

**ACTIVITY:** Wading?

**CASE:** [GSAF 2004.07.02.a](#)

**DATE:** Friday July 2, 2004

**LOCATION:** The incident took place off the public beach just west of the intersection of Alabama 59 and West Beach Boulevard in Gulf Shores Beach, Baldwin County, Alabama, USA.

*87°7'W, 30°3'N*



**NAME:** Trenton Martin

**DESCRIPTION:** He is a seven-year-old male from Oden, Arkansas. He is 3'9" [45 inches] tall and weighs 60 pounds. He had no injuries prior to the incident, and was wearing red swim trunks.

### **BACKGROUND**

**WEATHER:** It was a sunny day, but immediately after the incident the sky became partly cloudy, and there was no wind.

**MOON PHASE:** Full Moon

**SEA CONDITIONS:** The sea was calm, very warm and murky green. Visibility was very poor; Trenton could not see his feet when he was standing in waist-deep water.

**ENVIRONMENT:** There is a sandbar about 300 feet from shore and a pier 300 feet to the east of the incident site. About an hour before the incident a family who were riding boogie-boards in the second breaker line from shore noticed many six-inch fish in the breaking waves. Conservation officials have been conducting routine flights off the coast during the spring and summer to check fish populations. No reports were received of any large numbers of sharks off the beaches or concentrations of bait fish that might attract the predators to swimming areas. Prior to reopening the beach after this incident, conservation officials conducted flights over the beach to look for concentrations of sharks. However, three weeks later some 30 to 35 sharks were spotted at Orange Beach. Marine scientists believed they were drawn to the shallow waters by schools of baitfish that died due to unusually low oxygen levels in the Gulf waters.

**DISTANCE FROM SHORE:** 15 to 20 feet

**DEPTH OF WATER AT INCIDENT SITE:** Slightly more than 'waist-deep' because Trenton was in a wave 'jumping it'.

**TIME:** 16h40 (4:40 p.m.), sunset was at 7:56 pm

**NARRATIVE:** Trenton had been in and out of the water all day. He had just found a seashell, brought it to the beach, and returned to the water. He was looking for shells with his grandfather, Jeff Flanigan. Ten to 15 people were within 10 feet of the boy. He was in the water a few minutes, facing shoreward, bouncing up and down in the waves and paddling his feet, when he felt something bump him about six times in rapid succession and thought his 16-year-old brother was trying to scare him. The shark bit Trenton once, let go, then appeared to re-adjust its hold on the boy's foot, biting him a second time. Trenton says that his whole body was shaken by the shark, it pulled him towards shore and then submerged with him for a few seconds. Flanigan, who was swimming underwater, saw a shark, but didn't witness any contact with the boy, but when he surfaced Trenton was screaming. The shark released Trenton when Flanigan lifted the boy out of the water. Flanigan noted that the shark was moving very fast and sped out towards deeper water.

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**FIRST AID:** Lifeguards provided first aid on the beach, and when Gulf Shores paramedics they transported Trenton by ambulance to the hospital. Time between the incident and arrival at the hospital was 30 minutes.

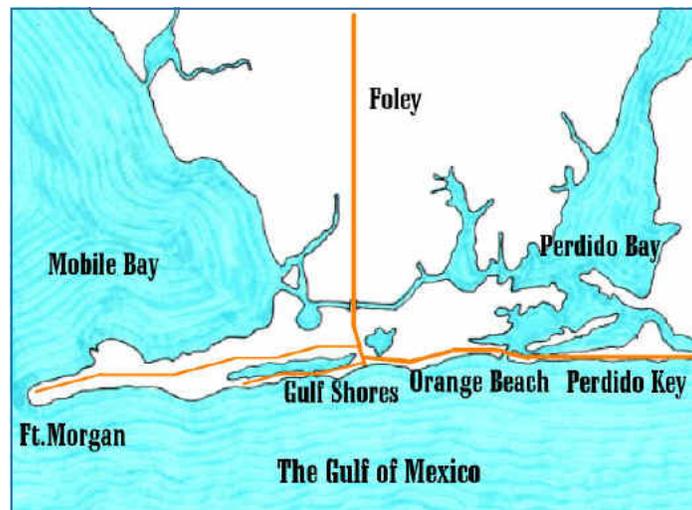
**TREATMENT:** Trenton underwent surgery at South Baldwin Regional Medical Center in Foley, Alabama, where he was treated by Raymond Fletcher, M.D.. The boy is expected to regain full use of his foot, according to Stephen Pennington, administrator of the hospital. He spent five days in the hospital. A cast was put on his foot following surgery and will be removed in about eight weeks.

**SPECIES INVOLVED:** Flanigan saw the shark and describes it as four to five feet in length. He noted that the upper lobe of its caudal fin was longer than the lower lobe.

**NOTE:** Lifeguard Pete Swinson said the only other shark incident he could recall on the Alabama coast was in 2000, when Chuck Anderson, Athletic supervisor for Baldwin County public schools, was bitten by a shark and lost part of his right arm just east of the area where Trenton was injured. When Anderson learned of the accident he went to the hospital to visit with Trenton and his family.

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*Gulf Shores Beach*

