



ACTIVITY: Surfing

CASE: [GSAF 2015.10.09.a](#)

DATE: Friday October 9, 2015

LOCATION: The attack took place in the Pacific Ocean at Leftovers, a popular surf break located between Laniakea and Waimea Bay on the North Shore of Oahu, Hawaii, USA.

NAME: Colin Cook

DESCRIPTION: A 25-year-old male from Kawaiiloa, and an understudy of famed North Shore surfboard shaper John Carper.



Colin Cook

BACKGROUND

WEATHER: At 10h56, PHBK (the airport nearest Waimea) recorded an overcast sky and 10-mile visibility. The air temperature was 82°F, heat index 86.3°F, dew point 71.1°F, humidity 69%, sea level pressure 30.02 inches, and wind direction was WNW at 5.8 mph.

MOON PHASE: Waning Crescent, 8% of the Moon was illuminated. New Moon, October 12, 2015

SEA CONDITIONS: The sea was clear with six-foot waves.

ENVIRONMENT: Leftovers is located about 3 miles (5 kilometres) from the famed Banzai Pipeline. In the 1960s when big wave surfing initially became popular, surfers considered this beach a second choice, or “leftover” surf site, paling in comparison to its neighboring beaches. Coincidentally, this beach also has a “left” surf break, meaning a wave that surfers ride to their left.

DISTANCE FROM SHORE: 150 to 200 yards

DEPTH OF WATER: Six to 10 feet

TIME: 10h25

NARRATIVE: Colin Cook was sitting on his surfboard, waiting for a wave with his legs dangling in the water, when he saw a school of fish jumping out of the water. Shortly afterwards the shark rammed his board from beneath. “It came pretty much out of nowhere. I felt like a truck ran into me and it kind of took me a second to realize what was going on,” said Cook. “It dragged me underwater, and it took me a second to realize it was a massive shark and it was on my leg.” Cook said he punched the shark, broke free, swam to the surface and called for help.

Keoni Bowthorpe was 100 to 150 yards away and witnessed the attack. He immediately raced over on his stand-up paddle board. “He paddled over while the shark was still on me – it was still swimming around me,” explains Cook. “The shark was still dragging me by my board. It was just dragging me around and he was able to hit it with his paddle.”

Bowthorpe, a filmmaker by trade who has spent the last six months working on a shark-related project, struck the animal with the blade of his paddle in an effort to redirect it. He tried to get Cook to grab his leash, but the injuries to his hands made that impossible. “I was finally able to get close enough to him that I just jumped on his back,” says Cook. “He was able to hit it with the paddle, and just kept pushing the shark away. So yeah, I just jumped on his back.”

“My stand-up board is pretty small, and once I was able to get Colin on my back I gave the shark one more whack, let go of my paddle and started to prone-paddle him in,” says Bowthorpe. He said the shark was persistent and he hit it a few times with his paddle as he helped pull Cook onto his back. “I had no idea that his hands were so damaged at the time, and he held on the entire time,” Bowthorpe said.

“On the way in Colin and I were able to catch a wave that helped close the distance to shore,” explains Bowthorpe. “That was key, because with the weight of us both the board was underwater and so was I. Colin passed out a few times and I had to pull him on my back, but he always held on. He never let go, even with his damaged hands. He’s a real champion.” Cook was rapidly bleeding out. Bowthorpe says Cook was barely conscious; he realized they would have to move quickly to get back to shore as the shark followed them into the cove. Forced to paddle in at Chun’s to avoid inshore rocks, the shark followed them all the way to beach. Once on shore several other people quickly responded.

INJURY: The shark severed the patient’s lower left leg and he sustained defense injuries to his hands.

FIRST AID / TREATMENT: Strangers on the beach helped pull them to safety “He was screaming ‘shark’ and ‘help,’” said Drew Zarba, so “I grabbed the surfboard and I laid it down right here as he was pulling off his leash off.” A surfboard leash was used as a tourniquet on the patient’s thigh. “(The patient) said three things,” remembers Zarba. “How is my leg? I’m thirsty, and where is the ambulance?” He helped carry the patient up to the highway on a surfboard. When paramedics arrived, the patient was transported to Queens Medical Center in Honolulu.

“When they took me to the hospital, they had to do an amputation right above the knee,” said Cook. “Unfortunately, I lost just above the knee down. And hands: my left hand, I lost part of my middle finger, and index finger and pinky finger kind of got all chewed up, but they were able to stitch those back together and keep them together.”



Bowthorpe with Cook's surfboard

Cook was released from Queen’s Medical Center on October 16, 2015 and moved to Rehabilitation Hospital of the Pacific to continue his recovery. Doctors say he can be in the water in a month and, when he’s ready, he’ll start surfing again. “It’s a day-by-day process definitely. The first few days, four or five days, were really hard, and I am just, day-by-day, getting better slowly,” Cook said. “It would be a dream come true to somehow raise some awareness actually for the sharks.”

SPECIES: A 10- to 12-foot tiger shark

SOURCES: KHON, October 9, 2015

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