



2023 IMPACT REPORT



**STRONGER
TOGETHER**

FOREWORD: JON CARDINELLI

Facing Adversity Together

The Springboks overcame significant physical and mental challenges across the 2023 season. The resilience and bravery of those individuals – and the unity of the team – ensured that South Africa won its fourth World Cup title in France.

The recipients of the Players' Fund have shown the same warrior spirit when tackling life's challenges on a daily basis. As you read through the stories of this report, you may come to realise – just as I did – how much these tales of adversity have the power to inspire.

Ollie Terblanche sustained a life-threatening neck injury in a club game back in 2015. Through sheer will and determination, Ollie has taught himself to walk short distances with the aid of crutches. He now has a two-year-old son, as well as his own coffee business. For every bag of coffee sold, Ollie donates R2 to the Players' Fund.

Rowan Hermanus was confined to a wheelchair after suffering a spinal injury during a school match in 2014. Since then, he has gone on to earn a Diploma in Public Administration and Management through UNISA. More recently, he competed in the Para Table Tennis Championship in the TT3 division. Riaan Miles

– another Players' Fund recipient – has also taken up the sport, and won the gold medal in the TT8 division at the 2023 tournament.

South Africans never quit. Last year, few expected the Boks to progress as far as the decider in France. It was nothing short of a miracle that Siya Kolisi, Handré Pollard and Pieter-Steph du Toit made it onto the pitch for their second-consecutive World Cup final appearance – given the trio's history with serious injuries.

Du Toit's road to the 2023 final was by far the most challenging. The flanker suffered a freak leg injury while playing for the Stormers in the 2020 Super Rugby tournament, and would have lost his limb if not for the timely intervention of the medical staff on the scene. Nevertheless, he was sidelined for the better part of a year, and many doubted that he would play at the highest level again.

The ordeal may have broken other individuals, but it only sharpened Du Toit's resolve. The following year, he contributed to the Boks' series victory against the British and Irish Lions, and in the 2023 World Cup final against the All Blacks, he delivered an aggressive

yet controlled defensive display that earned him the Man of the Match award.

To say that Kolisi, Pollard, Du Toit and others among that special Bok group have inspired South Africa would be an understatement. Thousands of fans lined the streets when the Boks embarked on a week-long trophy tour across various towns and cities. When Kolisi addressed the crowds and the greater South African public, he made it clear that the trophy belonged to the country as much as the team, and that inspiration is a two-way street.

That team shouldn't be measured by trophies and accolades alone. Many of the Boks have gone out of their way to support the Players' Fund and its recipients who can no longer play the game. That support has taken various forms, with established Test players visiting the recipients, making donations, signing memorabilia as well as attending special events.

These stories seldom make the headlines, and yet they highlight the strength of the community and the warrior spirit that is shared by so many in the South African game. The determination of these fallen players mirror that of the national team – and their stories have the same power to inspire.



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Recipient, Chris Labuschagne and wife Natasha, at the Wings for Life World Run in May 2023. Photo credit: Craig Kolesky

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OFFICIAL CHARITY OF THE SPRINGBOKS

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

Jean de Villiers



Dear Supporters and Friends of the Players' Fund,

As we reflect on the remarkable journey of the Players' Fund, it is important to look back to where it all began. The roots of this invaluable organisation can be traced to the vision and dedication of individuals who believed in supporting our rugby players in times of dire need.

The Players' Fund was born out of tragedy, a shared passion for the game and a deep sense of responsibility towards players who suffered misfortune playing the game they love. It was Morné du Plessis and Frikkie Naude, who first planted the seeds of what would become a vital lifeline for many and established the Chris Burger Fund in 1980. In 1987, The Petro Jackson Memorial Fund was established for the same reasons and was spearheaded by Dr Ismail Jakoet. When the Funds merged in 1992, Yusuf (Jowa) Abrahams joined the board, serving the fund for over 30 years, and retiring in August 2023. Their commitment to the welfare of these players laid the foundation upon which we stand today.

We cannot speak of the Players' Fund journey without paying homage to those who have dedicated years of their lives to its cause. Gail Baerecke stands as a beacon of unwavering dedication, serving the Fund for 18 years with passion and selflessness. We owe a huge debt of gratitude for the extraordinary contributions she made to the Fund during this time.

The past year has symbolised a changing of the guard within the Players' Fund. Change, as we know, is never easy. Yet, it

is through change that we grow and evolve. The Fund seems to have come full circle, with a new generation in place and ready to take the Fund forward.

As we honour the legacy of Morné, Frikkie, Jowa, and Gail, we also look to the future with hope and determination. We must respect and appreciate the immense work that has been done, and the significant contributions and sacrifices that have brought the Fund to where it is today.

Now, the opportunity lies with us, the new group entrusted with the Players' Fund's mission. It is our responsibility to take this organisation further and to new heights. We must understand the pivotal nature of our roles within the Fund, building on the solid foundations laid by these remarkable contributors.

In closing, I would like to extend my heartfelt thanks to Morné, Frikkie, Gail, and all those who have played a part in shaping the Players' Fund into what it is today. Your dedication and passion have created a legacy that will continue to uplift and support our recipients for years to come.

Together, let us embrace this opportunity to make a difference, honouring the past while forging a bright future for the Players' Fund and the recipients we serve.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading 'Jean de Villiers'. The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large, stylized 'J' and 'V'.

CEO'S REPORT

Mark Kritzinger

The rollercoaster that was 2023 has drawn to a close. It was a manic year filled with many exciting highs and tragic lows; a year of transition and change, a year in which South Africa showed the world what "Stronger Together" really means. I would like to express my utmost gratitude to everyone who supported The Players' Fund throughout 2023. The rugby community is truly amazing, and we could not deliver the impact that we do without your continued support.

Our fundraising events returned for the first time since the pandemic. We revived many of our regular annual events and made some new additions. In April, we hosted what will become the annual Betway Golf Day at Serengeti Golf Estate, and the guest list boasted a number of Springbok legends; in June, we hosted an Evening with the Springboks at the Southern Sun Pretoria, where we were honoured to have the entire Springbok squad in attendance before they set off for the World Cup in France; in August our hugely popular Women's Day at Steenberg Golf Club was hosted by former Stormers captain Chris van Zyl, and our special guest, Springbok Women's captain Babalwa Latsha. We built on our first ever international event (which was staged in 2022) by holding two events in the United Kingdom, namely Breakfast with the Boks in Cardiff prior to the Test against Wales, where six Springboks joined

to hear Michael Charton's story, "Mud, Mines, and Melody; as well as a South African braai at Wolfpack in London, where Charton delivered "Far From a Dance" prior to the record-breaking clash against the All Blacks at Twickenham. Lastly, we were fortunate to be the chosen charity for a Pitchside Hospitality Rugby World Cup Review dinner in London on 14 November, which was a huge success. 2023 was a very busy and exciting year on the fundraising front.

The Players' Fund focuses on supporting our recipients and ensuring that the quality of life they lead is improved through the impact we deliver. Since joining in May, Shoneé Cornelissen has personally visited 38 of our recipients to assess their health and wellbeing. Overall, we have seen 46 of our 88 recipients this year. This is a big achievement, as we were unable to see most of our Players' Fund family in person during the pandemic. Our Injured Player Welfare Officers have made huge strides over the last 18 months to ensure we are fully aware of their needs and requirements. We added two new recipients to the Players' Fund family, both of whom have suffered C5/6 complete spinal cord fractures and require specialised powered wheelchairs and long-term care from the Fund. As a result, we had a financially demanding year, despite our revived fundraising efforts.



"The Players' Fund focuses on supporting our recipients and ensuring that the quality of life they lead is improved through the impact we deliver."



We are always proud of the strides made by our recipients, and during 2023 we witnessed some great achievements and milestones. Riaan Miles won gold at the National Para Table Tennis Championships in the TT8 Division, while Rowan Hermanus also competed in the TT3 division. Henry Afrikaner married Tessa on 4 November, and Charles Oppelt married Amber on 18 November, having also won a silver medal at the Arnold Classic Bodybuilding Competition in May. De Wet Venter cycled the 947 Ride Joburg race on a tandem bike with biokineticist Justin Jeffery. Lifa Hlongwa participated in the World Rowing Champs in Belgrade, the Gavirate International Para Rowing Regatta in Italy, and the Africa Rowing Champs in Tunisia, placing second overall in his category and narrowly missing out on Paralympic qualification – all whilst completing his degree.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank our partners and donors for their continued support. Firstly to SA Rugby, who welcomed us into their offices 18 months ago. It has been a privilege to sit amongst the good people who run rugby in this country and who helped to bring the World Cup back home. Thank you to Betway, who continue to be a fantastic partner supporting us financially as well as partnering with us on the Golf Day and Evening with the Springboks. Thank you to MyPlayers and their members that have chosen to support us. Thank you to the Ball Family Foundation for their generous support over the last three years, it has been a privilege working with you.

Thank you to our incredible service providers at Nurture Health Aurora, Enable Centre, Justin Jeffery, the Cleary Park and Summerstrand Cheshire Homes, Andy Newell, Walking with Brandon Foundation, CE Mobility, and The Western Cape Rehabilitation Centre.

Thank you to Pick n Pay for the Springbok Shopping Bag initiative, and to all the shoppers that helped raise R500,000 for the Fund; to Outsurance for the generous donation; to National Glass, Algoa Joinery, and Alpha & Omega for helping us build and fit out a home for one of our recent recipients; to Declan McClaggan for his regular and continued donations; to Ollie Terblanche, a recipient of the Fund, who donates R2 from every bag of coffee sold from his brand Rise Coffee www.risecoffeeco.co.za; and to Furlo Theron, also a recipient of the Fund, who hosts an annual potjie competition to raise money for the Fund. Thank you to all the anonymous donors, and to the ones that I have missed, I apologise in advance. We quite simply could not do what we do without your support.

We also could not deliver the same impact without our small but determined team. Thank you to Aashia and Shoneé for all of the hard work during 2023, it was incredibly busy, and this small team moved mountains. A huge thank you to Gail Baerecke for 18 years of incredible service to the Fund, and who is now enjoying a busy "retirement". Thank you to our Chairman Jean de Villiers, and to all the Fund Trustees for the dedication and time you have and continue to give to

the Fund. It is incredibly valuable, and we are grateful to have you onboard.

We also bid farewell to two of the Players' Fund founders, after 43 years of service. Morné du Plessis and Frikkie Naude retired as Trustees this past November, having founded the Chris Burger Fund in 1980. Morné and Frikkie have played pivotal leadership roles in ensuring the Fund is where it is today, having supported over 600 seriously injured rugby players in South Africa during this time. Their service has left a legacy of positive impact on the community we serve, and we are all incredibly grateful for the dedication and effort that you have given the Fund. You've left us with large boots to fill, and we wish you all the best for the future.

On behalf of the Players' Fund, we would like to wish our #SupportSquad all the best for 2024. May it be one filled with many highs, and few lows. If you would like to support the Fund in any way, big or small, please feel free to reach out to us.

THE ROLE OF THE PLAYERS' FUND

Although the Players' Fund has long-term support at its core, we are involved with every serious injury in South Africa that is reported, from the outset. A serious injury is evaluated over several phases:

Initial Phase:

The Players' Fund's Injured Player Welfare Officer (IPWO) also acts as the Serious Injury Case Manager (SICM) across all forms of rugby at a national level, and from the moment the SICM is made aware of a catastrophic injury, our work as the Players' Fund begins.

Notification of serious rugby injuries are mostly reported to the BokSmart Serious Injury Case Manager (SICM) via the unions, clubs, schools, and ER24, according to the BokSmart Serious Injury Reporting Protocol.



Acute Phase:

Once the initial BokSmart report is received, the SICM will then follow up with the rugby club or school, the medical personnel involved and the injured player's family, to assess the extent of the injury and understand what support is needed, as well as reassure family and friends that they are not alone by outlining the support that the Fund offers.

Follow up is then regular until such time as an accurate injury outcome is established. During this time the SICM monitors the situation, keeping all parties informed about the potential outcomes and support required, with the hope that the injury will be classified as a "near miss" and that the recipient will make a full recovery. This is however not always the case, and when a permanent disabling injury is confirmed, the SICM/IPWO will onboard these injured players as recipients of the Players' Fund.

Recipient Phase:

Prior to discharge from hospital, and in consultation with the rehabilitation team, the unique needs of each recipient are assessed, and long-term support is planned that covers the physical, emotional and psychological aspects of the recipient's needs. We provide support across eight pillars:

SUPPORT PILLARS

1. **PROVISION OF EQUIPMENT**
We partner with recipients to ensure they have all the equipment they need to lead lives as independently as possible.
2. **MODIFICATION TO HOMES**
We work together with local builders and suppliers to ensure that recipients' homes are wheelchair friendly and safe.
3. **MEDICAL CONSUMABLES**
Through our partnership with YMS Medical Suppliers we assist all recipients with medical consumables that they are often not able to access in their communities.
4. **SECONDARY REHABILITATION**
Regular exercise is critical for physical and mental wellbeing, and we facilitate access for recipients to physiotherapy and other outpatient treatments close to their place of residence.
5. **FINANCIAL SUPPORT**
Where required, financial support is provided for monthly subsistence, payment of carers, and assisted living facilities for those who cannot live at home.
6. **EDUCATION & SKILLS DEVELOPMENT**
We encourage recipients to complete or continue their education journeys to remain or become economically active.
7. **TRANSPORT FACILITATION**
Where possible we contribute to the cost of transport for our recipients when urgent medical attention is required, when clinical appointments are scheduled, or to reach academic institutions for study purposes.
8. **PERSONAL CARE & WELLBEING**
Our recipients' quality of life is an important aspect of our work with them. Regular home visits and being just a phone call away, means that their needs can be regularly assessed and where possible addressed.

THE TEAM – BOARD OF TRUSTEES AND STAFF



RECIPIENT STORY

Ollie Terblanche

Ollie Terblanche was a promising provincial rugby player who represented the Golden Lions. After playing for a club in New Zealand for about a year, he moved to George to be closer to Chanel, the love of his life. They got engaged, but one month later – on 24 January 2015 – their lives changed forever after Ollie broke his neck during a local rugby match. Ollie was very fortunate to have survived the accident and has since received intense medical intervention, treatment and daily rehabilitation. He and Chanel got married two years after his injury. She has been his pillar of strength throughout this journey. Eight years later, his body has recovered to the point where he is physically semi-dependent and can walk short distances with the aid of crutches.

Being a strong character, Ollie could not allow himself to wallow in self-pity. During rehabilitation, he learned the importance of a strong mind and that the body can do almost anything that the mind sets out to achieve. This attitude is reflected in favourite scripture in Hebrews (1:11): “Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.” (King James Translation). Another aspect of Ollie’s life is his

absolute love and appreciation for good coffee, which developed after his injury. Coffee became a welcome comfort for him during those challenging times, and went on to play a crucial role in his decision to become a coffee marketeer.

It was Ollie’s wish to give back to rugby and especially to the Players’ Fund that assists catastrophic seriously injured rugby players. In May 2019, Ollie was offered the challenge he was looking for; the opportunity to start his own coffee brand, Rise Coffee. His plan was to grow his business by living out his love for coffee, financially supporting his family, and supporting others whose lives have been changed by the game of rugby that he continues to love and support. For every bag of coffee sold, R2 goes towards the Players’ Fund, and to date an incredible R29,000 has been donated. He now has a beautiful little boy named Lian, who was born on 27 February 2022. Ollie’s determination and courage continues to inspire many.

“It was Ollie’s wish to give back to rugby and especially to the Players’ Fund that assists catastrophic seriously injured rugby players.”



INCIDENTS, INJURY AND IMPACT

Shoneé Cornelissen

It's been a year of transition and learning, since Gail Baerecke retired in July 2023. I have the privilege of taking over as the Injured Player Welfare Officer, where the focus remains on providing exceptional care to our recipients and being Rugby's Caring Hands at every level of the game.

In 2023, a total of 46 recipient visits were made to assess our recipient's situations and attend to their needs. These visits are important as they allow us to assess the needs of our recipients first-hand. During these visits we check their equipment, review previous goals and plan new ones, discuss what support is required, assess their health and wellbeing, and discuss their education journeys. A face-to-face visit provides our recipients with the comfort of knowing that The Players' Fund truly cares and is always there for them. We unfortunately said goodbye to seven recipients who passed away during 2023, one of whom had been a recipient for over 39 years, and three for 35 years. I was fortunate to have visited some of them during the year before they passed.

ER24 remain a key partner together with BokSmart and the Players' Fund, and handle all the SpineLine reports. They play a significant role in identifying and assisting in the catastrophic injuries that occur and we are pleased to be able to continue the partnership.

In 2023, 50 incidents were reported to the Players' Fund via the BokSmart reporting protocol, with 16 of these considered serious injuries, and fortunately eight being classified as "near miss". Detail can be seen in the BokSmart Report.

We have welcomed two new recipients to the family this year, namely Simanga Mandita (29 years old) from Middelrift and Anzil Williams (16) from Humansdorp. They both sustained C5/C6 complete injuries and have undergone surgery and started their rehabilitation journeys.

Simanga started his secondary rehabilitation journey with an intensive four-and-a-half months at Nurture Health Aurora, before moving to Cheshire Home Summerstrand in November, where he has settled in well, made new friends and is adjusting to his new normal.

Anzil's secondary rehabilitation journey also included three months of intensive work at Nurture Health Aurora, and in January 2024, he moved back home to Humansdorp, where he will be assisted with returning to school to redo Grade 11, before completing Grade 12.

Secondary rehabilitation plays a pivotal role in the lives of our recipients, and it is an area that we encourage them to work on daily, as the benefits are tremendous.



"The support shown by the rugby community and our #SupportSquad has been incredible."



INCIDENTS, INJURY AND IMPACT (continued)

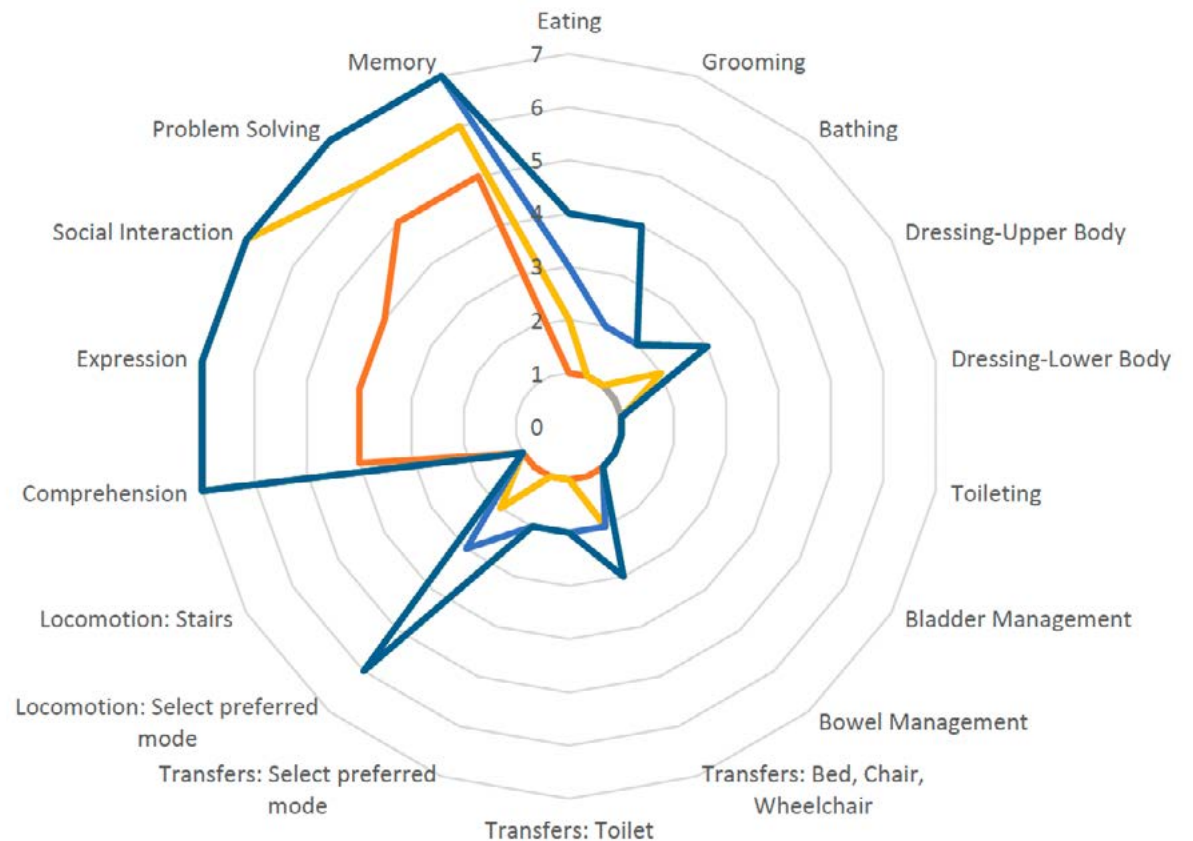
The case below shows a recipient's progress on a FIM Score (Functional Independence Measure), which is tool used in rehabilitation and occupational therapy to assess and monitor patients' functional independence across motor and functional subscales. It measures the patient's level of independence in performing everyday activities and provides a standardised method for evaluating functional outcomes across various settings and diagnoses. Level 1 being total assistance required, and Level 7 indicating complete independence.

In the below case, progress was monitored over a three-month period and as you can see, this recipient has improved significantly across eating, grooming, comprehension, memory, problem solving, social interaction and wheelchair locomotive skills.

Thanks to an offer from Andy Newell, we have been fortunate to begin offering Life Coaching to some of our recipients in need. This partnership provides our recipients a safe place to have the psychological support they may need, independent of the Fund.

The support shown by the rugby community and our #SupportSquad has been incredible. Thank you for allowing us to help our recipients in every way possible, and for the selfless time given towards them.

Shoneé Cornelissen



RECIPIENT STORY

Rowan Hermanus

Ten years ago, Rowan sustained a spinal cord injury whilst playing rugby for Hoerskool Swartland in Malmesbury. He was in Grade 10 at the time, and returned to school the following year in a manual wheelchair to complete his final two years. This was not easy, as high schools are difficult to navigate in wheelchairs, but through his determination and with the support of his family and school, he matriculated in 2015. Two years later, he started studying through UNISA, and graduated with a Diploma in Public Administration and Management in 2020. Over the course of his studies, he acquired eight subject distinctions.

Rowan lives at home with his mum in Atlantis. Since graduating, he has repeatedly applied for work opportunities, but hasn't been successful to date. Rowan's biggest goal is to save up enough money to purchase a car, as this will allow him to live independently and be available for job opportunities further afield. He exercises daily to stay fit and maintain what functionality he has. Rowan has been going for

monthly rehabilitation sessions at the Enable Centre for the past 10 months, and has shown great progress in cardiovascular endurance, allowing for sustained periods of exercise. This is a critical aspect of his overall rehabilitation, contributing to improved cardiovascular health and overall wellbeing. Milestones achieved throughout the past few months include first pull-ups unassisted, seated balance from 2/5 to 4/5, standing endurance up to 60 minutes at 90 degrees, crawling 20 metres, and floor to step height (30cm) transfer.

Rowan competed in the National Para Table Tennis Championship in Cape Town last year, and did extremely well in the TT3 division. His dedication to exercise has contributed to his progress.

"I am so grateful to the Players' Fund who from day 1 has provided me with support and advice along the road."



BOKSMART

BokSmart Training Statistics as at 30 January 2024

184 710 people have gone through BokSmart training since we launched in July 2009, many with multiple exposures to the programme, and 112 062 with at least one exposure.

<p>184 710 BokSmart Number trained since inception:</p>	<p>First-time certified 112 062</p>	<p>47 674 MyBokSmart ONLINE REGISTRATIONS</p>
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<p>BokSmart Cycle 7: MyBokSmart online completions: 10 642 TO DATE</p> <table border="0"> <tr> <td>Certifications 4 832</td> <td>Recertifications 5 810</td> </tr> </table>	Certifications 4 832	Recertifications 5 810	<p>AS OF 29TH JANUARY 2024, of the 20 356 people registered on the Module, 9 714 are currently still busy working their way through the BokSmart 7 online Course.</p>
Certifications 4 832	Recertifications 5 810		

MyBokSmart Medical Course participation numbers: 16 088 (9 345 completed)

<p>1965 Concussion Management in the professional game</p> <p>1 031 Rugby Safety messaging with a bit of humour:</p> <p>1 046 Saying no to banned substances</p>	<p>4 595 Concussion education</p> <p>206 Emergency Action Plan</p> <p>1 276 Referees Pre-match Checklist</p>	<p>1 573 Head, neck, and spine injury management</p> <p>1 047 Safety in the playing environment and EAPs</p> <p>1 363 The Concussion Blue Card System</p>
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<p>Tackle Height Change Educational Module participation numbers: 2 197 CURRENT</p>	<p>1 206 COMPLETED</p>	<p>In 2023, we trained 9 130 people on the BokSmart programme, predominantly coaches, referees, and medical staff.</p>
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Incidents (combined school and club) as at 30 January 2024

In 2023, we had 16 serious injuries and medical events across South Africa:

<p>ASCI (NEAR MISSES) TACKLE EVENT 3 X TACKLER X BALL CARRIER</p>	<p>ASCI (NEAR MISSES) SCRUM COLLAPSE X 2</p>
<p>AASCI (QUADRIPLÉGICS) TACKLE EVENT 2 X TACKLER</p>	<p>CARDIOVASCULAR EVENTS 3 X FATAL</p>
<p>TBI TACKLE EVENT 2 X BALL CARRIER 2 X TACKLER UNFORTUNATELY TWO OF THESE WERE FATALITIES.</p>	

In 2023, the Tackle again contributed to 11 of the injuries (six to the Tackler, and five to the Ball Carrier); the Scrum contributed to two injuries (neither of these were permanent injuries). The good news is that most of these events had positive outcomes and that the greatest impact the BokSmart programme has had to date, is limiting the average severity and number of permanent outcomes in South African Rugby Union. For those players who were less fortunate, we will continue to embrace and work towards #VisionZero – One is one too many!



BOKSMART (continued)

MyBokSmart

SportsCap, the Official Software Partner of BokSmart, has helped us move nicely into the digital space and we are immensely grateful for their continued support and altruistic approach to help us make the game safer for its players. MyBokSmart (<https://my.boksmart.com>) already has 1612 school and club registrations, where Clubs and Schools can register, manage, and integrate their rugby coaches, referees, and team medical staff on **MyBokSmart**.



Within the developing BokSmart Certification Software Ecosystem (BCSE), courtesy of our collaborative partnership with SportsCap, we are continually looking to move the programme forward. We have created three different online Service Providers, BokSmart, MyBokSmart Medical, and SA Rugby. Each of these providers cater for a different audience, but all with the same focus, and that is making the game safer and improving injury prevention strategies. To complete the regulated BokSmart Rugby Safety Courses, one must access the BokSmart service provider. For Rugby



Medicine and additional safety-focused modules, one can access the MyBokSmart Medical, and for other rugby-focused modules, the SA Rugby provider would be the route to take.

An example of a Rugby-safety focused Module on the SA Rugby service provider was the creation of a **Tackle Height Change Educational Module**. This module is an important one as it tells the story of why South African Rugby are lowering the maximum legal tackle-height for all amateur levels of rugby as of 2024. This is a worldwide initiative aimed at lowering the number of head-contacts in the game of rugby. South African Rugby's method also considered the tackle-catastrophic head, neck, and spine injury data collected over a 16-year period in South Africa in determining the best approach suited for South African Rugby and included additional laws to control the on-field actions of the ball carrier too.



BOKSMART (continued)

You can find out more about these changes, by going through the Tackle Height Change Educational Module and by accessing an explanatory document, which covers the essentials of these law changes. This could literally be the 'game changer' that positively influences concussions, catastrophic head, neck, and spine injuries, and long-term brain health.



Dr Wayne Viljoen
Senior Manager Rugby Safety

Who is BokSmart for?

Historically BokSmart focused on coaches and referees who must undergo compulsory Rugby Safety Course training every two years to remain certified to coach or referee within South Africa. To influence the players, one must positively influence those who determine the actions of these players during training and on match days – namely the coaches and referees, as they are responsible for preparing players and managing them on match days. Regular education of coaches and referees on programmes such as BokSmart has been effective in reducing catastrophic injury risk in rugby union.

Through the MyBokSmart programme, we can expand this strategy and reach more key role players over time, such as players, medical support staff and parents. All our materials are freely accessible, and the more we work together towards a common cause, the better it will be for the continued and improved safety of our players. Rugby is a contact sport, and with that comes some level of risk (albeit small) of catastrophic injuries.

It is our duty to limit that risk while trying to maintain the integrity of the game. As the four-time, back-to-back Rugby World Cup champions showed us, we can achieve anything if we work together as a team! #StrongerTogether.

THE ACTIONS OF A BALL CARRIER

The ball carrier may brace for contact, but may not run into contact with their body fully bent or horizontal, or with the head lower than the hips, or lead headfirst into contact with an opponent during open play.

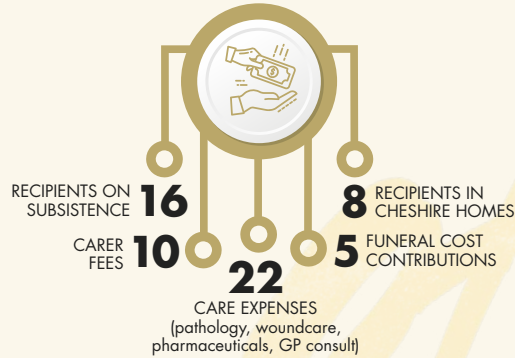
This could be described as "LATE AND LOW" and may be penalized for contributing towards dangerous play.



YEAR IN NUMBERS

R1 130 645

FINANCIAL SUPPORT



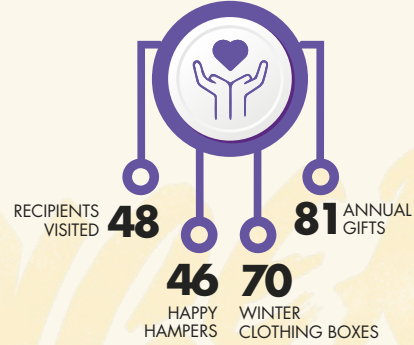
R314 247

MODIFICATIONS TO HOMES



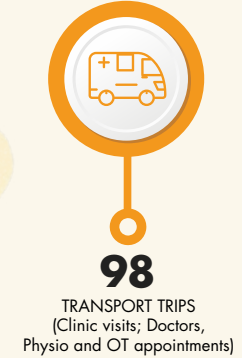
R296 518

PERSONAL CARE & WELLBEING



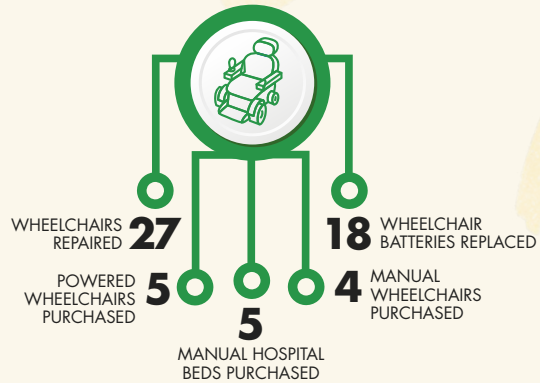
R172 744

TRANSPORT FACILITATION



R752 829

PROVISION OF EQUIPMENT



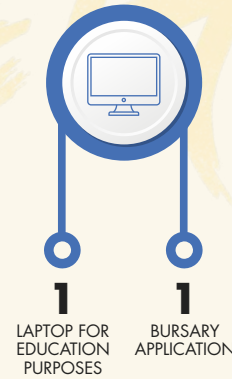
R79 603

SECONDARY REHABILITATION



VIK

EDUCATION & SKILLS DEVELOPMENT



R143 297

MEDICAL CONSUMABLES



RECIPIENT STORY

Riaan Miles

Riaan Miles is a businessman from Gqeberha with an above-knee amputation. Last year, he won a gold medal at the National Para Table Tennis Championship in the TT8 division.

Riaan sustained a life-changing injury while playing rugby at Hoërskool Despatch during his Grade 12 year in 1992. His knee was severely bent, and he underwent three surgeries before it was determined that arteries were damaged, and that his foot had already developed gangrene. An amputation was done just below the knee, but three years later, Riaan opted for better mobility and decided to have his leg amputated above the knee.

He joined Topspin, a local table tennis club, in 2014 – barely two years after starting to practise in his own garage. Riaan talks openly about the reasons for pursuing this form of exercise at the time. “I was very unhealthy, overweight, and my back started acting up,” he says. “I could barely move.”

His friend and now coach, Peter du Preez, persuaded him to start playing table tennis at home. “It was difficult,” Riaan says. “Within five minutes, sweat was

pouring, but my muscles got exercise, and I shed weight and enjoyed it more and more.”

After the strict COVID-19 pandemic restrictions, Riaan joined Topspin, where he could participate in local competitions before being selected to participate in the national championship.

In addition to his gold medal, Riaan and club teammate, Claude Lawack, won silver in the doubles TT10 division. Riaan is uncertain whether he will participate in future tournaments, but maintains that table tennis and Du Preez saved his life.

“This is a wonderful sport. I could reclaim my life through it.” He acknowledges that living with an amputation is not easy, but says there is always hope.

“Today, I have a life that I could never have dreamed of touching. I wanted to become a police officer, but today, I’m an entrepreneur working all over the world as a Google marketing advisor. Not everything that has happened is bad. There is always hope for a change; it’s never too late.”

“Today, I have a life that I could never have dreamed of touching.”





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IN MEMORIA



Franklin Prins

Injured on 12 September 2012, aged 34, while playing for Obiqua Prison. He lived in Macassar in the Western Cape.



Dean Maart

Injured on 1 July 2007, aged 32, while playing for Somerset East Rugby Club. He lived with his wife Rosie in Somerset East in the Eastern Cape.



Robert Burnett

Injury: 20 February 1988, aged 23, playing in the North West Premier League. He lived in Blyvooruitsig, a small mining town in the North West Province. Robert is seen here with his speech therapist.



Johnny Slabbert

Injured on 18 August 2001, aged 38, while playing for Patensie Rugby Club. Johnny lived in Patensie in the Eastern Cape and grew his own vegetables.



Quenton Steele

Injured on 17 March 1998, aged 30, while playing for False Bay Rugby Club. Quenton lived in Sun Valley in the Western Cape with his wife Carol and two sons. He worked at the naval base in Simon's Town and was promoted to the rank of captain.



George Visser

Injured on 2 May 1984 while playing for the Kanniedood men's residence, he suffered a dislocation of his C4/5 vertebrae when a maul collapsed. He married in 2000 and worked in property development. He and his wife were blessed with a daughter, Caitlyn in 2004. They relocated to Hartenbos in the Western Cape in 2009. He left a personal note that included the following: "I like people especially figuring out what makes them "tick". I dislike able-bodied persons parking in parking bays demarcated for wheelchair users ONLY."



Koos Kermis

Injured on 22 May 1988, aged 31. Koos lived in Paarl East in the Western Cape and was able to walk with assistive devices.

BROTHERS IN ARMS

The extra-ordinary service of two Players' Fund pioneers

The Chris Burger Petro Jackson Players' Fund bids farewell to two of its pillars, founding members and Trustees in Morné du Plessis and Frikkie Naudé.

For 43 years, the pair paved the way for the non-profit organisation with extraordinary passion and aplomb, and left behind a solid foundation for the Players' Fund to continue the phenomenal work.

Known as Rugby's Caring Hands, the Players' Fund assists 88 recipients who sustained catastrophic head, neck and spinal injuries while playing the game they love, and has aided over 600 fallen heroes over the years.

The Fund was founded by Du Plessis and several of his Western Province and Villagers teammates including Naudé, Tubby Teubes, HO de Villiers as well as Judge Pat Tebbutt and Neil Strybis on September 9, 1980, after the tragic death of Western Province fullback Chris Burger from an injury he sustained in a Currie Cup match against Free State in Bloemfontein on August 30 of that year.

Surging back to collect a kick in the final moments of the match, Burger was caught in possession by two charging Free State forwards, and a maul ensued. The 28 year old suffered a broken neck during this play, and later passed away in hospital.

"I remember very few things about my rugby career clearly, but that day is imprinted in my mind," said Du Plessis, a global rugby icon and talismanic loose forward, who captained Western Province and the Springboks at the time.

"It was already a difficult week, as Rampie Stander, who'd played for Free State, had passed away due to an aneurysm, I believe, earlier in the week, so we had a moment of silence for him before the match and then when Chris' incident occurred, we all knew that something serious had happened.

"Chris' death impacted us [his teammates] deeply and we felt we needed to support his wife, and Rampie's wife as well. It grew from that initial focus as we realised there are others who are not playing at the higher level and are not so well known that are also suffering from catastrophic injuries and that ultimately evolved into raising millions of rands and supporting hundreds of injured players over the last four decades."

Naudé, who dazzled at fullback for Free State and Western Province, recalled, "Players band together in tough times and that's what we did after Chris' shocking passing. It took time to come to grips with the loss of such a good friend in that fashion, but it brought us together. Morné was outstanding from the start; he showed great strength, had such vision as to what to do next and his leadership really came to the fore."

On 11 April 1987, South African rugby was rocked to its core once more as Kylemore wing Petro Jackson passed away on the field after breaking his neck during a zone club competition match against Excelsior. A similar fund was established in his memory, with the two merging in 1992.





Du Plessis served as Chairman and Naudé as Vice-Chairman for 38 years, handing over the reins to former Springbok captain Jean de Villiers and ex-Springbok hooker Hanyani Shimange respectively at the end of 2018. Du Plessis and Naudé remained active members of the Board of Trustees until the end of last year, having upheld the Players' Fund's pillars of caring, accountability, transparency, stability, dependability and approachability.

In terms of what fuelled them to keep serving the Players' Fund for over 40 years, Du Plessis said, "You can't start something and not see it through. The more time went by, the more I saw the need for it. There were times when, financially, we were fighting for survival, and having been part of starting the Fund, I felt it was my obligation to do whatever I could to keep it going.

"It was a sense of repayment as well for the good fortune I had in not sustaining any serious injuries myself over the course of my career. Then there were the friendships and associations that I made through the Fund. It's a family and a sense of belonging and making a difference.

"I just couldn't see myself stepping down until the next generation of guys came through and that's what happened when Jean and Shimmy and the likes of John Smit, Tiaan Strauss and Wayne Fyvie joined. There was a dramatic uplift in the Fund since they joined, and I could comfortably say it was in safe hands going forward."

Naudé highlighted the personal connections forged, saying, "To visit an injured player in hospital and see him smile despite being bedridden and having undergone a tragedy was incredible. To visit them at home and see them adapting to their new circumstances with such strength was so powerful. What was great to see as well was injured players attending games and them lighting up being back in a rugby environment. Those smiles stay with you and it was an honour for me to be involved with the Players' Fund."

Du Plessis echoed those sentiments, saying, "The journey was marked by contrasting emotions. On one hand, witnessing the sadness and tragedy of a serious injury and on the other hand, seeing the courage and positive attitudes of young people as they recovered to take on the challenges facing them and knowing that what we were doing was lending a small helping out."

Looking back at pivotal moments in the Player's Fund's history, Du Plessis said, "Starting to receive support from SA Rugby in the 1990s was a vital turning point, and it's fantastic that the Fund is now the official charity of the Springboks. The Fund still relies on its own resources and fundraising, but the support of SA Rugby is huge. The other key development was the advent of the world-renowned BokSmart safety programme that was launched by SA Rugby in conjunction with the Fund in 2009."

Upon further reflection, Du Plessis remarked, "I've had three amazing rugby journeys. My playing career, my role at the Players' Fund and my involvement in the Laureus Sport for Good Foundation.

"The heart of the Players' Fund is that it's not just about providing financial assistance, which is very important. But more importantly, it's about being there and offering support so that injured players and their families don't feel like they're alone."

Financially, however, the public needs to continue the important and much-appreciated role they play in helping the Players' Fund, Naudé urged. "In budgeting for each year, it was always tough having to plan for possible injuries as you don't want there to be any, but unfortunately, they do happen.

"The challenge financially is that wheelchairs, for example, have quadrupled in cost over the years, so as much as the whole team at the Fund are doing a truly exceptional job and it has great support from various partners, it's vital for the public to continue to support the cause."

To support the Players' Fund, visit www.playersfund.org.za and select your donation option of choice, which includes EFT, Payfast, SnapScan and Zapper.



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