

# M

METRO

## INSPIRATION



CHRIS VENTER, who is blind, is led up Lion's Head by Kosta Papagiorgio. The pair set a record and plan to do even greater things. | ARMAND HOUGH African News Agency (ANA)

## Blind hiker conquers Lion's Head

NORMAN CLOETE

LOSING his sight has not stopped a local adventurer from reaching new heights.

This week Chris Venter became the first blind person to climb Lion's Head with the help of a man who knows the mountain probably better than most people. Venter and his guide and fellow adventurer, Kosta Papagiorgio, achieved the feat in an astonishing 10 hours.

"Every step was like putting a piece in a jigsaw puzzle," said Venter, who lost his sight in 2013.

The climb, which would take a sighted and reasonably fit person between one and three hours to complete, one way, was done with Venter holding onto Papagiorgio's shoulder and being talked through every step of the way.

The 46-year-old father of an 8-and-a-half-month-old baby boy, caught a virus when he participated in a trek around the globe which saw him visit 20 countries over eight months from Cape Town to Dublin, in a Vespa.

He had been raising money for the Red Cross Children's Hospital at the time and that earned him the nickname "The Blind Scooter Guy".

Venter said he had been inspired by James Holman, a British adventurer who was known as the "Blind Traveller". Holman, an author and social observer best known for his writings on his extensive travels, was completely blind and suffered from debilitating pain and limited mobility, but he undertook a series of solo journeys that were unprecedented both in their extent of geography and method.

In 1832, Holman became the first blind person to circumnavigate the globe. He continued travelling and by October 1846, had visited every inhabited continent.

"My knee is pretty banged up but there's no blood. I am with Kosta now and haven't had him arrested yet, so that means it all went well," said Venter after the 10-hour climb.

He said, he found that sight used up to 75% of all the senses and when you lose your sight, you have more space to focus on other things.

"I am going to be taking part in the Breede-Berg and in Between Challenge" which will be by bike, boat and foot. "I will do 16 stages and will be joined by 16 different adventurers, including Kosta. We are raising funds for animal sterilisation," said Venter, who is married to a fellow adventurer and rock climber.

"Doing this with Chris has been life altering," said Papagiorgio, who has climbed Lion's Head 421 times. He started his personal challenge to climb it 500 times in 2017 and aims to reach his 500-mark by the end of this year. He had hoped to complete it sooner, but injury forced him to slow down. The 35-year-old is hoping to raise funds for five charities including Rape Crisis and the South African Anxiety and Depression Group.

"This is the first time I have ever done this with a blind person. I have so much respect for Chris. We all should really appreciate what we have," said Papagiorgio.

On November 2, the pair will take part in ExploreX at the Italian Club, where they will be joined by 12 other adventurers.

For more info visit [explorex.co.za/theblindscotterguy.com](http://explorex.co.za/theblindscotterguy.com) or Kosta's Lion500 page on Instagram.

The plane approaches Cape Town and, I'm astonished by the view of Table Mountain and the surrounding sea. It is so beautiful that I feel the urge to belong – not necessarily to the people, but to the landscape

JUSTIN CARTWRIGHT  
South African-British novelist

## CAMPAIGN

# Effort to make sports fields safer pays off

*Inspired by lack of emergency services*

KEAGAN MITCHELL  
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MEET the man behind the lens who goes the extra mile for the local sports community.

As a sports photographer for more than a decade, Rashied Isaacs has seen a number of deaths, head injuries and fractures of football players on fields around the city. He started the Safer Sports Fields campaign due to the lack of emergency planning and access to health services at sports fields.

A few weeks ago, Bayview FC's under-16 captain, Imtieyaaz Wagiet, collapsed and died during a match against Strandfontein AFC at Westridge Sports Field. Further studies showed Derek Pinn, Igshaan Spruyt, Craig Johnson, Moegamat Ruiters, Reza Salie and Ryan Rasool suffered the same fate as Imtieyaaz.

Isaacs said: "The death of Imtieyaaz Wagiet made me more determined to bring awareness and train more coaches in first-aid as part of my Safer Sports Fields programme."

Chairman and under-16 coach of Bayview FC Mark Rodrigues described Imtieyaaz as soft-hearted and disciplined young boy.

"In my 10 years as coaching, he was the perfect captain. On an occasion when he got a red card he was so apologetic. He had soccer in his heart and lived for it," he said.

"I wouldn't know if Imtieyaaz would have been alive still today if there were first-aiders or paramedics at the field. There is a 50% chance that a person will be alive because of the medical equipment and medical professionals we have in this age," Rodrigues added.

Isaacs said: "I can speak with authority on the lack of safety planning, which includes non-existence of first-aid personnel at games, no entry for emergency vehicles and no periodic inspections of spectator stands."

"I have seen it all on the sports fields: from fractures, convulsions to serious head injuries, which all went unattended most of the time. I have often put down my camera to assist as I have an intermediate life support background," he added.

"I am very concerned as we might lose more lives on the sports field if we don't change our attitudes, as custodians, towards safety. One untreated fracture on the field is a sign of our inability to plan as sports administrators, and let alone a death of a player."

Isaacs' campaign is finally getting



RASHIED ISAACS, Olympic silver medallist Elana Meyer and African News Agency (ANA) photographer Phando Jikelo. | SUPPLIED

the recognition it deserves following the death of Imtieyaaz.

"We still have a long way to go, but the programme got the necessary attention through the media and social media, with some administrators finally making it a priority for their clubs."

"I never thought the programme would get tongues wagging, but I always knew I was doing the right thing. This will make me sleep better at night," he said.

The Mitchells Plain resident started the campaign four years ago when he partnered with an accredited company, Dunmore Training & Skills Development. They offer first-aid courses to coaches and equip them with life-saving skills.

"The free course, under the Safer Sport Fields banner, gave the programme the kick-start it needed. Currently, the programme has delivered over 150 trained coaches with the level one first-aid skills which enables them to perform CPR, treat fractures, bandage wounds and treat basic emergencies on-site," he said.

City executive director for safety and security Richard Bosman said: "It is the responsibility of the event organiser to provide medical support. Venues/sports fields used for regular sporting fixtures by sporting codes (football, rugby, netball, baseball, etc) are deemed to be purpose-built for the sporting activities."

Bosman added: "In terms of Safa Competitions Uniform Home: It is the responsibility of a home team to inform the nearest public health institution of their home game, for the institution to be on stand-by and, where possible, to have a medical practitioner or physiotherapist in attendance throughout a match."

## HEALTH

## Crucial to have medical services

KEAGAN MITCHELL

HAVING first-aid services or paramedics is vital at any sports event.

"Should a medical emergency take place at the event, medical staff will be able to provide prompt emergency medical treatment. If staff are not on-site, the patient's condition can deteriorate rapidly. On-site medical staff can also facilitate the prompt transportation of a patient to a nearby facility."

"Due to the nature of sports and the injuries that may arise, it is always advisable to have emergency staff on-site," said ER24 communications officer Russel Meiring.

Netcare 911 spokesperson Shawn Herbst said: "Any form of medical

emergency could occur at a public event; it is unpredictable. First-aiders, nurses or paramedics with ambulances on-site will form part of your event planning, and is a legal requirement," he said.

Former sports medic for Medicare Medix Laurika Driessen said one should not panic when someone collapses or is unconscious.

"If the patient is unconscious, tap him on his shoulder, call his name and see if there is any reaction. If he comes by, take him off the field. If he doesn't come by, get him on a trauma board and move him to a cool place where there is shade," said Driessen.

"If you have oxygen, start with that while getting in contact with an ambulance to get him to hospital."



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## OUTRAGE OVER CITY BID TO LEASE CT STADIUM FOR R100

Residents and ratepayers in the city are alarmed at a proposal by the city to lease the Cape Town Stadium for R100 a year to a municipal entity created to operate and manage it. The Stadium Company will also receive a subsidy from the city.

## HEALTH



ILZE VAN DER MERWE and Birgitt Smit from Kids Kicking Cancer teach Liyahluma Nonkontwana, 7, mind-body techniques of martial arts instruction, breath work and meditation, as part of their mission to empower children with cancer at the Red Cross War Memorial Children's Hospital. | TRACEY ADAMS African News Agency (ANA)

## Empowering kids to kick the pain of cancer to the kerb

ZINZISWA DZAKWA

THE kids are kicking their way to less pain at Red Cross War Memorial Children's Hospital.

The Kids Kicking Cancer (KCC) programme launched more than 12 months ago at Red Cross. But now, KCC can be found in Tygerberg, Maitland and at Groote Schuur Hospital.

It all began in Detroit, US, with karate black belt Rabbi Elimelech Goldberg's loss of his child to cancer. Twenty years later, KCC was born, and it has spread into a global movement committed to reducing the pain children feel by using martial arts as a form of therapy.

"We have expanded to six different countries now – US, Canada, Italy, Israel, and South Africa – and we are launching in Zimbabwe, Zambia and Botswana," said programme co-ordinator Ilze van der Merwe.

Birgitt Smit and Van der Merwe have been doing martial arts for the past 20 to 28 years. Van der Merwe said KCC's main focus was to teach children cancer-breathing techniques. She said they used their expertise to help the children bring oxygen into their bodies.

"This is to help the children minimise stress levels and get them calm and more in control, which leads to less pain," added Van der Merwe.

As a way to make the kids feel courageous, they give them martial arts uniforms to wear during treatment.

In weekly class sessions, Smit and Van der Merwe teach them how to stretch and perform karate moves.

Van der Merwe added that the breathing, guided imagery and meditation techniques had proved to be very successful in lowering pain and discomfort during difficult treatments.

"Children find it fun when we are doing karate moves together," said the martial arts instructor. "It motivates us every day, especially when we see the

"This is to help children minimise stress levels and get them calm

Ilze van der Merwe  
MARTIAL ARTS INSTRUCTOR

spirit of the child and the excitement in his or her eyes.

"They don't associate us with needles and pins; that's something they identify with doctors," added Smit.

"Every time I see something about karate on TV, I get excited because I like what Sisi teaches us," said Liyahluma Nonkontwana, 7.

Liyahluma has been going for treatment at Red Cross Hospital since he was diagnosed with leukaemia in 2017. Every month his mother, Nomali,

and sister, Khanya, travel with him to Rondebosch.

On arrival, he looks eager to learn new karate movements, jumping around with a big smile on his face. One would never guess he has cancer.

Nomali said when she heard that her son had cancer, she could not believe it. Knowing how happy and energetic he was made her even more worried.

Liya's sister said her baby brother always showed a positive attitude at the hospital, and it was all thanks to the karate programme.

"As tough as it is for a child to have cancer, it's a relief to see that child get treated successfully," said Van der Merwe.

"KCC helps children be victors, and not victims of the illness."

Diagnosed with leukaemia in February, Rozharn Crouse first complained about his left knee to his mother, who took him to a couple of hospitals before his diagnosis.

Grandmother Jessica Strydom usually accompanies him to his treatments, which are fortnightly.

"I am happy he is getting better. My grandson is in his maintenance stage. We didn't know he could get better due to the fact that his granddad died from cancer as well," said Strydom.

She said Rozharn's sessions with KCC calmed him down.

"Even though we were sick with worry and upset, seeing him get better each day makes me happy."

Health bodies, heal thyself | **OPINION** | P8

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