



SERIOUS AND/OR CATASTROPHIC HEAD, NECK AND SPINE RUGBY INJURIES IN SOUTH AFRICA (INCLUDING CARDIAC EVENTS)

(LAST UPDATED March 2025)



SERIOUS AND/OR CATASTROPHIC HEAD, NECK AND SPINE RUGBY INJURIES IN SOUTH AFRICA (INCLUDING CARDIAC EVENTS)



Tables 1, 2 and 3 represent the current and most accurate statistics available in South Africa regarding serious and/or catastrophic injuries in rugby since 2001.

These data have been reported directly to the Chris Burger/Petro Jackson Players' Fund (www.playersfund.org.za/) and more recently BokSmart (www.BokSmart.com), via the reporting structures available at the time.

The data collected before 2006 should be interpreted with caution as there may be some inaccuracies.

The Players' Fund was originally established to help and assist those players, who experienced severe and debilitating injury resulting from the game of rugby. It was initially named after the local Western Province rugby great, Chris Burger, who died as a result of a neck injury in a provincial rugby match in 1980. When the previously divided South African rugby unions united in 1992, the fund merged with the Petro Jackson fund, which was formed in memory of another young rugby player, Petro Jackson, who was fatally injured in 1987.

In 2008, the data reporting and data collection process was standardised, and periodically analysed in line with the establishment of the BokSmart National Rugby Safety Programme, a joint local rugby safety initiative between the South African Rugby Union (SA Rugby) and the Players' Fund.





Table 1: Serious and/or catastrophic concussion, head, neck or spine injuries in South African Schoolboy rugby, including Cardiovascular events

Acute Spinal Cord and Head Injuries including deaths in South African SCHOOLBOY RUGBY as reported to the Chris Burger Petro Jackson Players' Fund & more recently BokSmart from 2001 -> 31 December 2024

Description of Injury	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
ACUTE SPINAL CORD INJURY (ASCI)																								
Near Misses (Acute Spinal Cord Injury or neck fractures without ASCI whom are now ambulant and a full recovery is expected)	1	4	2	0	8	7	4	2	4	4	3	1	1	1	0	0	1	0	2	0	0	5	3	3
Neurological deficit	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	1	0	0	2	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Quadriplegics	0	2	2	1	2	3	1	1	0	0	1	1	0	1	0	0	1	1	1	0	0	0	1	1
Fatality	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Not provided	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
TRAUMATIC BRAIN INJURIES (TBI)																								
Fully recovered	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	2	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	3
With disability	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0
Fatality	0	3	0	0	1	1	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0
CARDIOVASCULAR EVENTS																								
Fatality	0	1	0	2	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	2
Fully recovered	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1
UNKNOWN																								
Fatality	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
TOTAL	1	11	4	3	12	12	7	6	8	4	6	5	3	4	1	3	4	3	4	0	0	6	5	11



Table 2: Serious and/or catastrophic concussion, head, neck or spine injuries in South African Club rugby, including Cardiovascular events

Acute Spinal Cord and Head Injuries including deaths in CLUB RUGBY in South Africa as reported to the Chris Burger Petro Jackson Players' Fund & more recently BokSmart from 2001 -> 31 December 2024

Description of Injury	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	
ACUTE SPINAL CORD INJURY (ASCI)																									
Near Misses (Acute Spinal Cord Injury or neck fractures without ASCI whom are now ambulant and a full recovery is expected)	7	5	7	3	3	3	4	1	0	1	1	3	4	4	2	6	2	0	4	1	1	3	5	3	
Neurological deficit	0	0	0	0	0	0	4	1	2	4	3	1	0	0	2	0	1	3	0	0	0	2	0	0	
Quadriplegics	3	1	1	0	2	2	4	1	3	2	3	1	2	0	3	1	1	1	1	0	0	1	1	2	
Fatality	2	1	1	0	0	1	1	0	1	1	1	0	1	1	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	
Not provided	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
TRAUMATIC BRAIN INJURIES (TBI)																									
Fully recovered	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	3
With disability	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	
Fatality	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	3	0	1	0	1	2	0	
CARDIOVASCULAR EVENTS																									
Fatality	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	2	0	1	4	1	1	2	0	1	1	2	3	1	
Fully recovered	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
UNKNOWN																									
Fatality	0	1	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
TOTAL	12	8	10	4	6	6	14	4	9	9	8	7	7	7	12	9	9	10	6	3	2	9	11	10	





Table 3: Serious and/or catastrophic concussion, head, neck or spine injuries in South African Rugby Union for Schools and Clubs combined, including Cardiovascular events

Acute Spinal Cord and Head Injuries including deaths in both SCHOOL AND CLUB RUGBY COMBINED in South Africa as reported to the Chris Burger Petro Jackson Players' Fund & more recently BokSmart from 2001 -> 31 December 2024

Description of Injury	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
ACUTE SPINAL CORD INJURY (ASCI)																								
Near Misses (Acute Spinal Cord Injury or neck fractures without ASCI whom are now ambulant and a full recovery is expected)	8	9	9	3	11	10	8	3	4	5	4	4	5	5	2	6	3	0	6	1	1	8	8	6
Neurological deficit	0	0	0	0	0	0	6	2	2	4	5	2	0	0	2	1	1	3	0	0	0	2	0	0
Quadriplegics	3	3	3	1	4	5	5	2	3	2	4	2	2	1	3	1	2	2	2	0	0	1	2	3
Fatality	2	2	1	0	0	1	1	0	1	1	1	0	2	1	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	2
Not provided	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
TRAUMATIC BRAIN INJURIES (TBI)																								
Fully recovered	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	2	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	6
With disability	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	0
Fatality	0	3	0	0	1	1	0	1	2	1	0	1	0	0	0	1	2	3	1	1	0	2	2	0
CARDIOVASCULAR EVENTS																								
Fatality	0	1	0	2	1	0	0	0	2	0	0	3	0	2	4	1	3	2	0	1	1	2	3	3
Fully recovered	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1
UNKNOWN																								
Fatality	0	1	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
TOTAL	13	19	14	7	18	18	21	10	17	13	14	12	10	11	13	12	13	13	10	3	2	15	16	21



www.BokSmart.com
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