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Catastrophic Injury Communications Protocol

In the event of a player sustaining a catastrophic injury or event while playing or practising rugby SARU's primary concern is with the well-being of the player, his family and friends.

All other considerations – such as the supply of information to third parties – are of secondary importance.

This communications protocol has been designed solely with the best interests of the player in mind and all involved in the management and care of such players are respectfully asked to adhere to it.

1 Scope

This protocol is intended to apply to all individuals in the “*chain of custody*” of rugby players who sustain either a fatal or catastrophic injury or event during or as a result of participating in a rugby match or practice, taking place under the jurisdiction of the South African Rugby Union (SARU).

For clarity that includes all match officials, SARU employees, provincial rugby union employees and representatives, BokSmart co-ordinators, medical personnel and their administrators and team and school management.

2 Purpose

The purpose of this protocol is to control the dissemination of information to media in the event of death or catastrophic injury to an individual while participating in a rugby match or practice, in South Africa. Such occurrences are devastating to the individuals and their families and friends, and the uncontrolled supply of speculation or information to media has the potential to compound their grief and/or ability to deal accordingly with these life-changing events.

3 Protocol

- 3.1 All media inquiries relating to any such incidents are to be referred to the Corporate Affairs department of the South African Rugby Union (021 928 7000).
- 3.2 Involved persons are not to supply off-the-record information or speculation on the circumstances of the incident to media.
- 3.3 It is the duty of the BokSmart coordinator in each provincial rugby union to advise all involved persons of this Communications Protocol – the vast majority of whom will be unaware of it.
- 3.4 SARU’s Corporate Affairs department will work through the Rugby Safety department with involved parties on collating the appropriate information to supply to media.
- 3.5 In general SARU will supply only the following information:
 - a. The name, age, gender and team of the injured or deceased individual
 - b. The fixture and phase of play (tackle, scrum etc.) in which the incident occurred
 - c. The hospital at which the injured player was treated
 - d. A brief condition report – as supplied by the hospital
 - e. Media details will be forwarded via the Chris Burger Petro Jackson Players’ Fund to the family in the event that they wish to be interviewed, or wish to provide any additional information
- 3.6 SARU will not:
 - a. Describe or speculate on why the incident occurred
 - b. Offer a prognosis on the individual’s condition
 - c. Supply family details or pictures of the affected player.
 - d. Respond to any other questions on the incident.

4. Compliance

It is understood that SARU exercises no direct authority over many agencies involved in the “*chain of custody*” but it is hoped that, in the interests of the injured player, and their families and friends that all parties will align.