

**ACTIVITY:** Surfing

**CASE:** GSAF 2007.05.11

**DATE:** Friday May 12, 2007

**LOCATION:** The incident took place at Logan's Beach in Warrnambool, Victoria, Australia.

38.3°S, 142.4°E

**NAME:** Blake French

**DESCRIPTION:** He is a 19-year-old male from Warrnambool.

**SURFBOARD:** White



### BACKGROUND

**ENVIRONMENT:** On Saturday there was a sighting of a shark nearby. Teenager Vaughan Hoekman was about to catch a wave at The Flume around 17h00 on Saturday when the 13-year-old and others spotted the shark in a wave. He said they had to ride the wave to get to shore. "They were all swearing and screaming and panicking." He said he was 'numbed' to see the shark and headed for the beach.

**DISTANCE FROM SHORE:** 50 metres

**TIME:** 17h45 (Dusk)

**NARRATIVE:** Blake French was surfing with Douglas Macrae and about 10 other surfers some 50 metres from the beach in front of the whale-viewing platform. He was on the other side of the sandbank when he felt what he thought was the shark's fin catch on his lower right leg. "It was right down under my right side. By the time I looked down, it went around and underneath me. I don't know where it went. I was just happy it went away. I've always thought about sharks and stuff but I wasn't really sure what to do. I thought, 'do I punch it or do I kick it?'" French recalled. "So I just got my feet away from it (pulling them up onto the board) and hoped it would keep going, which it did." He said the sighting prompted about 10 surfers to get out of the water immediately. "It might not have been after a chomp out of me but (maybe) more curious, just checking if I was food or not. When I told my girlfriend, she didn't believe me. I still don't think she does." He plans to avoid surfing at dawn and dusk in the future but is otherwise unfazed.



*Blake French*

It was the first time in his three years of surfing that Blake had seen a shark, he said. "I've seen seals and I've come across dolphins but they don't normally get that close to us. It was right on dusk – it was feeding time."

**INJURY:** The shark's fin caught his lower right leg but the surfer was not injured.

**SPECIES:** The shark was about 10 feet in length, about the same size as Blake's board. He described the shark as 'silvery-grey' and thought it could have been a thresher or reef shark

because of its large tail and slim body. “The head was a bit blurry but I saw its fin and the gills clearly.”

**SOURCE:** The Standard, May 15, 2007