



**ACTIVITY:** Surfing

**CASE:** [GSAF 2011.08.23](#)

**DATE:** Tuesday August 23, 2011

**LOCATION:** The incident took place in the Indian Ocean at Lookout Beach located at the Keurboom's River Mouth, Western Cape Province, South Africa. Lookout Beach is 500 kilometers [310 miles] east of Cape Town.

*34°02'56.00"S, 23°22'49.97"E*



*Tim van Heerden*

**NAME:** Tim van Heerden

**DESCRIPTION:** He was a 49-year-old male, a Plettenberg Bay resident.

### **BACKGROUND**

**WEATHER:** At 09h00, George recorded 1.9 mile visibility and drizzle. The air temperature was 55.4°F, dew point 55.4°F, humidity 100%, sea level pressure 29.92 inches, and wind direction was NNW at 4.6 mph.

**MOON PHASE:** Waning Crescent, 31% of the Moon was illuminated. Last Quarter, August 21, 2011.

**SEA CONDITIONS:** The waves were small.

**ENVIRONMENT:** Plettenberg Bay is known for the white sharks in the waters around the Robberg Peninsula Marine Protected Area (MPA) where they prey on a large seal colony. A whale had breached near the surfers moments before the attack.

**DEPTH OF WATER:** The attack took place "in the shallows," according to a witness.

**TIME:** 09h00

**NARRATIVE:** Van Heerden was one of a crew of surfers. He was lying on his board paddling back to the surf after a ride when he spotted the shark and shouted a warning. He screamed as the shark hit him the first time and pulled him off the board. He was attempting to climb back on his board when the shark returned, hit him again, and took him beneath the surface. Seconds later Van Heerden surfaced.

Van Heerden was clinging to his board as another surfer, Charles Reitz, reached him. "He was in really bad shape when I reached him," said Reitz. "I think he had already bled out. He was not focusing and his eyes were glazed over." Reitz pulled the injured man onto the rocks.

As the National Sea Rescue Institute (NSRI) was attempting to resuscitate the surfer on the rocks, the surfer suffered cardiac arrest several times but was resuscitated each time. Resuscitation efforts continued in the ambulance and the surfer arrived at the hospital in a critical condition. Doctors at Plettenberg Bay Medi-Clinic were unable to save the surfer's life

**INJURIES:** Fatal. The surfer sustained two bites: high up on the thigh and in the groin area. His femoral artery was severed.

**SPECIES:** The incident involved a white shark more than six feet in length. White sharks less than 10 feet in length are like teenagers. They are exploring their environment, learning, and are curious. Lacking hands, a shark uses its mouth to examine an unfamiliar object, and when a white shark is curious, it may result in tragedy.

**SOURCES:** ZigZag, August 23, 2011

<http://www.zigzag.co.za/features/exclusives/7905/Interview:-Charles-Reitz-pulls-shark-victim-to-shore>

IOL News, August 24, 2011, <http://www.iol.co.za/news/south-africa/western-cape/sea-was-red-in-seconds-1.1124268>

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