

ACTIVITY: Surfing

CASE: [GSAF 2005.04.07](#)

DATE: Thursday April 7, 2005

LOCATION: The incident took place in the Gulf of Mexico at Isla Blanca Park, South Padre Island, Cameron County, Texas, USA.

NAME: Gianluca Ferrario

DESCRIPTION: The surfer is a 37-year-old male. He is six feet tall, weighs 200 pounds, and had no injury prior to the accident. He was wearing a blue surf short, a black lycra rash guard, white short-sleeve, and a black leash on his left ankle.

SURFBOARD: A nine-foot white Ukelele longboard with three black fins.

BACKGROUND

WEATHER: It was a sunny day, the air temperature was about 80°F, and there was a five to 10 mph North to northeasterly breeze.

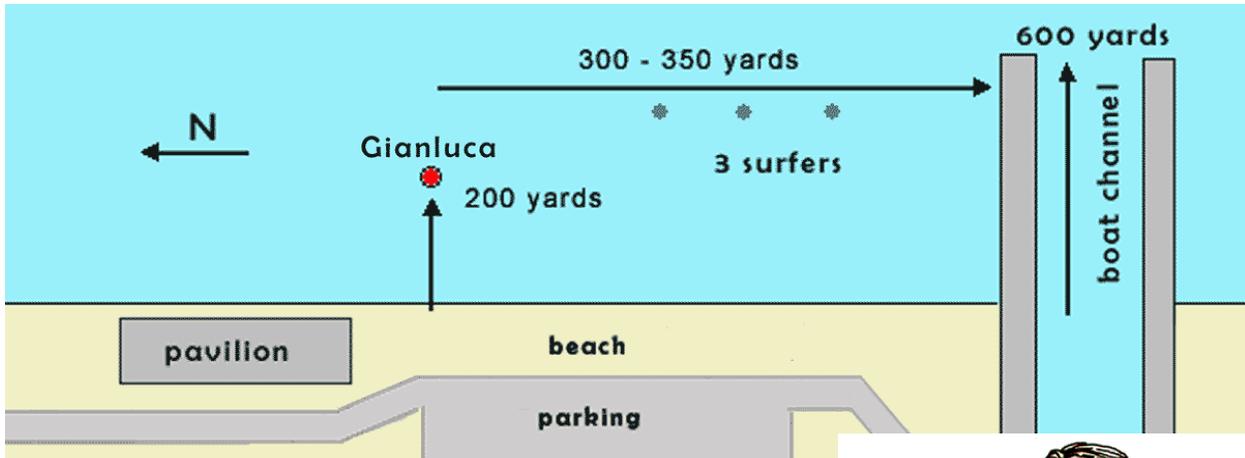
MOON PHASE: New Moon, April 8, 2005

SEA CONDITIONS: The sea was choppy with two- to four-foot waves, and no current. The water was murky due to sand turbulence and underwater visibility was two to three feet. The sea temperature was 73°F or 74°F.

ENVIRONMENT: Isla Blanca Park, on the southernmost tip of South Padre Island, lies between two bodies of water, the Laguna Madre and the Gulf of Mexico. Surfers have access to the benefits of a narrower continental shelf, deeper offshore waters and comparatively closer sandbars. This is South Padre's main stretch of breaks, drawing just about all the area surfers. On the north side of the jetties (referred to as North Jetties) strong walls hit the bars and provide long, workable lines. As you work north within the park toward the hotel strand, the bars sometimes move closer to the beach and, in some cases, become nonexistent. There are no major population or cultural centers nearby. The area depends heavily on its tourist and fishing trade, and the town of South Padre Island seems to quiet down quite a bit after spring break closes out, much like Panama City Beach in Florida. The surfer did not see any birds feeding, nor were dolphins seen.

A fishing pier extends from shore about 600 to 700 yards into the sea. The surfer was 300 yards from the pier when he was bitten. Most of the fishing takes place in the channel on the other side of the pier.





DISTANCE FROM SHORE: 150 to 200 yards

DISTANCE FROM PIER: 300 yards

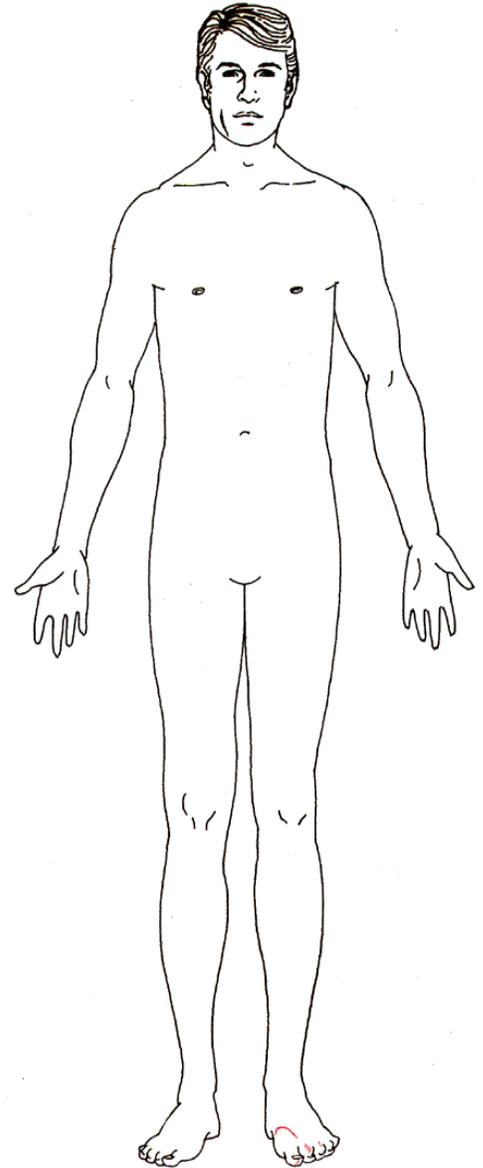
DEPTH OF WATER AT INCIDENT SITE: 10 to 15 feet

TIME: According to Cameron County Parks Police, the incident occurred shortly before 19h00 (7 p.m.)

NARRATIVE: Gianluca had been in the water about an hour. Three other surfers were in the water when the incident took place. Gianluca was sitting on his board, parallel to shore and facing northwards when the shark came from below. The surfer saw a flash of dark grey as the shark grabbed his left foot, then immediately released it. Gianluca pulled his feet and hands out of the water and lay on his board for two to three minutes, not realizing that he had been injured. Then a wave pushed the surfer and his board to shore.

INJURY: The surfer's left foot was bitten. The wound on the dorsal surface was in the form of a crescent: it began at his big toe, extended to the middle of his foot and continued to the plantar surface of his foot. No tooth fragments were seen on x-ray.

FIRST AID / TREATMENT: When Gianluca reached shore he realized his foot was bleeding and he wrapped his rash guard around the wound to prevent sand from contaminating it. Then he walked towards his car. A bystander saw that the surfer was injured, made him sit down and called 911. Paramedics arrived within 20 minutes and transported Gianluca to Valley Regional Medical Center in Brownsville. Nine sutures were needed to repair the wound on the dorsum of the foot, and three stitches on the bottom of the foot. No ligaments or tendons were torn. The attending physician was Dr. Ramon Losi-Hui. After being held two or three hours for observation, the surfer was released from the medical facility.



SPECIES INVOLVED: According to the surfer, the shark, was three to five feet in length. He thought it might have been a sand shark or a blacktip shark, *Carcharhinus limbatus*, but is unsure of the species involved.

SOURCES: Gianluca Ferrario; Juan Mendoza, Chief Park Ranger, Cameron County Parks; The Herald (Brownsville); KGBT 4—TV Harlingen, Texas
http://www.brownsvilleherald.com/ts_more.php?id=64585_0_10_0_C
<http://www.team4news.com/Global/story.asp?S=3200689&nav=0w0vYZxu>