

2015 J-Bay Open



ACTIVITY: Surfing

CASE: GSAF 2015.07.19

DATE: Sunday July 19, 2015

LOCATION: The incident took place in the Indian Ocean at Jeffrey's Bay, Eastern Cape Province, South Africa.

NAME: Mick Fanning

DESCRIPTION: A 34-year-old male from Tweed Heads, Australia. He is 5'8" tall, weighs 174lbs, and is a three-time world surfing champion.



Mick Fanning

BACKGROUND

MOON PHASE: Waxing Crescent, 11% of the Moon was illuminated. New Moon, July 16, 2015.

NARRATIVE: It was the final heat of the 2015 J-Bay Open, the sixth stop on the 2015 Samsung Galaxy World Surf League Championship Tour.

Julian Wilson and Mick Fanning were locked in a world title battle. Wilson had just completed the opening wave of the final, and Fanning was in the lineup waiting for a wave when a large fin was seen approaching behind him.

"I just had this instinct that somebody was behind me," Fanning said. "I was just sitting there and I felt something just get stuck in my leg rope, and I was kicking, trying to get it away." The shark either snagged or grabbed Fanning's surfboard leash, and as Fanning and the shark collided, the surfer was flung into the water.

"Then the [shark] came up," said Fanning. "It was like right there. It just kept coming at my board and I was kicking and screaming. I just saw fins, I didn't see any teeth. I was waiting for the teeth to come at me as I was swimming. I punched it in the back. It was thrashing around, and I was still attached to my board. It was dragging me under water, and then my leg rope broke. I just thought: 'What happens if it comes and has another go at me?' so I just turned around so I could at least see it coming."

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The water was cleared and both Fanning and Wilson were quickly picked up by nearby safety boats. The two surfers, opted to split the event prize money as per World Surfing League rules.

INJURY: No injury. “There’s a small depression in my board and my leg wrap [was] bitten,” said Fanning. His leash was severed by the shark and he sustained abrasions to his knuckles when he punched the shark.

SPECIES: White shark. Event organisers later said two sharks were seen in the Jeffreys Bay area and the same one involved in the clash with Fanning was seen again about 30 minutes later.

COMMENT: The event was caught on television. The footage indicates it was an accidental collision rather than an attack. The shark snagged the surfer’s leg rope which resulted in the board (and rider) being pulled into contact with the shark. If the shark’s target had been the surfer or the board, it had ample opportunity to bite either one, but it didn’t ^{seem} it just appeared to want out of there. The surfer, focused on competing, was badly shaken by the unexpected collision.

Two weeks after the incident Fanning gave an exclusive interview to Channel Nine’s *60 Minutes* television program to talk about his ordeal at Jeffreys Bay. Fanning subsequently donated his \$75,000 television appearance fee to Mathew Lee. Lee who was attacked by a white shark on July 2, 2015, at Ballina and was still a patient in the Gold Coast University hospital. David Gyngell, Nine network chief executive, pledged to donate a further \$25,000 to Lee for his ongoing treatment and rehabilitation.

A year later, Fanning returned to Jeffreys Bay to win the World Surfing League event, making him 5th in the world ranking.



SOURCES: Surfer Magazine, July 19, 2015

<http://www.surfermag.com/features/mick-fanning-attacked-by-shark-at-j-bay-open/#1P6Ey56qKtFRIA7P.97>

National Sea Rescue Institute, July 19, 2015

<https://www.nsri.org.za/2015/07/caution-urged-in-jeffreys-bay-following-shark-encounter/>

World Surfing League, July 19, 2015

<http://www.worldsurfleague.com/events/2015/mct/1244/j-bay-open>

The Australian, July 20, 2015

<http://www.theaustralian.com.au/sport/surfer-mick-fanning-survives-shark-attack-at-south-africas-j-bay-final/story-e6frg7mf-1227448385646>

BBC, July 20, 2015

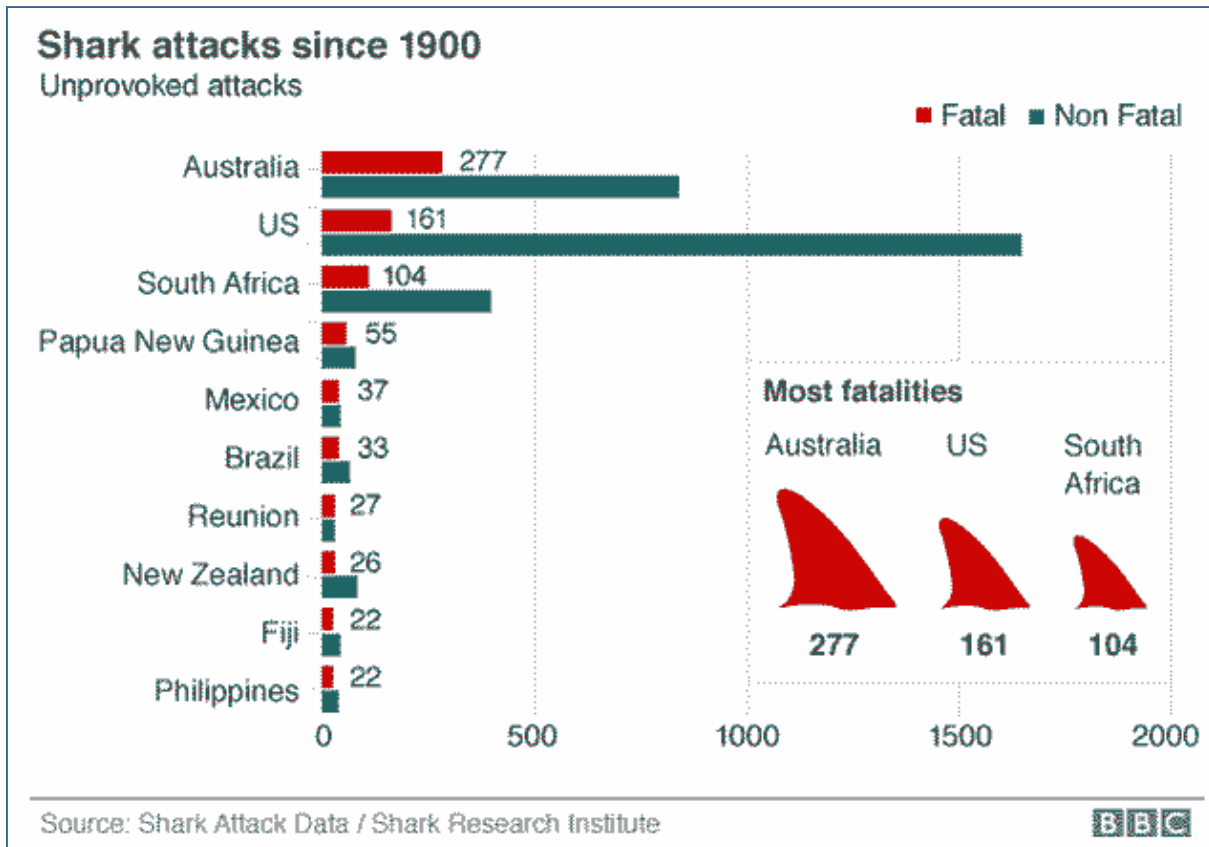
<http://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-33585853>

The Guardian, August 2, 2015

<http://www.theguardian.com/sport/2015/aug/03/mick-fanning-donates-75000-tv-fee-to-surfer-injured-in-nsw-shark-attack>

Newcastle Star, July 17, 2016

<http://www.newcastlestar.com.au/story/4035276/mick-fanning-wins-at-j-bay-in-triumphant-return-video/?cs=2452>





Fanning and Wilson were taken to safety by safety jet skis



Fanning comforted by Kelly Slater, the 11-time world surfing champion who lost to Fanning in the semifinals of the 2015 J-Bay Open.



Wilson and Fanning after the incident. Wilson, who paddled towards Fanning when he witnessed the incident, said that he felt as if he couldn't get to Fanning quickly enough.



Severed leash of Fanning's surfboard