol, said the incident may have involved a three- to five-foot blacktip shark, *C. limbatus*, which are common in the area.

**SOURCE:** Sabrina Goel, News 24 Houston; Houston Chronicle

*Ryan recuperating at home*



Photo by Melissa Phillip/Chronicle