

ACTIVITY: Surfing

CASE: [GSAF 2009.08.29](#)

DATE: Saturday August 29, 2009

LOCATION: The attack took place in the Indian Ocean at Outeniqua beach near Glentana, Western Cape Province, South Africa.

NAME: Gerhard van Zyl

DESCRIPTION: He was a 25-year-old male. He matriculated in 2002, achieved an A aggregate in matric. He was also captain of the school's cricket team.

SURFBOARD: He was using a newly-repaired board.



BACKGROUND

WEATHER: At 15h00, George recorded clear skies. The air temperature was 73.4°F, dew point 39.2°F, humidity 29%, sea level pressure 29.86 inches, and wind direction was South at 9.2 mph.

MOON PHASE: First Quarter, August 27, 2009. Full Moon, September 5, 2009.

SEA CONDITIONS: The water was crystal clear, and the waves were excellent.

ENVIRONMENT: According to Stephan Swanson, researcher at Oceans Research in Mossel Bay, during the past three years shark researchers have tagged approximately 400 white sharks in the bay in order to determine their behavioural patterns. About 98% of these sharks are between two and three metres in length. The smaller sharks, in particular, are nomadic and migrate to Gansbaai and False Bay, returning to Mossel Bay in August and September. Their daily swimming route stretches from Mossel Bay to Hartenbos, Klein Brak River, Groot Brak River and Glentana. "Sharks are opportunistic hunters and scavengers who investigate anything that might be edible. To determine whether an object is edible, they first smell and 'taste' it," he said.

TIME: 15h30

NARRATIVE: Gerhard van Zyl and Leonard Fourie were surfing together. Leonard was a few metres from Gerhard and paddling towards him when the shark struck. "It came out of the water and seemed to take him at the waist and flipped Gert off his board. It took me a second or two to realise what was happening. Then I kept screaming at Gert to get on his board. He tried to but the waves were breaking over him and he kept slipping off. Even then, I didn't know his leg was gone." By the time he reached Gerhard just moments later, the shark was gone.

INJURY: Fatal. Gerhard's right leg was severed below the knee. Death was due to shock and blood loss.

FIRST AID / TREATMENT: Another swimmer helped Leonard get Gerhard to the beach but by then the injured surfer was in shock. "The wetsuit was wrapped around the wound and tied with a piece of rope in an attempt to stop the bleeding," said Dawie Zwiegelaar,

head of the National Sea Rescue Institute (NSRI) station at Mossel Bay. Zwiegelaar also reported that a paramedic from Netcare 911 performed CPR. The injured surfer was airlifted by the Red Cross AMS helicopter and taken to the provincial hospital in George where he was later pronounced dead after all efforts to save him were exhausted."

SPECIES: The incident involved a white shark, said to be four metres in length.

SOURCES: Cape Argus. August 30, 2009, page 2;
News24.com, August 29, 2009, <http://www.news24.com/SouthAfrica/News/Surfer-dies-after-shark-attack-20090829>

