ROLLING
IN PIRATION
The leadin ople with mobility impairments
ISSUE 1 2026

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only for wheelchair users

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to World Wheelchair Rugby

Disability Tax

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Inspiring victory

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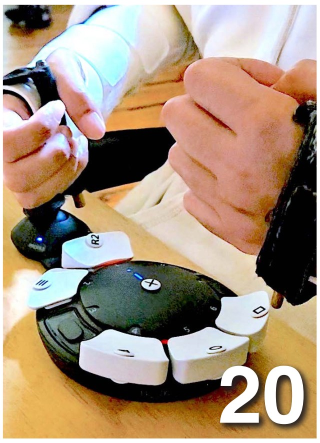

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Rolling Inspiration is published by the QuadPara Association of South Africa (QASA).

QASA team visits Free State

In February, the QASA team visited the Free State to meet with members, raise awareness and strengthen its partnerships in the region. This included identifying potential community partners who will continue the work that QASA has done with follow-up visits and community-based engagement.

They visited the EmoyaMed Rehabilitation Hospital, Nurture Hillandale Rehabilitation Hospital, Universitas Hospital, Pelonomi Hospital, APD Free State and the Jean Webber Home – to name a few stops. The team presented on the full range of services that the organisation offers and were able to sign new members who will be empowered through the various QASA programmes. R

Greater independence

The QASA Driving Ambitions Programme is aimed at assisting members to gain greater independence by acquiring their driver's licences. Recently, Kiah Morishige was able to get her licence through the programme.

"Getting my driver's licence was a huge personal achievement, and QASA's Driving Ambitions made it possible. The support, encouragement, and access to a car with hand-control equipment made the whole process so much easier. Thank you, QASA."

Well done to Kiah! To become a QASA member and benefit from their programmes and services, register via the link on the website. R

Share your thoughts

QASA members are encouraged to share their feedback on the various programmes and services, as well as make suggestions for future projects they would like to see. Feedback from the survey will be used to better support members. The survey can be found and completed here. R

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The **QuadPara Association of South Africa** (QASA) is a non-profit organisation established and managed by quadriplegics and paraplegics that aim to empower quadriplegics and paraplegics to live their lives to their full potential.

Get in touch: info@qasa.co.za

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Disabled Parking

only for wheelchair users

Only people who rely on mobility aids that require additional space to enter and exit a vehicle should be allowed to use the “disabled” parking bays

Often, I’m asked who is allowed to park in a “disabled” bay. I want to answer this as clearly and accurately as possible. I hope that others will agree with this view, help spread the message and have the civic courage to call out those who abuse our facilities. I use the word “our” deliberately, because I am firmly convinced that so-called “disabled” bays exist for wheelchair users only.

NOT FOR ALL DISABILITIES

The term “disabled bay” is incorrect. These bays are designated specifically for wheelchair users and should be named accordingly. The current terminology creates confusion and invites misuse. Because they are labelled “disabled”, many people with disabilities – whose disability is unrelated to mobility or wheelchairs – feel entitled to park there. For some, it is seen as a compensatory benefit; a “perk” for the stigma or inconvenience of being labelled “disabled”.

The most frequent abusers of wheelchair parking bays are not the general public, but people with disabilities that don’t require wheelchair access. This includes individuals with minor mobility limitations, chronic aches and pains, respiratory conditions, limps, pacemakers, hip or knee replacements, frailty, amputations and visual impairments.

Of course, members of the general public contribute to the problem; those who are “just going to be two minutes”; “didn’t see the sign”, or are “in a rush”. The remaining offenders are simply indifferent. Unfortunately, this group is characterised by a complete lack of moral responsibility and social conscience. Reaching their sense of empathy or accountability is, regrettably, unlikely.

LEGAL REQUIREMENTS

The South African National Building Regulations and Building Standards Act (Act 103 of 1977) sets out the legal requirements for erecting buildings. To help businesses comply with the requirements, rules are published as the South African National Standard (SANS) 10400.

These rules regulate the accommodations for persons with disabilities such as accessible routes, ramp gradients, door width, toilet specifications, parking spaces and signage. Chapter 5.3 of the SANS 10400-S:2023 covers the parking regulations.

According to the Standards, one wheelchair accessible parking bay is required for every 25 standard bays. A large shopping centre with 501 to 1 000 bays requires two percent of the total number of bays to be wheelchair parking bays. More than 1 000 bays would require 20 plus one for each 100 over 1000 to be wheelchair parking bays.

If you are a wheelchair user, keep this information handy for when a facility does not comply with these numbers. You can argue with confidence should you want to engage the centre manager or developer.

TRUE PURPOSE OF ACCESSIBLE BAYS

Most important is the size of a wheelchair parking bay. Depending on the version of SANS 10400 Part S, the minimum width of a wheelchair parking bay should be either 3 500 mm (2011 version) or 3 700 mm (2023 version) whereas a standard parking bay in 2 500 mm wide.

This width is critical to allowing a wheelchair user to safely enter or exit their vehicle. Without it, they cannot confidently stop and shop. A narrower bay simply won't work. They either won't be able to get out if there's a car on either side or they won't be able to get back in.

Wheelchair parking bays are traditionally placed near the entrances of facilities or shopping centres, which is where abuse often begins. The "abusers" park there not out of necessity, but for convenience. They enjoy a shorter walk, saving a few steps at the expense of a person who genuinely needs the space. Each bay misused significantly reduces the availability of accessible parking.

If you asked wheelchair users whether they would prefer a bay's location over its width, most would choose width every time. They would rather wheel/push a little further than be unable to access a properly sized bay.

A common argument from non-wheelchair users is, "I can't walk very far". Yet, these same people will navigate the vast distances of a shopping centre, just to save 20 meters. Their reasoning doesn't hold up when you consider the overall journey.

ENFORCEMENT LACKING

The root of the problem lies in the law. The Road Traffic Act refers only to "disabled parking", which leaves the interpretation open. Municipal bylaws often broaden the criteria even further. In some Garden Route municipalities, for example, a doctor's note certifying any bodily limitation, illness or disease is enough to qualify for a "disabled" parking disc. The result is a flood of people claiming access to wheelchair bays, leaving fewer spots for those who truly need them. Shame on those who take advantage!

The QuadPara Association of South Africa (QASA) supports the use of the wheelchair parking bays by individuals with other mobility impairments who truly need the additional space including people who use two crutches, a scooter, a Zimmer frame or similar mobility aids.

STILL A PRIVILEGE

I'm the first to acknowledge that the abuse of wheelchair parking is a relatively minor problem - especially in the wake of the unintended consequences of spinal cord injuries and severe disabilities, which can be life-threatening.

I also recognise that owning a vehicle and being able to drive, with the necessary adaptations, to a retailer or service provider of my choice is a privilege. Accessible public transport is virtually non-existent in rural areas – although I know that QASA is actively lobbying the Department of Transport to prioritise this.

Yet, this doesn't mean this fight isn't important. Wheelchair users should stand up for their rightful space! Show your civil courage and prevent these "abusers" from exposing their poor moral compass!

Ari Seirlis is the former CEO of the QuadPara Association of South Africa and now serves as the Treasurer of QASA. He is also, presently, a member of the Presidential Working Group on Disability. He is a wheelchair user and disability activist. Ari has recently published his biography, titled *Wheels of Fire*.

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“Not going to need your legs”

Despite suffering a spinal cord injury at a very young age, Bongani Mapumulo has thrived with some wisdom and lessons learned

In his bright red scooter, Bongani Mapumulo rides down the halls of the University of Cape Town Graduate School of Business where he is currently completing his Masters of Philosophy specialising in Inclusive Innovation with a research focus on assistive technologies for people with disabilities. He is stopped often as staff and students alike greet him. It seems he knows everyone, and everyone knows him. It’s unsurprising as Bongani is charming and vibrant with an infectious, bolstering laugh. With his shining optimism, it is easy to think that Bongani must have a simple, easy life. Yet, this couldn’t be further from the truth. Rather, Bongani has been able to transform hardships into drive and passion.

EARLY LIFE

At age five, a gunshot wound caused Bongani to become paraplegic. At the recommendation of hospital staff, he was sent to boarding school at Ethembeni School in Cato Ridge, Durban. While it was challenging to be away from home at such a young age, Bongani also believes this small choice, made a big difference in his future.

“The social workers said it’s probably going to be better if they put me into a special school for further rehab and to meet other kids who are in a similar situation like me,” Bongani recalls. “I would say it was one of the most prominent decisions. Obviously, I hated the idea at the time. At five years old, you just want to be at home with your parents and siblings.”

“But I think it was all about looking into the future: What seems like discomfort now is going to be valuable later,” he added. While the teacher were strict and demanded discipline, they were also very encouraging.

“I think being in that school was really important to understanding myself in relation to other kids and, to still believe that there is a bigger world out there that we as kids with disabilities are still going to integrate into. I remember we

MAIN PHOTO: Bongani Mapumulo was injured as a child, but still thrived.

ABOVE: Bongani is currently completing his Master's Degree at the University of Cape Town Graduate School of Business.

would still have questions such as, 'What do you want to be when you grow up?'".

Aside from the teachers, Bongani believes his parents played an important role in instilling confidence in him: "For me, a big role was played by my father, who unfortunately passed. He said, 'To succeed, to be something in life, you're actually not going to need your legs'. I think it was so profound. It applies to other parts of life."

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>
> **To succeed, you're actually not going to need your legs.**

Bongani took this encouragement seriously. He completed his schooling at Open Air School in Glenwood, Durban, where he was part of an accelerated development programme run by Standard Bank at the school. When he graduated, he started working at the bank. Several years later, he started considering what else life might have to offer him.

"I always had these thoughts like, 'What am I missing? Did I skip a step? There's a bigger world out there and I would like to explore it'," he shares.

This led him to the Stellenbosch University where he obtained his undergraduate degree majoring in sociology, anthropology and politics. Both his undergraduate and now his master's degrees were made possible through donors.

During his time at Maties, he served as head of Dis-Maties – a student organisation supporting students with disabilities. Here he would learn to be an advocate for the rights of people with disabilities. Believing a future is possible, is half the battle. Then it becomes important to cultivate independence while still nurturing important relationships.

CULTIVATING INDEPENDENCE

For people with disabilities, independence is crucial to practicing their own agency. Bongani shares his thoughts: "From what I've observed, in my own life, but more with other

ABOVE: Bongani is a beneficiary of the Berta Centre for Social Innovation and Entrepreneurship, and advocated for a ramp to access their offices.

people, there's a lot of exploitation that comes with being dependent on others. You end up living someone else's life."

"If you are in the unfortunate position of losing the use of your limbs, I think it's critical to try and develop as many other parts of the self to be independent and self-reliant. There's just so many benefits that come with being able to figure yourself out," he adds.

By better understanding yourself, you are better able to advocate for yourself, learn your talents and limits, and invite others into your experience. However, this can be a life-long journey as Bongani notes: "It's taken years and I think it's still an ongoing process. I don't think it ever gets to a point where it stops."

"Unfortunately, if you have a disability, it's probably going to take a lot to develop it and get to a point where you're actually independent," he adds. Independence and self-knowledge can also go a long way to building important relationships.

RELATIONSHIPS AND ALLIES

With a better understanding of self, people can better communicate their needs to loved-ones, their employer or donors. More importantly, close relationships can help create more allies to advocate on behalf of people with disabilities.

"I think if someone gets to know me personally and we are going somewhere, they get to see how the inaccessibility of spaces affects me; that makes it personal for them now. I think the more relationships like that, the more other people can take that burden off of us," Bongani shares.

"I understand that for some people building relationships is daunting. We all have different personality types. But if we are somehow able to bring other people into our world, they can get to understand [the challenges of disability]," he adds. These relationships expand into communities that can empower and shape world views.

COMMUNITY AND LEADERSHIP

Recalling how he became part of Dis-Maties, Bongani shares: "As I'm going through all the access-related challenges of starting out as a university student, I came across the student society for students with disabilities that basically exists to do a lot of advocacy work. Naturally, you want to join people where you don't have to explain yourself."

"I think it's wanting to be part of a community. I've grown to understand that communities are very important. They all serve a particular purpose in how I approach my work and how I make sense of the world," he adds. Communities can be networks to further yourself, but also provide an opportunity to help others – no matter how small.

His position with Dis-Maties, his activism work through the organisation, and later his position

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in residence leadership, taught Bongani how small, meaningful acts can be very important.

"I came to understand that there are different types of leadership. You can do the little bit that means the most to you; not biting off more than you can chew. It's also way more meaningful to think, 'How do I take this little thing and make it relevant and practical to these few people'," he shares.

"How do I leave the space slightly better than how I found it? To me that means trying not to overburden myself when the change or the transformation I want is not happening at the pace that I want. I understand that maybe I'm meant to just play a small role in the greater scheme of things. That little does add to the momentum," he continues.

Doing your bit for your community doesn't have to result in formal activism. In fact, Bongani cautions those who are interested.

"I don't think we all have the stomach for it. It can take a lot out of you. You might find yourself having to explain yourself a lot. Sometimes you explain yourself to people who will still don't get you. You might have to ask yourself the tough questions of, 'Do I still want to be part of this space despite not being received well or being misunderstood?'," he shares.

"It's a tight rope, because we all yearn to be relevant in not just our work, but to other people, especially in terms of wanting to be treated with respect," he adds.

FACING A CHALLENGE

Regardless of what role you find yourself playing within your community, it is important to bravely step into the unknown.

"When confronting difficult things that might scare you, you tend to learn a little bit more about yourself. Think of it as a furnace that, if you're able to manage or tolerate in a way, you can reap the benefits on the other side. I think, with most people, it looks so huge, intimidating and tough to tackle that they just don't take it on at all," Bongani shares his wisdom.

ABOVE: Bongani believes a bit of patience, courage, independence and community can take you very far.

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> **You never know when you might be forced to reset.**

"I think it was also a valuable lesson to say you don't know when you might be forced to restart. I think it's what gave me the courage to say, 'I feel like there's a bigger world and a bigger calling for me, calling somewhere'. You never know when you might be forced to reset," he adds.

Along with being ready for any curveball that life might throw at you, Bongani also encourages patience for when you are unsure.

"I might have no answers for the present, but if I venture into it intentionally, wilfully and honestly, I'll get the answers over time. I just need to be patient; not just with myself, but with the world, because not everyone will always be understanding of what we are going through as individuals. Sometimes we just need to wait and the answers will come over time. I know it sounds easy to say, but it's a lot harder to live out."

With some patience, courage, independence and community, there can be many opportunities in this life – one that don't require the use of legs. R

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IDA'S CORNER

Forgotten necessity of footcare

Neglecting footcare can result in some expensive, time-consuming treatments for the various foot conditions

In the summer, we swap socks and shoes for sandals, flip flops or bare feet. Our feet are more visible – ideal for closer inspection! To help you take full advantage, we look at general footcare and two common foot afflictions that go unnoticed among people with lower body paralysis namely, ingrown toenails and fungal infections. If you struggle with blood circulation, we recommend that you visit a doctor. For more information on Sausage Feet, read the Overt Consequences of SCI booklet on the *Rolling Inspiration* website.

To keep your feet healthy, you need to regularly perform toenail care, skincare and check your footwear:

Toenail care: Clip and file your toenails regularly. Keep them at a comfortable length – just below the tip of the toe. Clippers or nail scissors can be used. For filing, emery boards or a steel nailfile are both suitable. When cutting your toenails, follow the contour of the toe. Do not cut into the corners of the nail. Rather file off sharp points.

Regular filing (once a week) is a safer option for persons with no feeling in their feet. Cutting is easier after washing when the nails are softer. Filing will require a hard nails thus it is best done before washing.

If cutting causes a nail to bleed, rinse with warm water, apply pressure with cotton wool or a tissue until the bleeding stops. Then apply a plaster if required. If the wound is not healed after 48 hours, consult a doctor.

Skincare: Basic foot skincare requires keeping your feet clean and dry, especially between the toes. After washing your feet, make a point of drying between your toes. This is the best, proactive way of preventing infections such as athlete's foot. It also forces you to inspect your toes and feet.

Keep your feet comfortable. Hot, sweaty feet are more prone to infections while cold feet can compromise circulation. After washing and drying, moisturise your feet with a foot cream that contains urea as the main ingredient. Avoid apply between the toes. This may be done daily or less frequently depending on the state of the skin.

Check for cracks in the skin and signs of infection such as redness, pus and areas of "weeping", blisters and peeling skin. If need be, dead skin can be removed while the skin is dry using a foot file or a pumice stone. Contact your podiatrist or doctor if you are concerned about fungal infections, ingrown toenails or sores that do not heal.

Footwear: Shoes should be comfortable, well-fitting and in good condition. If you suffer from sausage feet, it may be wise to swap to a larger shoe size or even remove the inner sole to increase the inner space. Always go for broader shoes with lots of toe space and make sure the shoes are made from material that “breaths” to allow circulation. Poorly fitting shoes can cause ingrown toenails, corns and bunions. Socks should be of natural material like cotton or wool to allow for breathing and should not be tight fitting.

INGROWN TOENAIL

An ingrown toenail is where the nail grows into the adjacent skin. This causes discomfort and pain; however, it can go unnoticed among people with reduced or no sensation in their feet. Careful inspection of toes for signs of ingrowing nails is therefore a must.

It can occur in any toe, but is most common in the big toe. Check for a nail growing or curling into the flesh, redness and swelling, and, in advance cases, pus oozing from the toe. The pus is a sign of infection, which might also make you feel hot and shivery.

Causes of ingrown toenails include cutting the nail incorrectly, hot sweaty feet, tightly fitting shoes or socks, an injury to the toe or a nail that grows out of shape. It can be prevented by cutting the nails straight across and not into the corners, keeping your feet clean, wearing comfortable shoes with lots of toe space and not cutting your nails too short.

You can manage ingrown toenails by soaking the foot in warm, salty water to soften the skin around the nail and reduce the chance of infection. Dry your feet thoroughly afterwards. Do not cut the nail. Let it grow out. Wear soft, comfortable shoes with lots of toe space. Consult your doctor if the home treatment does not work, or the toe becomes hot, swollen and pussy, and if you feel feverish.

If you are a diabetic with an ingrown toenail, consult your doctor immediately as it can complicate rapidly. Your doctor will treat the infected toe with antibiotics. They may cut away part of the nail or remove the entire nail. You might also be referred to a podiatrist who will perform the required procedure.

FUNGAL INFECTIONS TO THE FOOT

The two major types of fungal infections of the foot are Tinea pedis (Athlete’s Foot) and Onychomycosis, a fungal infection of the toenail. These often result from sweaty feet, high humidity, ill-fitting socks or shoes with poor breathability, and frequently visiting public facilities such as gyms, public swimming pools and public showers. Diabetics need to take particularly care as they are more susceptible to complications.

Athlete’s Foot: Mostly it presents as an itchy, peeling skin between the toes but may include the sole. It can become blisters and be somewhat smelly. A topical anti-fungal cream will clear up the infection within a week or two, but severe infections may take up to four weeks to clear. Continued exposure to high-risk areas (like a gym) will require Tolnaftate powder to prevent future infections.

Onychomycosis: The infection includes a white or yellow streak or white spots on the nail, thickened or lifting nails, brown discoloration, splitting or destruction of the nail, or a build-up of debris below the nail. Onychomycosis can affect one nail or multiple nails. The big and little toes (first and fifth) are the most commonly affected.

Treating Onychomycosis takes six or more months to clear using a medicinal nail lacquer or cream prescribed by a doctor. If topical treatments fail, your may be prescribe anti-fungal tablets, which work faster and more effectively, but have side effects. Alternatively, laser therapy by a podiatrist takes two or three sessions. Treatment of Onychomycosis is expensive and requires discipline.

Just because we cannot use or even feel our feet, it does not mean we can neglect them. Foot problems left unattended can become the cause of much misery, which can in turn become very time consuming and expensive to manage.

George Louw qualified as a medical doctor, but, due to a progressing spastic paralysis, chose a career in health administration. The column is named after Ida Hlongwa, who worked as caregiver for Ari Seirlis for 20 years. Her charm, smile, commitment, quality care and sacrifice set the bar incredibly high for the caregiving fraternity.

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Mini guide to an accessible holiday

An accessible holiday may take a bit more planning, but with these tips, you are guaranteed a great trip

Often, I'm asked for accessible holiday options. With my many years as a universal access specialist, person with a disability, and avid traveller, I have some great tips for planning the ideal accessible holiday.

RIGHT PLACE AT THE RIGHT TIME

Decide where you would like to holiday, like a beach, mountains or a historical or cultural significance place. Then research the area. Combine all the relevant activities that you would like to do while on the trip. Consider the best time of the year to visit. You don't want to be uncomfortably hot or cold when you are spending hard-earned money on your trip.

BE KIND TO YOUR BUDGET

Consider how much you are expecting or want to spend on the trip. This will determine your mode of transport, accommodation and activties. Be sure to include all the expenses when drawing up the budget, including the flights, petrol, tolls, car hire, meals, drinks, activities and any passport or visa costs.

RAIL, ROAD OR AIR

Depending on where you are travelling (locally or internationally), you might want to consider the different modes of transport that are available. Here are some things to consider with each:

- **Driving**: You'll be able to stop along the route to see more places, and take more equipment with you. You'll also have more flexibility at your destination to visit other places. Depending on the distance, driving can be exhausting!
- **Flying**: It is quicker, especially for those who find long journeys too tiring. However, you will need to arrange airport transfers to the accommodation or hire a vehicle for your stay.
- **Rail**: The South African long-distance rail carriages are not wheelchair accessible, however there are many overseas countries that offer accessible carriages on their rail systems.
- **Cruise ships**: Most cruise ships have accessible cabins, however these rooms are inside cabins that accommodate two people. There are no family suits or rooms with balconies available. Larger cruise ships offer better options internationally.

STAYING IN COMFORT

Consider the style of accommodation that would best suit the nature of the trip and your needs. You may love camping, but won't want to stay in a tent when you are skiing! Here are some options to consider.

- **Caravans and Camping**: These establishments are common, especially locally. However, most campsites have inaccessible ablution facilities. SANParks has a list of their camping areas with accessible communal ablutions facilities.
- **Self-catering**: Cottages, homes and apartments offer self-catering options. Usually only the bathrooms are accessible (often the guest bathroom). The kitchens, dining tables and lounge furniture are mostly standard heights and not compliant with universal access guidelines. There are some gems that are completely accessible.
- **B&Bs and Hotels**: Many hotels advertise accessible rooms. It is important to double check that the accessibility meets your needs and requirements as they don't always follow the universal access guidelines. However, you should be able to find something suitable and then have meals covered.
- **Game Lodges**: If you are able to self-drive, then game watching is fun. Ensure that your vehicle is able to drive on off-road conditions. Otherwise, the Lodge needs to have a means of assisting you into their game-drive vehicle either with a raised loading area with ramped access, a portable ramp or a wheelchair hoist. There are some Game Lodges with wheelchair-accessible game-drive vehicles. Be sure to enquire before booking.

CONFIRMING ACCESSIBILITY

Before booking, make a list of what you require from your room and check that all of these facilities are available. Here are a few things to consider.

- **The Room**: Room choice may be limited. Most establishments only have one type of accessible room. It's either the more expensive "Superior" or the cheaper "Standard" room. Usually, there are no accessible family rooms, however there may be an accessible room with and an interleading door to the room next door that could work for families or when travelling with your carer. The cost difference will be higher as you will be paying for two rooms instead of one. It is always cheaper to share. The quoted prices are always Per Person Sharing (pps), so be sure to enquire if you need single supplement rates.
- **The Accessible Bathroom**: Everyone has their own requirements for an accessible bathrooms. The best option is to request pictures or a video and ask questions about the details that you need like a step-free shower and basin height. Be sure to enquire directly for the establishment that you will be visiting.

VISITING THE SIGHTS

There might be some places you want to visit or things that you want to do while on holiday. Sometimes, it is worthwhile booking a tour group to make the experience more enriching. Group tours are cheaper than private tours, but a private tour allows you to tailor-make your tour.

Always confirm that the transport and venues that you plan to visit are accessible. You may choose to wait outside certain venues or in the vehicle in order to see the one's you can visit with a guide. There will likely be a fee for each site you visit so be sure to include that in your budgeting!

There are websites like Get Your Guide [LINK: www.getyourguide.com] that offer accessible tour options in most overseas destinations. You can use this info for research or make bookings for all the tourist and historic places and activities that you would be interested in.

For a more comprehensive guide on accessible travel, read or download my Deep Dive into travel from the *Rolling Inspiration* website. Safe travels.

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Triumphant Return to World Wheelchair Rugby

Team South Africa re-emerged on World Wheelchair Rugby stage with determination as the team builds towards the 2028 Paralympic Games

In October 2025, in the quiet Norwegian town of Skien, South African wheelchair rugby made a statement that echoed far beyond the walls of the Skien Fritidspark. After a decade away from international competition, the SA Wheelchair Rugby (SA WCR) National Paralympic Team returned to the global arena and did far more than simply participate. They dominated.

Over five matches, South Africa went unbeaten, clinching the 2025 World Wheelchair Rugby (WWR) European Division C Championship, securing promotion to Division B and re-establishing themselves as a serious force on the international wheelchair rugby landscape For athletes, coaches, and supporters alike, Norway was not just about medals. It was about belonging again.

A RETURN YEARS IN THE MAKING

This campaign marked South Africa's first international wheelchair rugby appearance since the 2015 Wheelchair Rugby World Challenge in London. That long absence was not due to a lack of talent or ambition, but structural, financial and logistical realities that stalled international participation.

The turning point came in 2025 when World Wheelchair Rugby rezoned South Africa from the Asia-Oceania Conference to Europe Division C. The move created a more practical competitive pathway in terms of travel, time zones and development progression, while reopening the door to Paralympic qualification routes. For SA WCR, Norway was about proving that the country still belonged in elite wheelchair rugby conversations.

PURPOSEFUL PREPARATION

Team SA's success in Skien was no accident. Preparation began months earlier under the leadership of national coach and High Performance Director Gary Burnard, whose background as a biokineticist shaped a structured, athlete-centred programme.

A national selection camp in February 2025 brought international expertise into the South African environment with input from respected World Wheelchair Rugby figures including Rob Tarr and Paralympic gold medallist Stuart Robinson.

From March onwards, the squad trained together weekly, complemented by three intensive national camps focused on conditioning, tactical systems and team cohesion. For a team returning after ten years, this level of preparation was essential. It rebuilt confidence, sharpened systems and ensured that when South Africa arrived in Norway, they arrived ready.

EXPERIENCE MEETS NEW BLOOD

The final nine-player squad struck a careful balance between experience and debutants. Veterans such as Bennie Erasmus (captain), Bonga Khumalo, Clyde Holland, Lucas Sithole, Jared McIntyre and Okker Anker provided leadership and calm under pressure, while first-time internationals like Metz van Wyk, Morne Mulder and Jeffery Yates injected energy and hunger.

The newcomers adapted quickly to the pace of international play, while the capped players set standards on and off the court. The result was a squad that looked composed, connected and confident throughout the tournament.

FIVE MATCHES WITH A CLEAR MESSAGE

The format of the Division C Championships was simple: Three teams, each playing the others twice, with the top two progressing to the final. South Africa wasted no time asserting control.

They opened with a commanding 70–22 win over hosts Norway, followed by a 61–32 victory against Ireland, their main rivals for the title. Two more dominant round-robin performances confirmed South Africa's place in the final, where they again faced Ireland and delivered a decisive 62–29 win to seal the championship

Across all five matches, South Africa showcased tactical discipline, superior conditioning and an unmistakable hunger. They were faster on transition, clinical in attack and relentless in defence.

INDIVIDUAL SHINES IN A TEAM EFFORT

While wheelchair rugby is defined by collective effort, individual excellence was rightly recognised in Skien. Captain Bennie Erasmus was named Best 1.0 Athlete of the Tournament, while Lucas Sithole and Okker Anker earned Best 3.0 and Best 3.5 honours respectively.

These accolades reflected not just personal performance, but the effectiveness of Team SA's classification balance and on-court combinations. Every athlete understood their

MAIN: Team SA after winning the Europe Division C Championship in Norway.

ABOVE: (From the top) Team SA Captain Bennie Erasmus with the trophy. The team in a hudle and in full action on the court in Norway.

role, and every role mattered. For Erasmus, who had spoken before the tournament about believing the team could win Division C, lifting the trophy was both vindication and motivation.

MORE THAN A TROPHY

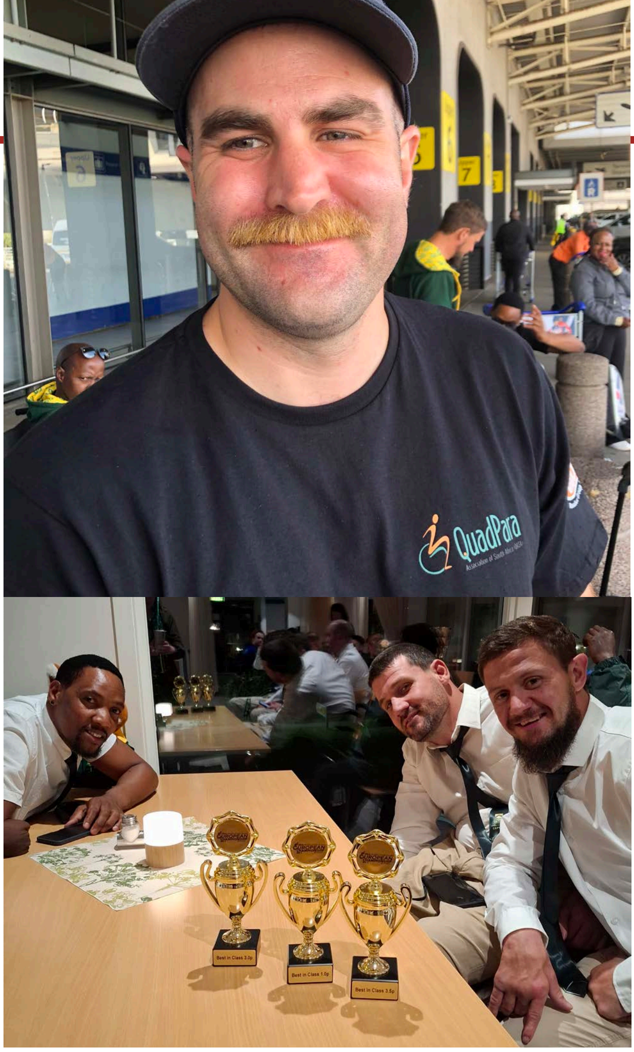
Beyond the scoreboard, the Norway campaign represented a critical milestone for disability sport in South Africa. Winning Division C secured promotion to Europe Division B in 2026, opening the door to competition against established nations such as Sweden, Poland, Italy and Spain.

Equally significant was the message sent to current and aspiring athletes at home. International success is possible. Pathways exist. Investment in preparation works. For a domestic league that has been rebuilding momentum post-Covid, seeing athletes return with silverware and confidence provides a powerful boost.

THE ROAD AHEAD

Norway was not the destination, but the foundation. Progressing through Division B and ultimately challenging for Division A status will require sustained support, deeper domestic structures and continued high-performance investment. Sponsorship, specialist support staff, and regular international exposure are now essential, not optional.

The pathway to the Los Angeles 2028 Paralympic Games is open, but it remains demanding. The European Division B Championships is the next stepping stone, taking place in Zaragoza, Spain, from 23 May to 1 June 2026. Norway proved that South Africa has the talent, the leadership and the systems to walk that path.



TOP: Team SA Coach Gary Burnard.
BOTTOM: (From the left) Lucas Sithole, Bennie Erasmus and Okker Anker won Best in Class at the Championship.

ROLLING WITH CONFIDENCE

In Skien, the SA WCR National Team did more than win a tournament. They reclaimed space on the international stage, restored belief within the local wheelchair rugby community and reminded the sporting world that South African disability sport belongs at the highest levels.

For Rolling Inspiration readers, this victory is a reminder of what happens when opportunity meets preparation. It is a story of athletes who refused to fade quietly, of a sport that rebuilt patiently, and of a team that roared back to life in green and gold.

South African wheelchair rugby is no longer knocking on the door. It has kicked it open.

South Africa Wheelchair Rugby (SAWCR) is the official administrator of the wheelchair rugby in South Africa. The association is involved in all aspects from development and local club support to game officials and managing the national wheelchair rugby league. For more information, please contact admin@sawcr.co.za or visit the official Facebook page at @SAWheelchairRugby.

Get in touch: admin@sawcr.co.za

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LETS PLAY!!! 👊🇿🇦♿🏐
#wheelchairrugby

Everyone deserves to game

With the right hardware and software adaptations, gamers of all abilities can enjoy the benefits of gaming. Bruce Cardoso and Liesl Gerber from Konke Gamers share

Gaming is an important part of my life. It has given me countless hours of entertainment, of course, but it has done more than that. Gaming has given me a community. It allows gamers to create bonds, find acceptance and support, and broaden their world.

As technology continues to develop, gaming has flourished with innovations constantly reimagining how we game. However, gamers with disabilities are often forgotten. This is why it is so important to us at Konke Gamers to make gaming accessible to all.

There are several products on the market today that adapt or augment existing gaming tools specifically for the use of gamers with disabilities. These include both hardware and software adaptations that can meet the needs of each individual player.

ACCESSIBILITY HARDWARE

Standard controllers are designed to be played with two hands and require full finger mobility. Players with limited motion, grip strength, or precise muscle control, or with tremors or limb differences can find standard controllers practically impossible to use. Thankfully, various companies have designed controllers for gamers with disabilities. These controllers allow gamers to customise the layout and programming to tailor it to their specific needs. Additional controls, such as peddles or buttons, can be added for more ways to use the console or computer. Sony's Access Controller for the PlayStation 5 is of particular interest as it is the most commonly adaptive controller available locally.

You don't necessarily need a purpose-made controller to make the most of the newest game releases. Standard controllers can also be modified to make them playable for one-handed gamers.

A passionate gamer and 3D printing enthusiast, Akaki Kuumeri, has created adaptive 3D-printable designs that can easily be added to any PlayStation, Nintendo or Xbox controller. The system of levers and buttons transform a standard controller into a one-handed controller for both left and right-handed gamers. Users have found these simple and affordable designs transformative, allowing them to play their favourite games without any barriers. All Kuumeri's designs can be downloaded free of charge at www.printables.com/@Akaki.

ACCESSIBILITY SOFTWARE

In the past, most games did not include

ABOVE: The Access Controller for PlayStation 5 by Sony makes gaming more accessible.
RIGHT: Konke Gamers introduces gamers with disabilities to the adaptive hardware that will make their gaming experience more enjoyable and accessible.

accessibility features, or only added them later. As the gaming industry has evolved, more developers are starting to include accessibility features from the inception of the game. These simple features can include:

- **Remappable controls**: Some players may struggle with hard-to-reach or small buttons. By remapping the controls, the player can reassign any action to a more comfortable button or trigger.
- **Aim Assist and Auto Targeting**: These help a player lock on an enemy target. This is useful to players who find precision manoeuvres difficult.
- **Steering Assist**: Similarly, steering assist helps players who struggle to manipulate subtle controls. It makes it easier to take sharp turns in fast-paced racing games.
- **Game Difficulties**: Unlike most accessibility features, game difficulty settings have been in games for decades. However, they have become more detailed and customisable to allow players a more forgiving gaming experience while they learn how to navigate the game world.
- **Timing Adjustments**: Often, a player is required to input a series of buttons or perform a task within a certain timeframe. Games now include settings that allow extra time to complete these actions, allowing players using adapted or adaptive controls to beat the buzzer.
- **Sensitivity Settings**: Sensitivity settings allow gamers with limited mobility to increase the sensitivity of their controls so that they can perform an action with less effort. Gamers with tremors can lower their sensitivity settings to counteract their involuntary movements.

There is still a lot of progress to be made, but support and inclusion is on the rise. More game developers are incorporating accessibility features with more disabilities considered and catered for.

We can help to keep this momentum going by supporting game studios who actively build inclusivity into their games, and by spreading the word about the available adaptations so that more gamers can access them. Accessibility in gaming is all about giving everyone the chance to take part, play and connect with the gaming community. R

Konke Gamers is a volunteer-driven, non-profit initiative focused on making gaming accessible to people with disabilities. Working with **Able Gamers**, they provide adaptive controllers and specialised, inclusive gaming solutions to break down barriers in the gaming community.

Get in touch: Konkegamers@gmail.com

Showing the way

Seasoned amputees can be profoundly beneficial in helping newly amputated individuals navigate their new reality

In our practice, we have often seen the benefits of pairing a seasoned amputee with someone who has been newly amputated. When someone undergoes an amputation, the experience can be physically, emotionally and psychologically overwhelming. In those early days, uncertainty often outweighs hope.

This is where the presence of a seasoned amputee can be profoundly beneficial. Speaking with someone who has already navigated the same journey offers something that even the best medical professionals cannot fully provide: Lived understanding.

A seasoned amputee serves as a real-life example that recovery, adaptation and a fulfilling life are possible after limb loss. They can answer practical questions about prosthetics, pain management, mobility and daily routines in ways that feel relatable and honest. Rather than abstract reassurance, the newly amputated person sees tangible proof of resilience. This can reduce fear, ease anxiety, and replace feelings of isolation with a sense of belonging.

Equally important is the emotional connection. A veteran amputee understands the grief, frustration and identity changes that often follow amputation. Their empathy is rooted in experience, not theory, which helps build trust quickly. This peer-to-peer support often encourages the new amputee to express concerns they might hesitate to share with family or clinicians.

Such meetings can also inspire motivation. Seeing someone who has returned to work, sports, hobbies or family life demonstrates that amputation is not the end of independence or purpose. In many cases, this interaction becomes a turning point, shifting the new amputee's mindset from loss to possibility. Ultimately, these conversations foster hope, confidence and the belief that a meaningful future is still well within reach.

So yes! In our practice we will continue the strategy of amputees accidently bumping into each other and sharing a moment together in the waiting room, because we know this is one of the primary sources of hope. Sometimes hope is all you need!

Heinrich Grimsehl is a prosthetist in private practice and a member of the South African Orthotic and Prosthetic Association (SAOPA).

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The "Burden" Myth

Employing people with disabilities is an opportunity that can secure a competitive advantage

Let's be honest. When we speak about disability inclusion, many employers don't consider the opportunity. They only think about the perceived "burden". They think of expensive ramps, complex bathroom retrofits, and a mountain of paperwork. They worry about productive dips. For 15 years, I have sat at boardroom tables and watched these unspoken fears cloud the eyes of otherwise savvy business leaders. The truth is that the "burden" of employing a wheelchair user is a myth – one that is actually costing your company!

The most pervasive myth is that reasonable accommodation is expensive. The reality is that the South African government has turned disability inclusion into a powerful financial instrument. Through mechanisms like the Section 12H Tax Allowance and the Employment Tax Incentive), the government effectively subsidises the cost of training and hosting employees with disabilities.

When structured correctly – what I call the "Grand Slam" approach – the tax deductions and cash-back incentives often cover 100 percent of the training costs and stipends. It is a "net-zero" investment that buys you B-BBEE Level improvements and free skilled labour. If you aren't using this, you aren't "saving money". You are overpaying tax.

The second myth is that productivity will suffer. This assumes that wheelchair users can't perform at the same level as their peers without a disability.

I am a wheelchair user. My daily commute involves navigating a world that was not built for me, which requires a level of logistics, problem-solving, and grit that most able-bodied employees never have to develop.

When you hire a person with a disability, you are hiring a micro-interventionist – someone who solves problems to survive. In a business environment, this type of mindset is a competitive advantage.

Finally, there is the fear of the "red tape" with the SETA grants, the learnership agreements and the compliance audits. Yes, the macro-system is complex, but partnering with specialists can make this more manageable. You create the opportunity and we handle the placements and risk.

I have spent my career building systems that prove inclusion isn't a nice-to-have, but rather a "must-have" for any business that cares about its bottom line. Let's retire the word "burden", for it is really an opportunity – one you don't want to miss!

Rustim Ariefdien is a disability expert who assists businesses to "let the Ability of disAbility enAble their profitAbility" through BBBEE, skills development, employment equity and socio-economic development. His purpose is the economic empowerment of persons with disability in Africa. As a person with a disability himself, he has extensive experience in the development and empowerment of persons with disability.

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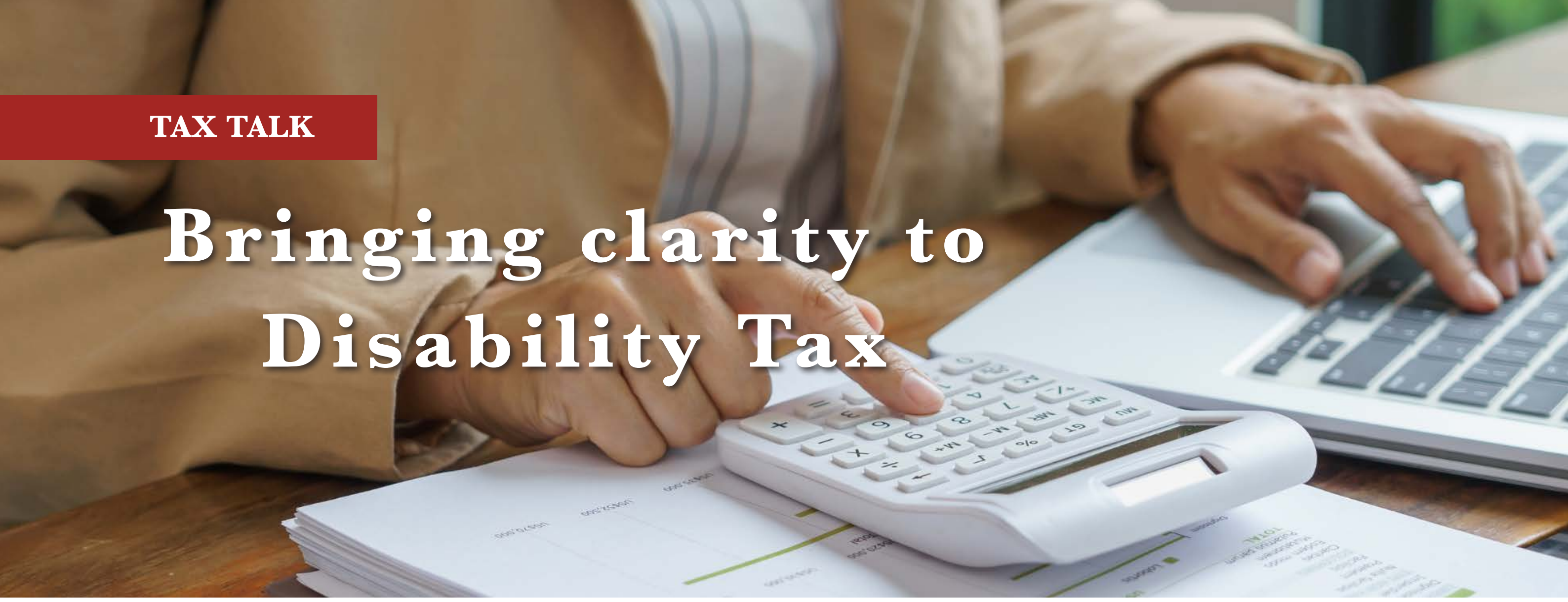

Bringing clarity to Disability Tax

Even with his qualifications, Lammert Stavast found submitting disability tax returns complicated. Now, he is working to make it easier for everyone

When my son was born in 2017 and later diagnosed with cerebral palsy, my life changed in ways I could never have prepared for. Like many parents, my focus was on therapy appointments, specialists, assistive devices and learning how to navigate a world that suddenly felt far more complex. What surprised me most was not the medical journey, but the administrative one.

I am a qualified chartered accountant and tax practitioner. I work with tax legislation every day. Yet, when it came time to claim disability-related medical tax credits, I struggled. The rules felt unclear, the paperwork intimidating, and the process emotionally exhausting. I remember thinking, *If I'm finding this difficult, how many other parents and individuals must be feeling completely overwhelmed?* That question stayed with me.

Disability tax relief exists for a reason: Living with a disability, or caring for someone who does, comes with ongoing, unavoidable costs. These are not "luxuries". They are necessities that allow people to live with dignity, independence and opportunity. Our tax system recognises this, but the reality is that many people never access what they are legally entitled to. Some don't know they qualify. Some are afraid of doing it wrong. Others simply don't have the time or energy to fight another system.

In 2020, that realisation led to the official launch of YourDisabilityTax. The goal was simple: To help individuals and families understand the disability tax framework and to assist them in claiming what the law already allows – no shortcuts, no risk, just clarity and support.

Since then, we've helped clients recover more than R4 million in legitimate tax refunds. Behind every number is a family who could redirect funds towards therapy, care, education or simply breathing room.

Over the coming months, I'll be writing a series of articles focused on disability tax – not in complicated tax language, but in practical, real-world terms. We'll unpack who qualifies, which expenses are often overlooked, how medical assessments work, and what to do if SARS queries your claim. My hope is that these articles reduce uncertainty and replace it with confidence.

Disability already demands resilience. Claiming what you are entitled to should not demand courage as well. R

Lammert Stavast is a qualified chartered accountant, tax practitioner and founder of YourDisabilityTax, which assists persons with disabilities or families with their disability tax rebate claims and disputes to the maximum refund within the legal framework.

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An African approach to brain-computer technology

There are some exciting developments with brain-computer interfaces that are out of reach for Africa – unless it depends on its own talent and strengths

Doom-scrolling through X (formally Twitter), I found on a picture of a digital sketch. A simple, charming drawing of shapes and colours. It wasn't the art that grabbed me. It was the artist. The handle was @NeuraNova9, otherwise known as Audrey Crews. She wasn't using a stylus or a mouse. She was using a Neuralink N1 implant to translate her neural intent directly into digital ink. The Neuralink N1 is a fully implantable, wireless brain-computer interface (BCI) that allows the user to control computers, phones and other devices just by thinking. Seeing Audrey reclaim her creative autonomy was nothing short of miraculous. I just had to know more!

As an adaptive technology enthusiast looking at this from South Africa, I had to pump the brakes on my excitement. It dawned on me that the technology is incredible, but also incredibly exclusive. We are talking about elective neurosurgery with a robot drilling a hole in your skull. The "foreign body response" and the sheer logistical burden of maintaining such a device make it a fragile solution.

In South Africa, we have one of the highest rates of traumatic spinal cord injuries in the world driven largely by road accidents and interpersonal violence. For the vast majority of these patients, the public health system struggles to provide basic mobility aids, let alone experimental brain implants. If the future of BCI requires millions of rands and neurosurgical suites, the "digital divide" will morph into a terrifying "biological divide".

Yet, this isn't a story about despair. South Africa doesn't need to follow the same path as wealthier nations. We can chart our own course shaped by our unique constraints and strengths. Just as Africa leapfrogged landlines to build massive mobile networks, we can leapfrog invasive surgery in favour of AI-driven, non-invasive solutions.

The University of Cape Town (UCT) houses Africa's only 128-channel high-resolution EEG facility with which they map cortical activity without breaking the skin. Wits University conceptualised a project called the "Brainternet" which streams brainwaves to the internet. By combining the clinical expertise at UCT with the low-power AI research at the Wits MIND Institute, local startups could build headsets that offer 80 percent of Neuralink's functionality for a fraction of the price. Imagine a headset that costs R5 000 instead of R500 000, powered by local algorithms, that clean up "noisy" signals to allow for cursor control and communication!

Africa has the talent to design, engineer and build these solutions. For South Africa, the future is in using our constraints to engineer a bridge to the future that everyone can cross – not just the wealthy and privileged.

Sandile Mkhize, a T5 complete paraplegic and drone industry software developer. Passionate about improving accessibility through smart engineering, assistive technology, and global collaboration.

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Access to justice blocked by physical barriers

Old infrastructure and inaccessible parking bays are creating barriers to justice – both for advocates and clients with disabilities

In 1996, I became a quadriplegic after a life-altering injury. I refused to let that define me. I earned a BSc in Agricultural Economics and later answered a new calling: Law. Today, I run my own firm Mupeti Attorneys serving clients from all walks of life.

As a lawyer with a disability, I face daily barriers within the justice system. As a candidate attorney, accessing courts especially the High Court was daunting. Even now, the path to justice remains obstructed. Parking is a constant struggle. I often arrive to find no designated accessible bays. Recently, I had to park on a busy street where my car alarm was jammed.

Steep ramps and uneven pavements force me to rely on security guards for help, though they aren't trained or obligated to assist. Inside, broken elevators have left me stranded, unable to access key offices.

Court infrastructure tells a similar story. Historic buildings with steep inclines and inaccessible facilities dominate. In Randburg and Roodepoort, accessible bays are far away or misused, assistance is absent, and security is minimal. Load-shedding and faulty elevators disrupt proceedings. The Court Online system offers some relief, but it's unreliable and unavailable in most regional courts.

The South African Constitution, the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, and the African Disability Protocol enshrine equal access to justice, but these rights remain aspirational if physical, technological and logistical barriers persist. If I, a practicing attorney, face these hurdles, what hope does the average person with a disability have?

I call on our courts, government and legal profession: Don't pay lip-service to access. Make it real, tangible and lived for every person with a disability seeking justice.

Aaron Mupeti is a duly qualified and admitted Attorney of the High Court of South Africa, and founder of Mupeti Attorneys, which offers a full range of legal services while giving each client the individual attention they deserve.

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OPINION

True value of a weigh-in

Reflecting on the themes in her most recent book, Palesa Mathibe shares her thoughts on the importance of knowing your weight

Following her own battles with accessing accessible scales, Palesa Mathibe wrote *The Weight is Over*, a fictional retelling of her experience that portrays a very real struggle that many wheelchair users face.

“Besides for the obvious reasons of what we see with the naked eye, [weighing in is] useful for healthcare purposes as regular weight checks are crucial for health monitoring and adjusting medication in order to make informed health decisions,” author Palesa Mathibe reflects.

For wheelchair users, this is particularly important as the lack of movement increases the chances of becoming obese and battling resulting conditions like Type 2 Diabetes, heart disease and stroke.

Prior to her injury, Palesa paid little attention to her weight. When she tried to donate blood, she was refused as she was considered “underweight”. This made her realise the important role weight plays in her over health.

After her accident, she realised how inaccessible most scales are. This inspired her to advocate for better inclusion and resources for wheelchair users. Her advocacy work includes educating medical staff on disabilities.

“Clinic staff will undoubtedly be more confident when dealing with persons with disabilities, not because they would know everything, but because they would know where to begin and what questions to ask,” she shares. Better informed medical practitioners allow for better care, but also gives the patient with a disability more autonomy over their body.

In her own experience, Palesa was told that she would have to have a caesarean to deliver her baby despite what her own research said. Fortunately for her, she was able to birth her child naturally while the doctor was still on their way.

“Persons with disabilities tend to be denied freedom of choice,” she shares. “I don’t deny medical advice. I just urge due diligence. This will raise confidence in healthcare facilities, showing that they are cognisant of the various bodies that they can be presented with; are passionate about learning and educating others; and confirming that awareness and inclusion are at the forefront in such spaces.”

Palesa advises others with disabilities to learn as much about their condition to be better advocates of their own health: “Research and learn as much as you can about the condition. This awareness plays a vital role in gearing the mind to acceptance. Then share the knowledge with those around you as that assists greatly in empowering others to understand how to help you better.”

“Look out for communities of persons who are in the same situations, which is the best space to share concerns and experiences; and learn firsthand how to navigate these new changes.”

For more resources, to purchase a copy of her book, or to continue conversation, reach out to Palesa at 777wordpower@gmail.com.

Partnering with teachers for ultimate support

Building a relationship with your child's teachers is a great way to ensure your child with a disability is properly accommodated in the classroom

Most parents feel anxious about sending their children to school, especially as they transition from one grade to the next or move to a new phase. Parents and caregivers of children with disabilities often experience additional stress like worrying about whether their child's individual needs will be accommodated. We know our children's strengths, challenges, routines, likes and dislikes better than anyone.

Here are some practical ideas of easing your anxiety while ensuring your child's needs are clearly shared with their teacher.

MAKE CONTACT

It is important to communicate with your child's new teacher sooner rather than later. I suggest reaching out to the school as soon as possible and asking to have a face-to-face meeting with the new teacher – ideally in the classroom so that you can see and discuss the physical environment. If face-to-face is not possible, you could look at an online meeting.

Reach out via e-mail with an introduction to some of your child's specific strengths, challenges and accommodations. I suggest not overloading them with details in this e-mail. Rather mention what you would like to chat about in your proposed meeting. An e-mail is great as it shows that you are making an effort and want to work and collaborate with the school.

INVOLVE EVERYONE IMPORTANT

Once you have agreed on a date and time, you might want to invite any relevant parties such as occupational therapist or physiotherapists (all dependent on your child) to this meeting. Sometimes they aren't available, but can share a report or resources with teachers. I would print these out or share via e-mail with the teacher.

Depending on the age of your child, their abilities and what information you will be sharing, you might want to have a meeting just with adults, then invite your child to join later in the meeting or on a separate day.

If your child is at the same school as the previous year, I suggest inviting their previous teacher to share what accommodations they made, which will help with transitioning. They may also be able to add insights into what worked and what didn't from the previous year.

COME PREPARED

I would write out a simple "agenda" so that you are clear about what you want to share. This will keep you on track and ensure that you cover everything. I suggest providing a brief background to your child and relevant information about their disability. Don't overload the teacher with long histories about the medical condition or disability.

Focus on information that will help them understand and accommodate your child the best. This can include important routines such as toileting or bowl and bladder management, feeding, medication, assistive devices (such as voice activated software, standing frames and pencil grips), provisioning of reasonable accommodation (such as scribes, additional time and note takers).

If specialists and other teachers who know your child are able to attend, let them know what you would like them to share with the teacher, for example, ideas on best place to seat your child, any practical resources and tips your teacher can use in the classroom.

If your child has an existing Individualised Education Plan (IEP) containing personalised goals, strategies and accommodations for your child from a previous school, share this with your new school as it will show what was done to accommodate and support your child previously. If your child is at the same school and an IEP was previously developed, ask for this to be discussed in the meeting as there may be some changes needed.

It is important to leave times for the teacher to ask questions and, if you child is present, time for them to ask questions and offer their perspectives. They know their bodies best – what works and doesn't work. The more practical, interactive and co-created solutions orientated this meeting, the better for your child and their teacher.

CONTINUE COMMUNICATION

It is important that you develop and foster a positive relationship with your child's teacher. If things change, let your teacher know. For example, share when your child has been put on new medication and is expected to be drowsy in class for a few days or weeks.

Building a positive relationship with your teacher will also result in better communication coming from the classroom. For example, if the teacher is going to be absent, preparing a child who finds changes in routine hard beforehand may help with this transition.

If you child will be having tests, therapeutic or medical interventions, let your teacher know so that they can help to bridge your child back into the classroom when they are ready by preparing the class or sending work home to help them catch up.

Things that happen at home will have a direct impact on what happens at school; and what happens at school will directly impact your child at home. The better communication between you and the teacher, the more supported and accommodated your child will be. R

Dr **Emma McKinney** owner of Disability Included Consultancy, a company providing disability employment and educational research, training, support, and resources.

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LIFE COACHING

Following the tides of motivation

While grand goals are tempting, some months or years might ask you to slow down – a pause that can be very beneficial

A few months have passed since the year first found its feet. For many, the emotional residue of December and the quieter truth of January are still very present. What follows is not a look back for nostalgia's sake, but an honest reflection on what a great number of us experienced as the year began, and how those early weeks often set the tone for everything that comes after.

December has a particular energy to it. It builds, it gathers pace, it leans forward. Even when life has been difficult, December carries a sense of promise. There is noise, colour, movement and the feeling that relief is just around the corner. We push a little harder, spend a little more, say yes more often than we should, and borrow emotional energy from a future we imagine will be calmer and kinder. December encourages intensity, even when we are already tired. December is a climax month.

January arrives very differently. The decorations come down, routines return, inboxes refill, and the quiet sets in. The emotional music drops a few octaves. What felt exciting only weeks earlier can now feel flat, heavy or strangely disappointing. Many people quietly ask themselves, "Is this it?", and then feel guilty for even thinking it. Others assume they should feel grateful, motivated, or energised, and judge themselves when they do not. January is not broken. January is honest.

What we often experience in January is not failure or a lack of motivation, but the nervous system finally exhaling after weeks of intensity. The difficulty lies not in January itself, but in the expectation that it should feel like December. We measure it with the wrong ruler and then blame ourselves when it does not measure up.

In coaching, I often describe December as an emotional overdraft. We draw on energy, hope, connection, and goodwill, assuming we will repay it later. January is when the statement arrives. It simply reflects what was spent. There is no judgement in it, only information.

This is where many people turn on themselves. They decide something must be wrong with them. Others seem to be flying, setting goals, posting plans, moving fast. Meanwhile they feel slow, tender, or unsure. Comparison creeps in, followed closely by pressure to fix, improve or reinvent themselves immediately, as though discomfort is something to be eradicated rather than understood.

But January is not asking for reinvention. It is asking for recalibration.

February understands this instinctively. It does not rush. It steadies. It tests small rhythms and modest intentions. February quietly asks a far better question than January ever could, “What can you sustain?”, not just for a week, but for a season. This is where a simple shift changes everything.

Instead of asking, “What do I want from this year?”, try asking, “What does this year need from me right now?”. The answer is rarely dramatic. It is usually something small and kind. More rest. More structure. Less noise. One honest step instead of ten imagined ones. These answers may not impress anyone else, but they tend to work.

As the year moves into March and April, momentum often begins to appear, but only if it is built on honesty rather than pressure. When we force progress too early, motivation becomes brittle. When we allow it to emerge naturally, it becomes steady. What grows slowly has a far better chance of lasting.

Another helpful image is that of tuning your inner radio. December tends to blast multiple stations at once, expectations, obligations, excitement, pressure. The early months of the year give us the opportunity to turn the dial deliberately, to tune into the station that feeds us rather than the static that drains us. This is not a once off adjustment, but an ongoing practice.

This does not mean doing nothing. It means doing the right things, quietly. A short walk or wheel taken consistently. A morning routine that grounds rather than demands. One conversation you have been avoiding. One promise you keep to yourself.

These are not small things. They are stabilising things, and they build a sense of trust with oneself that becomes invaluable as the year unfolds.

By mid-year, many people experience another wobble. Energy dips again. Focus scatters. Old doubts resurface. The enthusiasm of the early months has worn thin, and the finish line still feels far away. This is often where people decide they have failed, when in truth they are simply human.

The emotional seasons we experience at the start of the year tend to repeat themselves in different forms as the months unfold. Understanding this rhythm changes how we live. Instead of judging ourselves harshly when motivation fades, we learn to listen. Instead of pushing harder, we learn to adjust. Instead of abandoning ourselves when things feel uncomfortable, we learn to stay present and curious.

For persons with a disability, illness or ongoing limitation, this rhythm is especially important. The year does not move in straight lines. Some seasons require patience rather than effort, kindness rather than courage. Gentle traction beats forced momentum every time. Life does not ask us to sprint through the year. It asks us to find our metaphorical footing, again and again.

If the early months felt quieter than expected, you were not falling behind. If the middle months required adjustment, that you haven’t failed. If the year asks you to pause, that pause may be doing important work beneath the surface. Listening, done kindly, sets a far healthier tone for the year than any resolution ever could.

I am still practising this myself, and living with limitation has taught me that timing, patience, and honesty matter far more than force ever could. If you find yourself needing a steady hand as you recalibrate and find your rhythm, Life Coaching can offer a quiet, supportive space to listen more closely to yourself and choose your next steps with intention, not urgency. R

Len Davey is a qualified life coach. To book a session, contact him via his website: www.theworldwithin.co.za. A free “goal setting” session is offered without any obligation so that you can experience life coaching first hand.

Get in touch: len@theworldwithin.co.za

Finding your voice again

Speech therapist Sam Rees explores the role of speech therapy in spinal cord rehabilitation

Working as a speech therapist in the multidisciplinary team in a neurological rehabilitation unit, I was often met with quizzical looks upon introducing myself to the newest admission. What could a speech therapist have to contribute to my rehabilitation for spinal cord injury?

When most people hear "speech therapist", they think of school children learning to say "r" properly. Rarely do people picture us working alongside physios and OTs in a gym, doing spinal cord rehabilitation. So, what value can we add to this team?

Speech therapy is about much more than just speech. It's about communication, cognition and swallowing. In spinal cord rehab, it is most importantly about breathing. After a spinal cord injury, especially one sustained higher up the neck, the muscles that control breathing and swallowing may be affected.

Breathing isn't just about your lungs. It is about the muscles that move air in and out. We have our diaphragm (innervated by the phrenic nerve at levels C3 to C5), which is the star of inhalation; intercostal muscles (from T1 to T11) that expand our rib cage and help you to take a deep breath and project your voice; and abdominal muscles (from T6 to T12) that are essential for forceful exhalation, coughing, and voice projection.

Injuries sustained above these levels can weaken these muscles and affect these important functions. Without a strong diaphragm or abdominal support, the air pressure generated beneath the vocal cords is reduced. Less air pressure means a weaker cough, difficulty clearing your throat and a softer, breathier or easily-fatigued voice.

This is why many people with higher-level spinal cord injuries may struggle to clear their throat, complain that others can't hear them in a noisy room, or they run out of breath mid-sentence.

A speech therapist assists with respiratory muscle strength training (RMST) – gym for the muscles that control breathing. Using specialised devices you can learn to engage and strengthen the muscles involved in breathing.

Over time, this strengthens the diaphragm and respiratory muscles to improve cough strength (keeping lungs clear and infections at bay), support longer, louder speech and boosts endurance for everyday tasks, like chatting to a friend without pausing for breath every couple of words.

After cervical spinal cord injuries, or certain spinal operations, the muscles that control swallowing may be affected, leading to coughing, choking, or food "going down the wrong way". Speech therapists provide clinical swallowing evaluations and rehab exercises to improve swallowing function. We might recommend muscle-strengthening drills, safe-swallowing postures, or texture modifications to make mealtimes safe, enjoyable and social again.

Recovery after a spinal cord injury is about regaining as much independence as possible and quality of life. Being able to breathe deeply, laugh loudly, sing along to your favourite song and eat without worry is essential. Speech therapists work alongside your rehab team to help make that possible. In the end, rehabilitation isn't just about movement, it's about finding your voice again.

The **Enable Centre** is an outpatient physical and cognitive rehabilitation centre with branches in Cape Town and Durban. It operates as a social enterprise, meaning it provides therapy to people from all socioeconomic backgrounds whilst incorporating innovative technology and evidence-based treatments.

Get in touch: admin@enablecentre.org

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Making History and Mixing Hits

Almost eight years to the day after suffering a life-changing rugby injury, Jacques Hector returned to the field to inspire the Springboks to victory

On 26 August 2017, Jacques Hector captained the Cederberg Academy Under-19 B team in a home game against Clanwilliam Secondary. Usually a scrumhalf, he played hooker on that fateful day and had a hand in two of his team's tries before disaster struck.

"Our scrumhalf carried the ball up and I, with my scrumhalf instincts, was reaching for the ball, but it was lodged deep in the ruck, so I had to stick my head in a little deeper to reach it," Citrusdal-based Jacques recalls.

"The next moment I heard a loud snap-crack sound. I was the one lying on the ground unable to move. The player in front of me tried to pull me towards him, but my head got stuck in a small sand pit."

"I was conscious through it all, trying to stay positive, but it got harder when people started crying around me." The talented teenager had broken his neck (C4 vertebra) and had no idea what was to come.

"I was taken to Citrusdal Hospital and then airlifted to Tygerberg Hospital where I stayed for two days before I was transferred to Groote Schuur Hospital, where I finally underwent surgery. I was in the hospital for more than two months and then transferred to the Western Cape Rehabilitation Centre where I underwent rehabilitation for three months," Jacques shares.

MAKING HISTORY

Fast forward to 23 August 2025 and the headstrong Hector made history as the first recipient of the Chris Burger Petro Jackson Players' Fund to be the official mascot of the Springboks for their clash against Australia in Cape Town, which the men in Green and Gold won 30-22.

"It's a huge honour. To be given such an opportunity is every Springbok supporter's dream," says the now 26-year-old. "For weeks leading up to the day, I had butterflies in my stomach because I knew it would be a once-in-a-lifetime experience. I was so excited that I only slept four hours before we departed for Cape Town."

"I'm a lifelong Bok fan and to meet some of my rugby heroes before the game was mind-blowing. The humility of the guys is what struck me the most. All of them were nice and took what little time they had to meet me," Jacques adds.

"I had the opportunity to exchange a few words with my two favourite players, Manie Libbok and Sacha Feinberg-Mngomezulu. They were so humble! I also had the privilege to talk to Jesse Kriel before the game and on the field, and I spoke with Steven Kitshoff before the game, too. What a nice guy!"

SUPPORT THE UPLIFTS

Jacques praised the Players' Fund for their support over the years, saying: "The Players' Fund has played a big role in my life. Without their support, I wouldn't have been able to go back to school, face everyday challenges and have the confidence I have now. I'm grateful for every day they've been there for me."

Another rock for Jacques, affectionately known as "Pikkie", is his mother. He shares: "There are no words to describe how amazing my mom has been for me; sacrificing for me and helping me through everything since my injury. She's been there through it all physically, mentally and spiritually."

With the strength to carry on, Jacques redid Grade 11 and matriculated at Jan Kriel. All the while, he's continued to develop some of his biggest passions as an IT software enthusiast, DJ and music producer.

"My enthusiasm for IT software began in my Grade 10 year. I just took a liking to the complex writing of code and problem solving of programming. So I said to myself that I would like to fix people's phones, computers and electronics if I can. To this day, I am still helping where I can," Jacques shares.

MIXING HITS

"My passion for music runs deep because music expresses feelings and serves as a therapist for many. I have had a deep understanding of music ever since I was a small boy. My godfather and his friends were DJs and one was a sound engineer. I was 10 when they first took me to a sound festival with them. It was loud and the energy was what captivated me. I had my first solo gig for a 21st birthday party at 13, and things took off from there," Jacques adds.

ABOVE: Jacques Hector was the first Chris Burger Petro Jackson Players' Fund recipient to be the official mascot of the Springboks.

"When my cousin started rapping in 2015, I featured on his song 'Alles Duidelik' which I produced, and that is where I got an idea to monetise, because we don't have a music studio in Citrusdal. My most memorable events have been with DJ Saxie at the 2023-2024 New Year's party, my first solo gig, at Club 925 and Club Mykonos."

Jacques had a final message for those in similar situations as him: "Know your worth, set boundaries, identify strengths, own achievements, challenge negative thoughts, practice self-compassion and surround yourself with support." R

Quintin van Jaarsveld writes on behalf of the Players' Fund. If you would like to support the Chris Burger Petro Jackson Players' Fund, visit their website at www.playersfund.org.za and select any number of the giving options available, which include EFT, payfast, Snapscan and Zapper.

Get in touch: contact@playersfund.org.za

Adaptive Skiing truly inclusive at Afriski

A group of 13 wheelchair users took to the slopes at the Afriski Mountain Resort and found the experience to be very inclusive

There is something undeniably powerful about snow-covered mountains; the silence, the speed, and the sense of freedom that comes with gliding downhill. For many people with disabilities, skiing can feel like a distant dream. Last year, that dream became a reality for a record-breaking group of adaptive skiers at the Afriski Mountain Resort, proving that when the slopes are truly open, anything is possible.

It marked a major milestone for Adaptive Sports Fund with the largest group of wheelchair users ever to ski together in Africa. A group of 13 adaptive skiers took to the slopes with 11 of them complete beginners. What made this experience particularly special was not just the numbers, but the level of care, preparation and inclusion shown throughout the trip.

For the first time, everything was ready from the moment the group arrived. Accommodation had been carefully considered, ensuring space, access, and comfort for all 13 participants. While no venue is ever perfect, the effort made by Afriski staff was evident and deeply appreciated.

Each morning, the adaptive skis were prepped and waiting, allowing the group to maximise time on the snow rather than dealing with delays or logistics.

The instructors played a crucial role in the success of the trip. Whenever they had a spare moment away from their regular duties, they stepped in to assist. With six sit-skis on the slopes, four of which required constant support, the extra hands made all the difference.

The presence of a dedicated wheelchair ski instructor, who has been involved for the past two seasons, brought confidence, consistency and reassurance to new skiers finding their balance for the first time.

Adaptive skiing is about more than just learning technique. Some of the most meaningful moments happened off the slopes, sitting in the snow listening to music, waiting for a turn, sharing laughs, and simply being part of the mountain experience.

Watching the expressions on faces as things started to click was unforgettable. Seeing someone like AJ make his way down independently for the first time was a moment that stopped everyone in their tracks.

One of the most powerful highlights came on the final afternoon. As the sun dipped low behind the mountains, instructors took turns guiding participants from the very top of the slope at speed. The exhilaration was unmistakable: shaking hands, racing hearts, and huge smiles at the bottom. It offered a glimpse of what is possible with time, practice, and confidence.

Equally important was the atmosphere beyond the snow. From restaurants to social spaces, Afriski ensured the group was fully included. A group of 13 wheelchair users take up space, and yet the resort made room – literally and figuratively – allowing the group to be part of the full après-ski experience, meeting new people and creating lasting friendships.

A heartfelt thank you goes to Afriski Mountain Resort for their commitment to accessibility, and to our generous sponsors whose support continues to make experiences like this possible.

Adaptive skiing at Afriski is not limited to organised groups. Individual skiers are welcome too. With advance booking and communication, assistance and instruction are available, ensuring the slopes remain open to all.

This trip was about more than skiing. It was about freedom, community, and proving that with the right support, the mountains belong to everyone.

Jeffrey Yates writes for the Adaptive Sports Fund (ASF) is a non-profit company, committed to supporting individuals with disabilities and breaking down barriers and creating a more equitable and just world for all people, regardless of their abilities. and with the following objectives: Supporting, enriching, encouraging, motivating and providing resources that empower individuals with disabilities to achieve their goals for them to live their best lives and creating a more accessible and equitable society for all.

Get in touch: info@adaptivesportsfund.org

Mandeville the Joburg Giant

In the second article on the series profiling wheelchair rugby clubs, we head to Johannesburg to meet Mandeville Wheelchair Rugby Club

Mandeville Wheelchair Rugby Club is inseparable from the history of wheelchair rugby in South Africa. Known as The Rhinos, the club was one of the founding forces behind the introduction of the sport in the late 1990s. It is also the longest continuously running wheelchair rugby club in the country.

In 1998, Mandeville participated in the first wheelchair rugby tournament ever held in South Africa. This event marked the formal beginning of the sport at a national level. Later that same year, the club won the first Wheelchair Rugby National Championships, establishing itself as both a pioneer and an early benchmark for performance.

From its earliest days, Mandeville helped shape the culture, rules and competitive expectations of wheelchair rugby in South Africa. That legacy continues to define the club today.

JOZI'S HOME OF WHEELCHAIR RUGBY

Mandeville Wheelchair Rugby Club is based at the Mandeville Sports and Social Club in Bezuidenhout Valley, Johannesburg. The venue is widely recognised as the premier disability sports club in South Africa, and has a long history of supporting adaptive sport at both recreational and elite levels.

Within this environment, wheelchair rugby has flourished. The facilities, accessibility, and sporting culture of Mandeville Sports and Social Club provide a stable and professional home for training, competition, and athlete development. For many athletes, it is the first place they encounter organised wheelchair rugby.

LARGEST CLUB IN THE COUNTRY

Mandeville is currently the largest wheelchair rugby club in South Africa. The club fields three active teams in the South African Wheelchair Rugby League. This includes one Paralympic-format team and two Wheelchair Rugby Fives teams, known as the Red Rhinos and White Rhinos.

This depth allows the club to support athletes at different stages of their journey. New players, developing athletes, and experienced competitors all train within the same programme. The result is a strong internal pathway that supports both performance and retention.

CONSISTENT SUCCESS AT THE TOP

Mandeville's size is matched by its competitiveness. In 2024, the club achieved an exceptional milestone by winning both the Paralympic and Fives league formats. This rare double win highlighted the strength of the

club across multiple versions of the game. In 2025, Mandeville again reached the finals in both formats and finished as runners-up. This confirms the club's sustained presence at the top of the national standings and its ability to compete year after year. Mandeville is widely regarded as one of the most difficult teams to face in South African wheelchair rugby.

INTERNATIONAL REPRESENTATION

The club plays a significant role in the national high-performance system. In 2025, five of the nine athletes selected for the South African National Paralympic Squad were members of Mandeville Wheelchair Rugby Club, including Clyde Holland, Jeffrey Yates, Bonga Khumalo, More Mulder and Lucas Sithole.

That squad won the European Division C Tournament in October 2025, marking a major international success for South African wheelchair rugby. Mandeville athletes played a central role, reinforcing the club's reputation as a producer of elite-level players.

INCLUSIVE BY DESIGN

Mandeville is home to approximately 25 active athletes with a wide range of disabilities, ranging from quadriplegia and cerebral palsy to spina bifida. The club actively accommodates athletes across all eligible wheelchair rugby classifications. Inclusion is not an add-on. It is embedded in how the Mandeville programme operates. Athletes are supported regardless of background, experience or level of impairment. The focus is on ability, commitment, growth within the sport and, most importantly, creating a healthy, safe and inspiring environment for a close-knit community of athletes.

GAUTENG CENTRAL AND BEYOND

Mandeville services the Gauteng Central region, with a catchment area that extends into the East Rand. It is widely recognised as the premier wheelchair rugby club in the Johannesburg area. For many athletes in the region, Mandeville represents the highest level of club competition available locally. The club plays a leadership role in growing the sport across Gauteng Central and strengthening regional participation.

TOP: The Mandeville Wheelchair Rugby Club is the biggest wheelchair rugby club in South Africa.

ABOVE: The club boast five players who made it onto the national team, and had a hand in winning the European Division C Tournament in October 2025.

KEY FEEDER INTO PROVINCE

The club is a major feeder into the Gauteng Central (Lions) Provincial Wheelchair Rugby Team. Athletes progressing from Mandeville into provincial structures arrive technically prepared and tactically aware. This consistency has helped strengthen provincial performance and ensures alignment between club development and higher-level competition.

COACHING AND STRATEGIC INFLUENCE

Mandeville is coached by Ilan Guest, who has been involved with the club for over 10 years. During this period, the club has

ABOVE: The Mandeville Wheelchair Rugby Club, dubbed The Rhinos, were the runners-up in 2025 Wheelchair Rugby league.
RIGHT: Ilan Guest is the team coach and Director of Fives Rugby within South Africa Wheelchair Rugby.

grown into one of the dominant forces in South African wheelchair rugby. Beyond the club, Ilan has held several senior roles within South Africa Wheelchair Rugby, including High Performance Director, Tournament Director, and his current role as Director of Fives Rugby.

In this new role, he is responsible for guiding the national development of the fast-growing Fives format of the sport. This close link between club leadership and national strategy has helped ensure consistency, alignment, and long-term vision at Mandeville Wheelchair Rugby.

HIGH-PERFORMANCE TRAINING

Training takes place every Thursday from 18:00 to 20:00 at the Mandeville Stadium. Sessions are structured and purposeful. Athletes work on physical conditioning, chair skills and contact technique, alongside tactical awareness and team systems. The programme is designed to meet Paralympic performance standards while remaining athlete-centred and supportive. Development is deliberate, measurable, and aligned with national performance expectations.

MORE THAN A CLUB

Despite its success, Mandeville remains grounded in community. The club is known for its strong culture and sense of belonging. Many athletes arrive at Mandeville during periods of personal transition. Through wheelchair rugby, they gain physical strength, confidence and purpose. The club offers more than competition. It offers identity, support, and opportunity.

More than 25 years after participating in South Africa's first wheelchair rugby tournament, Mandeville Wheelchair Rugby Club continues to lead the sport forward. Built on history and driven by performance, the Rhinos remain at the heart of wheelchair rugby in South Africa.

Reach out to the club on 083 657 3706 or mandevillewcr@gmail.com. Following the club on Facebook and Instagram at @mandevillewcr. R

South Africa Wheelchair Rugby (SAWCR) is the official administrator of the wheelchair rugby in South Africa. The association is involved in all aspects from development and local club support to game officials and managing the national wheelchair rugby league. For more information, please contact admin@sawcr.co.za or visit the official Facebook page at @SAWheelchairRugby.

Get in touch: admin@sawcr.co.za


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Reigniting the flame as a parent

Intimacy can feel difficult while juggling the responsibilities of a parent, but reconnecting with your pleasure is easier than you might think

Parenthood is one of the most profound identity shifts a person can experience. It brings joy, responsibility and change to every area of life, including sexuality. For parents with a spinal cord injury (SCI), these shifts can feel even more complicated.

The challenge lies not only in balancing the demands of parenting with intimacy, but negotiating how injury, caregiving, and family roles reshape your sexual self.

The common question many new parents face is: “How do I remain a sexual being while also stepping into the role of mother/father?” This is further complicated by the physical and identity changes endured because of the SCI.

One of the first changes that often arises is role confusion. After an SCI, some partners already feel that intimacy is complicated by the blending of caregiving and romantic roles. Adding parenthood into the mix can further blur roles.

When much of the day revolves around feeding, nappies and routines, it can be difficult to switch gears and reconnect with the part of yourself that is sensual and intimate.

The shift into parenthood can sometimes make partners feel more like co-managers of a household than lovers, which can dampen sexual desire and closeness.

Reclaiming sexuality in this context requires intentional efforts of finding opportunities to reconnect, even briefly, outside of the parenting role.

Body image also plays a significant part in how new parents with SCI experience sexuality. Many parents, regardless of injury, struggle with fatigue and self-esteem while adapting to the demands of parenting. For someone with an SCI, these concerns may be intensified by physical limitations or bodily changes.

It is not uncommon to feel that your body has become more practical than sensual. Yet, intimacy thrives when the body is seen as capable of pleasure, affection, and connection.

Exploring new erogenous zones, incorporating sensory substitution, or engaging in mindfulness activities can help rebuild a sense of the body as a source of intimacy rather than just utility.

> **Shorter, more spontaneous moments of closeness can be just as powerful as extended encounters.**

Parenthood forces a reconsideration of time and energy. Sexuality often takes a back seat when sleep is scarce and daily responsibilities pile up. For a parent with SCI, fatigue can be even more significant, and physical preparation for intimacy may require more planning.

Shorter, more spontaneous moments of closeness can be just as powerful as extended encounters. Sometimes, intimacy may be less about sexual activity itself and more about nurturing the emotional connection that is the foundation for desire.

Another important factor is identity integration. Before becoming a parent, sexuality may have been tied to independence and spontaneity. Now, it may be about creativity, communication, and adaptability. This shift can be difficult at first but also freeing.

By reframing sexuality as something that evolves alongside identity, parents can discover new forms of intimacy that feel authentic to their current lives.

Parenting with an SCI does not mean putting sexuality aside, it means embracing the challenge of weaving together multiple identities: parent, partner and sexual being.

It is about acknowledging the changes, communicating openly with your partner, and giving yourself permission to redefine what intimacy means. In doing so, sexuality doesn't become something lost in the chaos of parenting, but something enriched by the resilience that parenthood and SCI together can bring.

Dr **Danie Breedt** is a passionate scholar-practitioner in the field of psychology. He divides his time between training, research and clinical practice. Danie works from an integrative interactional approach in psychotherapy, dealing with a wide range of emotional difficulties and sexual rehabilitation for patients with disabilities. He is the co-owner of Charis Psychological Services, a psychology practice that specialises in physical rehabilitation across South Africa.

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Memoir with a call-to-action

Rising Above Disability is a powerful memoir by Bongani Ntuli challenging its readers to see beyond the limits and challenges to the resilience, hope and strength that define the human spirit.

Born in Evaton Township, Gauteng, and diagnosed with polio at the age of four, Bongani recounts the profound challenges of growing up with a disability in South Africa. His narrative is deeply rooted in family love, community support and the determination to transform adversity into strength.

Divided into two "books", part one traces Bongani's childhood from his formative years in boarding school to the pivotal experiences that shaped his independence. He describes moments of fear and isolation, like his long hospital stays and the strict discipline of boarding school life, that became his catalysts for growth. He recollects the friendships and moments that helped him discover his own voice – highlighting the importance of connection and creativity.

Part two explores his broader reflections to offer readers practical wisdom on living with purpose, breaking barriers and leaving a legacy. Bongani emphasises perseverance, authenticity and leadership. He encourages readers to embrace their individuality and advocate for inclusivity. His writing is honest and heartfelt, balancing vulnerability with an unyielding spirit.

Rising Above Disability is compelling for its dual role as memoir and manifesto. Bongani's journey is deeply personal, while his call-to-action resonates universally: See beyond limitations, foster empathy and build a society where diversity is celebrated.

Copies are available at R260 and can be ordered directly from Bongani. Contact him at 061 043 2300. R

2025 Events Calendar

SASAPD NATIONAL CHAMPIONSHIP

27 to 31 March 2026

The 2026 SASAPD National Championships will take place in Stellenbosch on 27 to 31 March. Visit the official SASPD website for more information, or follow along with all the action on Facebook.

ADAPTIVE ARCHERY

11 April 2026

The Adaptive Sports Fund will be trying out Adaptive Archery on 11 April 2026. Visit their Facebook page for more information or contact them at info@adaptivesportsfund.org.

ADAPTIVE MOUNTAIN BIKING

25 April 2026

The Adaptive Sports Fund will be trying out Adaptive Mountain Biking on 25 April 2026. Visit their Facebook page for more information or contact them at info@adaptivesportsfund.org.

WHEELCHAIR RUGBY CHAMPIONSHIP

23 May to 1 June 2026

The South African Wheelchair Rugby team will be competing in the European Division B Championship taking place in Zaragoza, Spain, with the aim of advancing further and qualifying for the Paralympic Games.

ADAPTIVE 4X4ING

13 June 2026

The Adaptive Sports Fund will be trying out Adaptive 4x4ing on 13 June 2026. Visit their Facebook page for more information or contact them at info@adaptivesportsfund.org.

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