

ACTIVITY: Surfing

CASE: [GSAF 2009.02.12](#)

DATE: Thursday February 12, 2009

LOCATION: The attack took place at Bondi Beach, Sydney, New South Wales, Australia.

NAME: Glen Orgias

DESCRIPTION: He is a 32-year-old male from Dover Heights.



Glen Orgias

BACKGROUND

WEATHER: At 19h30, nearby Richmond recorded an overcast sky and visibility of 6.2 miles. The air temperature was 62.6°F, dew point 59°F, humidity 88%, sea level pressure, and wind direction was SSE at 9.2 mph.

MOON PHASE: Full Moon, February 10, 2009

SEA CONDITIONS: The water was murky, colder than usual for this time of year and the tide was falling. 1018.7 hPa.

ENVIRONMENT: Bondi Beach stretches for approximately 900 metres and is backed by a rocky shoreline and cliffs. Aerial surveys revealed large schools of baitfish. Wildlife officials say Sydney's cleaner ocean water, due to offshore sewage outlets and stormwater cages, has encouraged marine life closer to shore, which in turn has attracted more sharks.

The beach had shark nets. The recent accidents have reopened debate about the efficacy of shark nets, which are used off all of Sydney's ocean beaches. The nets do not form a complete barrier; they simply cull sharks in the area.

TIME: 19h30 (Sunset occurred at 19h51.)

NARRATIVE: Glen Orgias was surfing near dusk at the southern end of the beach when he felt a tug on his arm. When he looked down he saw a bad bite to his left hand and arm and yelled for help. A nearby surfer, James McIntosh, used his board leash as a tourniquet to slow the bleeding, and helped the injured man to shore. McIntosh said a friend described the attack: "The shark bumped Will's board first, then two seconds later, bang, this guy who was sitting on his board got attacked," he said. "It grabbed his arm when he was sitting up on his board. I don't even know how that happened. You'd think it would have gone for his leg."

INJURY: The surfer's left hand was nearly severed; it remained attached only by a three-centimetre piece of skin.

FIRST AID: The quick actions of the nearby surfer and doctor who happened to be on the beach no doubt saved the life of the surfer. A large group of surfers all formed together to stretch the injured man out on to the main road, waiting for the ambulance and intensive care units to take over the medical treatment. The surfer was put in an ambulance within five minutes of being pulled from the water.

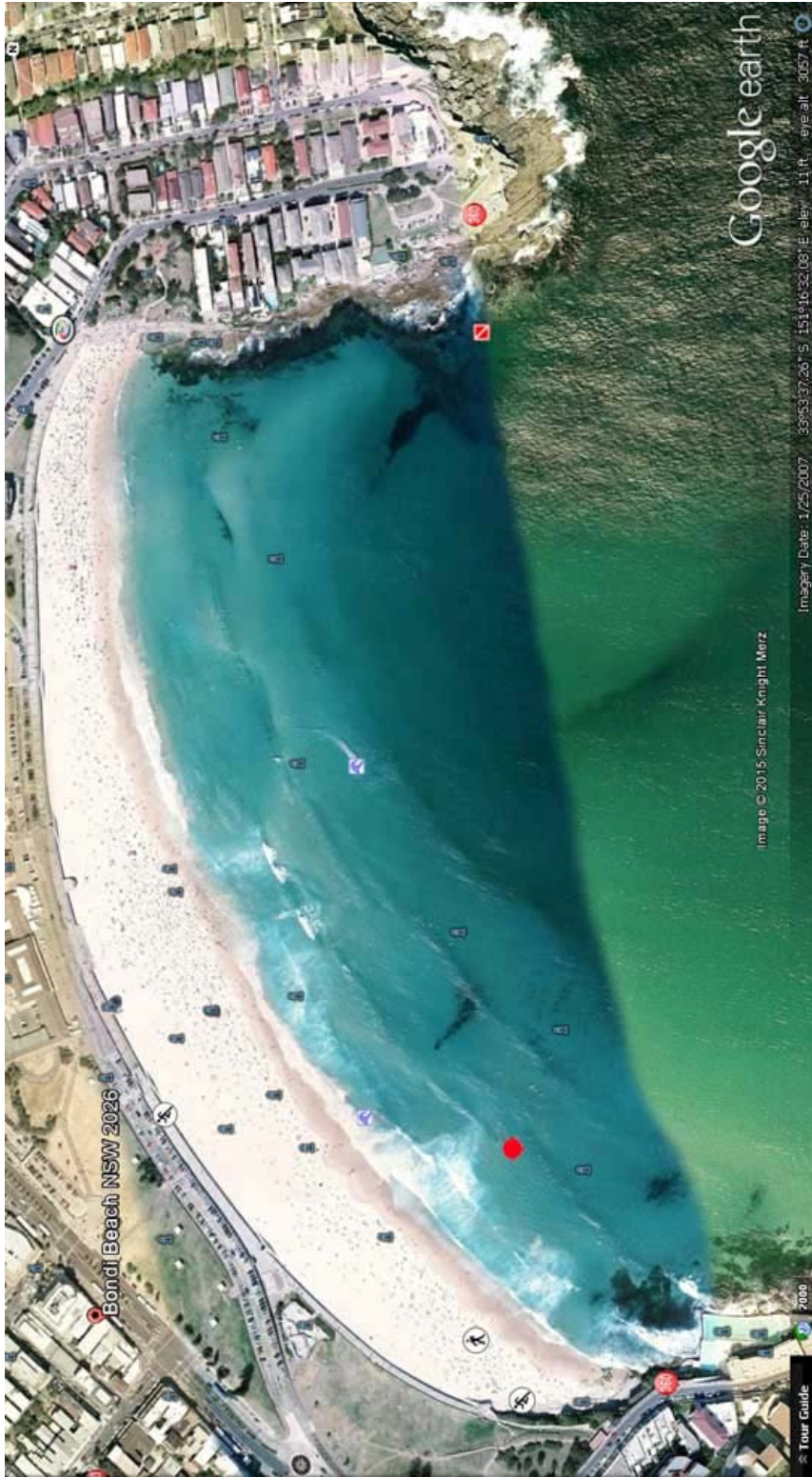
TREATMENT: The patient was transported to St Vincent's hospital where he underwent a 10-hour procedure in an attempt to repair the damage. Plastic surgeon Kevin Ho initially

reattached the nearly severed left hand. However, circulation could not be maintained and it was surgically removed on March 1, 2009.

SPECIES: The surfer told the police he didn't see what bit him. On February 23, 2009, Primary Industries Minister Ian Macdonald said photographs of the surfer's injuries confirmed that a 2.5 m white shark was involved in this incident.

NOTE: According to press reports, the shark initially made contact with another surfer before biting Orgias. There are several other cases in which a shark, repelled by its initial target, struck the second target with increased aggression (or frustration): See GSAF 1974.02.13 (Joe Kool & Damon Kendrick), GSAF 1994.03.23 (Phil Buffington & Heather Boswell), and GSAF 1994.07.09 (Andrew Carter & Bruce Corby).





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Shark victims support each other through ordeal

Two Sydney men mauled by sharks just days apart have used their incredible shared fate to support each other through their recovery in hospital, the pair's doctors said today.

Surfer Glenn Orgias, 33, and navy diver Paul de Gelder, 31, were attacked by sharks just two days apart a fortnight ago.

In a statement released today, Mr Orgias said he had not seen the great white shark that attacked him as he surfed at Bondi. "I didn't see the shark – it let me go after three shakes," he said.

Able Seaman de Gelder was attacked as he performed a navy exercise off Garden Island.

As the pair recovered at St Vincent's Hospital, their doctors today spoke of their progress, praising their mental strength and spirit as they "[bounced] around trying to get motivated".

Plastic surgeon Kevin Ho, who completed the nearly impossible task of reattaching Mr Orgias's hand, said the patient was already able to move his fingers.

Dr Ho said that when he encountered Mr Orgias - who was mauled by a great white shark - his hand was almost severed, connected by just a "small breach of skin". The surgeons went into the operation not expecting to be able to save the hand, Dr Ho said.

"However ... given his general health and the speed [with] which he was rushed into the operating theatre, and also the extent of his injuries, made it a possibility that we could reattach the hand," he said.

Crucial to the success of the operation was the first aid given to Mr Orgias by two off-duty doctors who were at the beach at the time of the attack, Dr Ho said.

Mr Orgias was then rushed several kilometres to St Vincent's Hospital, where he underwent 10 hours of surgery.

Leeches were had to be used during the operation to remove stagnant blood, Dr Ho said.

Able Seaman de Gelder was also lucky to be alive, St Vincent's trauma director Anthony Grabs said. An artery in the diver's leg had come close to being severed, and it was the speed with which he was taken to St Vincent's after being rescued by fellow navy divers that had saved him, he said.

Dr Ho said the severity of Able Seaman de Gelder's injuries - in which parts were "barely identifiable as fingers" - meant reattaching his hand was not possible.

But the pair's recovery had also been boosted by their mental strength and the support they were able to offer each other, the doctors said.

"They are both guys of the highest mental fortitude," Dr Ho said. "They've met each other and that support certainly helps."

Dr Grabs said the pair were remarkably upbeat considering their experiences, and that this was aiding their medical progress.

"It's much easier to work with a well motivated patient," he said. "These two individuals, they're both highly motivated, up and bouncing around trying to get motivated and do things for themselves."

Both doctors said they had been affected by the plight of Able Seaman de Gelder, who has lost his hand and a leg but wants to return to his love of navy diving.

"It was probably one of the first times I felt quite sad when I got home," Dr Grabs said. "Here's this young guy in the defence force doing his job and [he's been attacked] in such unusual circumstances."

Dr Ho said both doctors were "used to seeing people in traumatic circumstances", but had still been affected by the injuries to Able Seaman de Gelder, who was "defending our right to live" when he was attacked. Able Seaman de Gelder was involved in an anti-terrorism diving exercise at the time.

Dr Grabs believed Able Seaman de Gelder could work again, and was hopeful he could resume a career in the defence force. He was already doing weights and had spoken of a desire to climb mountains, he said.

Dr Ho said Mr Orgias would have more function in his reattached hand than he would have had with a prosthesis. He is already getting movement back in his fingers, the surgeon said.

Both men's energies were now focused on rehabilitation, the doctors said.

In a statement, Mr Orgias said: "At the present time, it is not known what will happen [to] my hand. I have a long fight ahead, but could not be working with better people than Dr Kevin Ho and his team. "I have received an overwhelming amount of love and support from my family and friends, and this has flowed positively into my recovery process. I would especially like to thank my parents and my wife for their calming love."

SOURCE: Arjun Ramachandran, Sydney Morning Herald, February 24, 2009

Shark victim gives thanks for blood

GLENN ORGIAS marked his 34th birthday in the intensive care unit at St Vincent's Hospital, two weeks after he was attacked by a shark while surfing at Bondi at dusk. And it was a celebration. He was alive.

A glass-half-full man, he considers himself fortunate, thanks to the two French tourists and a surfer on the beach who wrapped surfboard leg ropes as tourniquets on his arm, the plasma which he believed was pumped into him in the ambulance, the 50 units of red blood cells which kept him going in hospital, and the surgeons who performed 18 hours of microsurgery.

"I led a quiet life before I was bitten by a shark - and I loved that life and I don't want to be in the spotlight," Mr Orgias told the *Herald* yesterday.

But he has an almost missionary desire to thank the Australian Red Cross Blood Service and those who provide blood for people like him.



Grateful patient ... Glenn Orgias is promoting the Red Cross blood service. Photo: Jon Reid

So despite the dollars waved at him to tell his story, this morning Mr Orgias fronts up for free as the blood service's newest public face. A lapsed donor himself, he will help launch its football campaign, where fans of rugby league's State of Origin can "Donate for your state".

He doesn't recall much of the attack but says the worst part was paddling back to shore with the help of a wave. "It was a miracle. The wave helped bring me in." And he wants to talk of the miracle of blood. "Without the blood I would never have survived. It saved my life several times and along with that it gave me the opportunity to save my forearm, and it gave me the opportunity to save my hand, which, unfortunately didn't reattach."

His three weeks in intensive care were "scary, and funny at times, a real roller coaster". While he had the best of 21st-century surgical techniques applied to his care, he also had the medieval treatment of leeches sucking out blood from his hand. The nurses, he said, found them a bit disgusting. Mr Orgias says he was inspired by the navy diver Paul de Gelder, who was battling after being mauled by a shark in Sydney Harbour the day before Mr Orgias was bitten. "He is a lovely guy, very courageous," he said.

Mr Orgias returned to work as an energy commodity trader about six weeks ago. While in hospital, he said his family protected him from a lot of news, but he was aware of calls to cull sharks following the spate of attacks. "I don't want sharks to be culled ... shark attacks are very rare," he said. "I knew the risk I was taking when I went out and I accepted that."

SOURCE: Leonie Lamont, May 19, 2009, <http://www.smh.com.au/national/shark-victim-gives-thanks-for-blood-20090518-bcp4.html>