

**ACTIVITY:** Surfing  
**CASE:** GSAF 2006.03.19  
**DATE:** Saturday, March 19, 2006

**LOCATION:** The incident took place in the Pacific Ocean at the edge of the mouth of the Sigatoka River at Viti Levu, Fiji.

**NAME:** Paul Chong Sue  
**DESCRIPTION:** He is a 21-year-old male from Kulukulu in Sigatoka. He is a national surfing representative who has taken part in several international competitions.



#### BACKGROUND

**WEATHER:** At 18h00, the weather station at Suva recorded mostly cloudy skies and visibility of 31.1 miles [50 km]. The air temperature was 84.2°F [29 C], dew point 78.8 F [26°C], humidity 84%, sea level pressure 29.89 inches [1012 hPa], and wind direction was East at 3.5 mph [5.6 km/h].

**MOON PHASE:** Waning Gibbous, 86% of the Moon's visible disk was illuminated.

**ENVIRONMENT:** The incident took place at the edge of the Sigatoka River mouth. Police warned surfers to be wary when in the area because, "It is a narrow river mouth which opens to the sea." Paul has lived near the river mouth almost all his life and frequents the spot which is reknowned for its big waves. Villagers in the area said that while sharks have been seen frequently in the water, they seldom attack humans. According a relative of Paul, "Sharks were always spotted in that area," but the incident was the first of its kind they were aware of in the area. "These people have been surfing here for a long time, but this is the first time we have come across such a situation." The attack was in the same vicinity from where former winning Sevens Rugby World Cup forward, Aminiasi Natuiyaga, disappeared while swimming with his rugby team few years ago.

**TIME:** 18h00

**NARRATIVE:** A police officer in Sigatoka said that Paul Sue was surfing off the reef opposite Club Masa at Kulukulu. He was paddling out to catch a wave when the shark came from up from behind and beneath his surfboard. "He was surfing with four tourists and three locals when he suddenly yelled out," said the officer.



“The shark came from below his board and bit his right arm,” said Ratu Naiqama. “It tried to pull him under but Paul fought back and managed to free his arm from the sharks grip.” Naiqama said after Paul pulled his arm free, he called out to the other surfers for help and they rushed to his aid. “There were about 15 of us out at sea with him. We all surrounded him and started making our way back to the beach. After the attack, the shark kept circling the area. Even though we thought that it was going to strike again, we did not pay much attention because we were rushing to get Paul onto the beach,” said Naiqama.

**INJURY:** “The shark ripped some flesh from his right hand,” according to the police officer.

**FIRST AID:** “Fortunately, nurse from Australia was also at the river mouth surfing and she helped us treat the wound before we took him to the Sigatoka Hospital,” reported Naiqama.

**TREATMENT:** The injured surfer was admitted to Sigatoka Hospital, arriving there about 18h30 [6.30 pm]. At 20h30 [8.30pm], then he was transferred to Lautoka Hospital for further evaluation and surgery. A relative said he was in stable condition. She said that Paul loved the sport so much that the shark bite would not deter him from going back into the water once he recovered. “I’m sure this would make him stronger and with his love for surfing, it is not going to stop him,” she said.

**SPECIES:** Not identified. According to witnesses, the shark was five feet in length.

**SOURCES:** Fiji Sun, March, 19, 2006

Fiji Times Online, March 21, 2006

**CASE INVESTIGATOR:** Richard D. Weeks, Global Shark Accident File.





Richard D. Weeks, Global Shark Accident File

*Sigatoka River, view from town*



Richard D. Weeks, Global Shark Accident File

*View from Club Masa. Location description: extensive sand dune area; dark sand.*



Richard D. Weeks, Global Shark Accident File

*View of Sigatoka River & mouth from the beach at Club Masa.  
It would have taken a walk of at least 20 minutes to reach the river mouth.*



Richard D. Weeks, Global Shark Accident File

*Sigatoka Hospital*