

ACTIVITY: Body surfing

CASE: [GSAF 2014.07.03](#)

DATE: Thursday July 3, 2014

LOCATION: The incident took place in the Atlantic Ocean at Isle of Palms, Charleston County, South Carolina, USA.

NAME: Christian Fairbourne

DESCRIPTION: He is a 19-year-old male from New Jersey. He is 6'1", weighs 185 lbs and was wearing white swim trunks with black stripe on the sides. No jewelry was worn at the time of the attack.

BACKGROUND

WEATHER: Visibility was 10 miles, sea level pressure 1011 hPa, and wind direction was NNW at 10 km/h with gusts to 42 km/h.

MOON PHASE: Waxing crescent, 33% of the Moon was illuminated.

SEA CONDITIONS: The sea was 'clear', although visibility was limited; Christian could not see his feet when in the water. The sea surface temperature was 78°F, estimated. Current direction was south-to-north. Mean low tide occurred at 18h37.

ENVIRONMENT: Hurricane Arthur was moving northward along the coast. The sea surface was calm that evening but earlier in the day (08h00) the hurricane was offshore and produced wind, rain and choppy seas. The following day (July 4, 2014) as the hurricane passed by to the east just off the South Carolina shore, Buoy 41004 measured a sustained wind speed of 51 mph and a peak wind gust of 67 mph, and at Isle of Palms a lifeguard reported breaking wave heights of 5 to 6 feet at the shore.

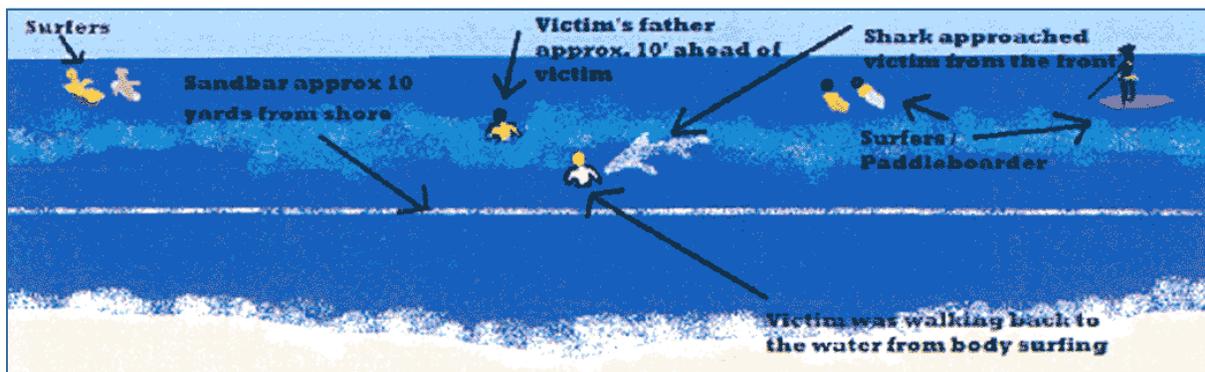
This incident took place over a sandy bottom. There was a sandbar about 10 yards offshore and a channel ran between the beach and the sandbar. The incident site was a half-mile from a pier, but there was no fishing activity in the immediate area, nor had any diving birds or dolphins been observed.

DISTANCE FROM SHORE:

DEPTH OF WATER: Five feet

TIME: Between 18h15 and 18h30 (6:15 pm and 6:30 pm)

NARRATIVE: There were approximately 10 people on the beach, and eight people in the water — some surfers and a paddleboarder — and Christian Fairbourne's father who was about 10 feet seaward of him. Christian had been body surfing for about 45 minutes and was heading back out after catching a wave. He was facing seaward and he was seaward of the sandbar. The shark approached from the front, coming directly towards him and bit his right hand. The shark made a single strike, and may have shaken the teen, but did not push or pull or attempt to submerge him. The strike was deliberate and after biting the teen, the shark swam away.



INJURY: Right hand: Shallow cuts to all the palmer surfaces of the fingers at their bases. Right forearm just above the wrist: A circular gouge surrounded by teeth marks.

FIRST AID / TREATMENT: The Isle of Palms Fire Department cleaned and wrapped the wounds and checked his vitals in the house the family had rented. An ambulance crew arrived and transported him the MUSC/ Medical University of South Carolina in Charleston. Four stitches were required to close the wound on his thumb, and seven more to close the wound on his wrist. He is expected to make a full recovery.

SPECIES: According to Christian, the shark was four to five feet in length, gray in color with a head about a foot wide. He thinks the head looked flat, but is not really certain because the animal was straight in front of him, and the bite happened so quickly. No tooth fragments were recovered from the wounds.

SOURCE: Christian Fairbourne

CASE INVESTIGATORS: Clay Creswell and Dr. Gordon Hubbell, GSAF