

ACTIVITY: Spearfishing / Freediving

CASE: GSAF 2016.01.24.b

DATE: Sunday January 24, 2016

LOCATION: The incident took place in the Gulf of Mexico about 100 miles off Surfside, Brazoria County, Texas, USA.

NAME: Keith Love

DESCRIPTION: He is a 31-year-old male, 6'3" tall, a licensed USCG Captain, a world-class spearfisherman, holder of state and world spearfishing records and the owner of Tuff Extreme and Texas Bluewater Safaris, a spearfishing charter business. He was using a solid teak speargun weighing about 15 lbs without the spear (one of the heaviest guns available) with 100 feet of line and bungee cord.

BOAT: A 36' Contender with Twin 350's.

BACKGROUND

WEATHER: The sky was partly cloudy and the air temperature was 55°F.

MOON PHASE: Full Moon, January 24, 2016

SEA CONDITIONS: The sea was clearer than the previous day, flat and blue.

ENVIRONMENT: Artificial reef, an old rig.

DISTANCE FROM BOAT: 50 yards

DEPTH OF WATER: 200 feet

TIME: 09h30 — 10h00



Keith Love with the wahoo he had shot when he encountered the bull sharks.

NARRATIVE: Keith Love, deckhand Joe Tate, and three clients left Surfside the previous day and spent the night in the area. Members of the group had shot two wahoo, *Acanthocybium solandri*, earlier in the day. Then Love dived to a depth of 15 or 20 feet and shot a wahoo.

"I shot the wahoo and it took off racing. It went out of sight and the float started taking off so I started swimming after it. A huge bull shark was chasing the wahoo that I had just speared and the wahoo came back towards me and then was using me as a shield. The Wahoo tangled me up in the shooting line [around my waist] and then the shark was able to hit me and the wahoo I was pushing off the shark's head."

"The shark then got tangled in the line with me and the wahoo and was dragging me and hitting me with his tail. Then the shark broke the line, but me and the wahoo are still connected."

"Then a second bull shark about seven to nine feet long came speeding up from below. He was coming up straight from below as fast as he could."

Utilizing the only defense that he had, Love rammed his empty speargun downward, hitting the shark and breaking the weapon.

“The shark was trying to get me and the wahoo. There was blood everywhere. It was a cloud of blood from the wahoo and sharks hitting me and attacking the wahoo that was still In tangled with me in a frenzy as Joe Tate races the boat to me to pull me in the boat. I don't know how they didn't get their jaws around me because the sharks had their jaws extended trying to bite me.”

“The wahoo had two main bites out of him and was attached to me when Joe Tate pulled me in. Joe witnessed the sharks jumping on top of me and landing on me and the sharks thrashing on the surface at me.”

“I laid on the back transom for 10 minutes. I was in shock. I felt like it took everything out of me. I couldn't move.”

INJURIES: He sustained bruised ribs and bruised tail bone. In addition his wetsuit was cut and his bluewater gun was broken.

SPECIES: The incident involved two bull sharks, *Carcharinus leucas*.

SOURCES: Keith Love

The Facts, February 6, 2016

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