

ACTIVITY: Surf skiing

CASE: [GSAF 2008.06.28.a](#)

DATE: Saturday June 28, 2008

LOCATION: The incident took place in the Indian Ocean in Mossel Bay Harbour, Western Cape Province, South Africa.

NAME: Kobus Maritz

DESCRIPTION: He is a 46-year-old male.

SURF SKI: A Fenn Millennium surf ski

BACKGROUND

WEATHER: At 14h00, Mossel Bay recorded an air temperature of 60°F [15°C], dew point 46°F [8°C], humidity 49%, sea level pressure 30.30 inches [1026 hPa], and wind direction was West at 12.7 mph [20.4 km/h].

MOON PHASE: Last Quarter, June 26, 2008

DISTANCE FROM SHORE: 50 metres

TIME: 14h00

NARRATIVE: Kobus and Jan-Hendrik Barnard had paddled from Mossel Bay Harbor along the coast and had just turned around to come back. They were paddling slowly, chatting together, when the ski was hit.

"At first I thought I'd hit a rock or had been hit by a big seal, but when the foam and commotion cleared I could see the shark's head," said Kobus. "It was a solid hit," he said. "The front of the ski was lifted – maybe six inches – out of the water. [The shark] looked as though he was trying to get a good grip."

The shark struck the right side of the ski, and Kobus fell into the water off the left side. The shark let go of the ski and swam towards the tail of the ski and disappeared.

Kobus clambered onto the ski but the strong offshore wind had already carried his paddle some 10 metres away. Lying on the ski, he swam it across to his paddle, grabbed it and got back into the seat.

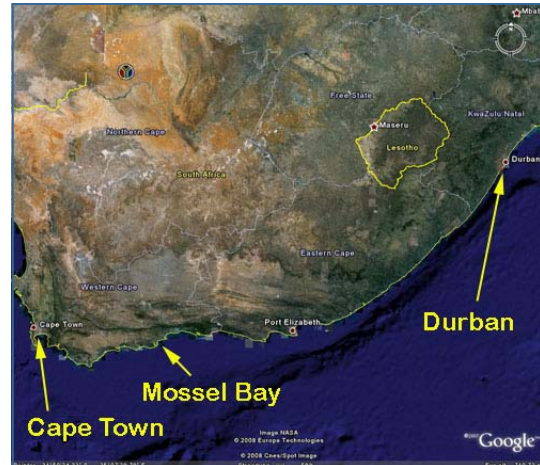
The ski was sinking, but as the tail dipped below the water the damaged nose lifted above the surface and he was able to paddle the waterlogged craft to the beach.

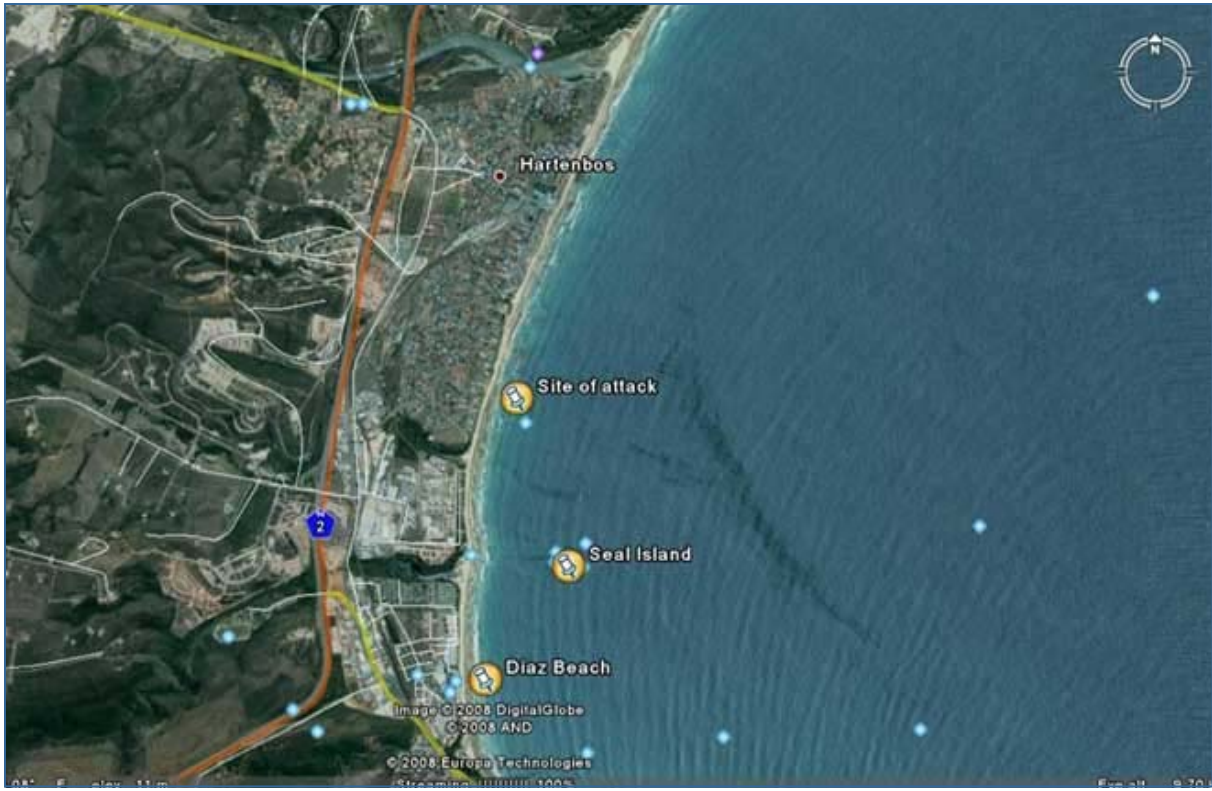
INJURY: No injury

DAMAGE TO SKI: The ski was bitten by the shark.

SPECIES: The incident was thought to involve a white shark about two to 2.5 metres in length.

SOURCE: <http://www.surfski.info/content/view/761/147/>





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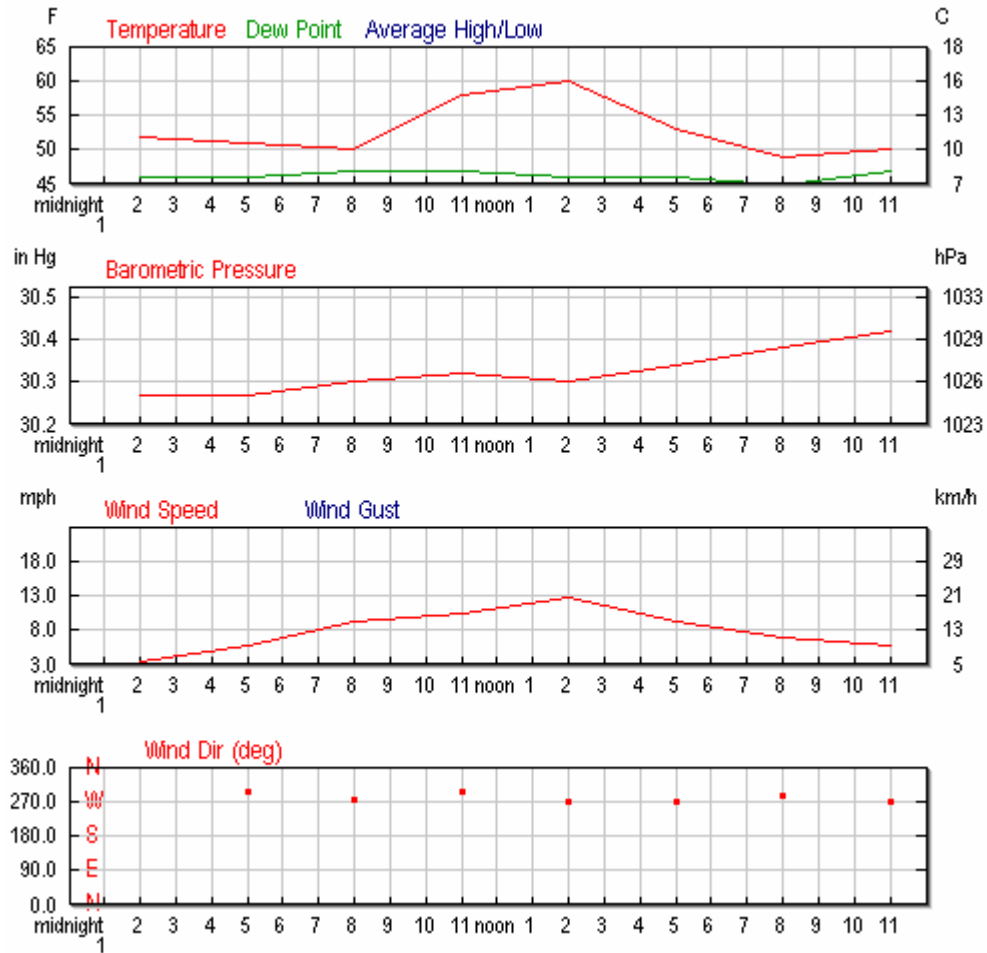
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. Weather at Mossel Bay on June 28, 2008

Kobus Maritz' Story

Kobus Maritz, 46, has been paddling surfski for about 15 years - mostly on the Cape West Coast and in Cape Town. He'd seen small sharks before - hammerheads and other species - but had never encountered a Great White.

He and Jan-Hendrik Barnard had paddled from Mossel Bay Harbor along the coast and had just turned around to come back - and were about 50m from the shore.

They were paddling slowly, chatting together, when the ski was hit.

"At first I thought I'd hit a rock or had been hit by a big seal. But when the foam and commotion cleared I could see the shark's head."

"It was a solid hit," he said. "The front of the ski was lifted - maybe 6 inches - out of the water. He looked as though he was trying to get a good grip."

The shark hit from under the right the ski of the ski - and Kobus fell off on the left side. The shark let go of the ski and swam towards the tail of the ski - with the ski between it and Kobus - and disappeared.

Kobus clambered onto the ski but the strong offshore wind had already carried his paddle some 10m away. Lying on the ski, he swam it across to his paddle, grabbed it and got back into the seat.

The ski was sinking - but as the tail dipped below the water, the damaged nose lifted out and he was able to paddle the waterlogged hulk into the beach.

"I chatted to the lead researcher at the SA Marine Predator Lab in Mossel Bay," he said, "and they confirmed that it was a relatively small shark - 2 to 2.5m. They said it was probably just inquisitive," he added, "but it felt to me like a fair amount of aggression!"

Kobus said that according to the Shark researchers, they estimate that there are about 200 individuals in the bay, with about 40 individuals present at any one time. Most of the sharks are fairly small in size i.e. 2-3m in length and they mostly inhabit the area north of Seal Island towards Hartenbos.

"It was a strange thing," he said. "I couldn't believe it was happening. And it was all over in probably 10-15 seconds. I'll get back in the water - but I'll avoid that section near Seal Island."

SOURCE:

http://playak.com/index.php?option=com_fireboard&Itemid=2&func=view&catid=105&id=22287

Jan-Hendrik's Story

On Saturday 28th June we went for a paddle from Mossel Bay Harbor along the coast in the direction of Hartenbos. It was 14h00, overcast with a north-easter blowing, i.e. an onshore wind. The water was not very clear nor was it exceptionally murky.

We try and stay as close to the shore as the swell allows, probably out of fear of sharks. I've been paddling in the area for 3 years now and only twice saw a shark. I always thought my fear was unfounded. Neither of the sharks I did see were very big.

Kobus remarked only minutes before being attacked that at least if you are two paddlers you halve your risk of a shark attack, at least for me it worked out.

Tearing and Crushing Sound After turning around, and on our way back to the harbor I heard a tearing and crushing sound. Kobus's ski was thrust upwards. The shark clearly came from the depth and struck his boat with considerable force. After that it gave the ski a few bites. Kobus managed to stay in his ski, but probably because the shark was shaking the ski he fell out. The shark swam along his boat, but on the other side that he was in the water and disappeared. We never saw it again. He managed to get back on his ski. It was taking in water but kept afloat because of the buoyancy. He paddled to the beach sitting up to his hips in water. Fortunately we were not more than 50m from the shore.

If ever I have to go to war I know who to take, Kobus stayed calm and never panicked even when the shark swam only a meter from him, he being in the water at that stage.

2.5m Long The local shark experts had a look at the bite marks. According to them it was not more than 2,5m long. The photo is misleading as the defect in the boat is not a true reflection of the shark's mouth. They down-played the whole incident, putting it down to the inquisitive nature of white sharks, I however think it was hunting and not being playful!

Shark Politics In no way do I want to get involved in shark politics, but I do find it strange than shark cage diving with chumming is going on not more than a few hundred meters from a major swimming beach. You can see Diaz beach on the Google map.

Often when paddling we see the boat at the seal island busy with shark dives. We are not allowed to feed baboons at Cape Point, but sharks seem to be different than other wild animals in this regard. I am not an shark expert, perhaps chumming is safe even close to a swimming beach??????? I understand during high season they do stop the chumming.

River Paddling We still paddle, but for some reason the river is so much more appealing than before. On Friday afternoon the tide was quite high and we were on the Little Brak River when suddenly we were aware of Zambezi sharks going up river. I do not think that we will again go paddling along the beach to the east of the seal island.

Shark Shields? Perhaps all ocean paddling boats should be fitted with shark shields. I realized that sharks are a reality and not only something on National Geographic, I did not think it would ever happen. We are in a high risk area but then again sharks are not in cages and roam wherever they like.