



ACTIVITY: Surfing

CASE: [GSAF 2012.09.08.b](#)

DATE: Saturday September 8, 2012

LOCATION: The accident took place in the Atlantic Ocean off Lori Wilson Park (North), Cocoa Beach, Brevard County, Florida, USA.

80°36'17.53"W, 28°20'14.81"N

NAME: Matthew Fowler

DESCRIPTION: He is a 25-year-old male from Plant City, Florida. He is 6'1" tall, weighs 190 lbs, and was wearing blue swimming trunks with a black stripe down each side, a black sleeveless rash guard, and had a black surfboard leash attached to his right foot. He was not wearing any jewelry, but he had a sustained minor laceration on the left pinky finger from the nail bed to the tip of the finger that occurred while he was surfing several hours before he was bitten by the shark.

SURFBOARD: New Surf Project (NSP) 7'6" triffin board. The board's upper surface was blue/white, its undersurface was white.

BACKGROUND

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WEATHER: At 11h55, Cocoa Beach recorded clear and sunny skies, and 10-mile visibility. The air temperature on the beach was 88°F, dew point 75.6°F, humidity 70%, sea level pressure 29.98 inches [falling], and wind direction was WSW



at 8 to 10 mph.

MOON PHASE: Last Quarter, September 8, 2012

SEA CONDITIONS: The sea was brown and turbid; visibility was <1ft, and the sea surface temperature was 85°F, estimated. Surf was shoulder high and conditions were pretty smooth. The current was <5knots to North. Strong rip current advisories were in effect for the day. Mean high tide occurred at 13h54

ENVIRONMENT: The area is characterized by a long flat sandy beach. A sandbar runs parallel to the beach approximately 200 feet from the shore. There were no known attractants; no one was fishing and there was no unusual bird activity.

DISTANCE FROM SHORE: 100-200 feet

DEPTH OF WATER: Four to five feet. The bite occurred three to four feet below surface.

TIME: Approximately 12h00

NARRATIVE: About 20-30 people were in the water. No other people were close to the surfer, although ~10 were within 3 to 20 metres of him when he was bitten by a shark.

"I had been surfing for several hours about 1000 yards from the beach at the first break. Nearing the end of my day, I surfed toward shore and dismounted the board about 100 yards from the beach. At Lori Wilson park on Cocoa Beach there is a deep region about 150 yards from shore where the waves stop breaking and begin rolling. This is where I hopped off the board. I surfed a few waves on the second break near the shore. After about 15 minutes of doing this, I decided I was going to take the next wave in and be finished for the day. Water in this area was churned up and foamy, brown in color, and had low visibility."

"I was resting with my chest and arms on the board, in a perpendicular fashion [parallel to shore and waiting for a wave]. My left leg was holding my position in the sand while my right leg was dangling in the water. Suddenly, I felt a quick sharp pressure on my right foot. The pain was more like a brick getting dropped on my foot rather than sharp pain. Immediately, I knew that a shark had bitten me, though I did not see it. The shark let go of my right foot very quickly."

"I mounted my board and paddled as quickly as possible toward the shore. While laying on the board and paddling, I lifted my legs into the air and out of the water. Blood was pouring out of my foot and down my leg."

INJURY: *"The doctor said that I had three (3) avulsions, five (5) lacerations, and several puncture wounds to the top of my foot. There were several puncture wounds and lacerations to the bottom of my foot at the base of my toes."*

FIRST AID: *"After I reached the shore, I limped out of the water and headed towards the lifeguard station directly in front of me. At this point I was able to see the extent of my wound. The top of my foot and my big toe had been sliced open and was bleeding profusely. My tendon was visible in the wound and a section of my skin near my small toes was liberated and missing. However, all my tendons were intact and my toes were all still attached."*

"The lifeguard gave me some first aide supplies and helped me stop the bleeding until

EMS arrived. About 5-10 minutes, they showed up and provided further medical care. After about 10 additional minutes, the wound had been flushed by EMS and been wrapped with gauze and bandages. My foot was beginning to experience sharp pain and heat.”

“I could not walk on my foot without extreme discomfort and was escorted on the EMS ATV to my wife who was about ¼ of a mile South of my location. We left the beach and went to Parrish Emergency Care Center in Port St. John for medical treatment.”

TREATMENT: The patient was taken to the hospital by private car, arriving there 90 minutes after he was bitten by the shark.

“I was given 32 stitches and several lacerations were glued back together. I had swelling on the lower half of my foot for a few days thereafter. There was also severe bruising and soreness for about 10 days. Some of the regions on the top of my foot no longer have feeling.”

SPECIES: The surfer did not see the shark.

REPORTED BY: Al Brenneka, Shark Attack Survivors

SOURCE: Matt Fowler

