

PRESS RELEASE FOR ILIVESAFE
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
ISSUED BY OXIGEN COMMUNICATIONS
DATE: 19th JANUARY, 2015

TITLE: *Trauma in sport: The Professionals Speak*

As South Africans, we value our sporting culture. We have fought with blood, sweat and tears for everything which we have achieved on the sports field – in particular over the last 20 years - and the world considers us serious contenders especially when it comes to disciplines such as cricket, rugby, swimming and athletics. Any avid sports fan will tell you how often they have witnessed, from the comfort of their couches, how sportsmen and women physically put their bodies on the line. What actually happens on the sports field in a moment of crisis is another thing altogether, and due to the serious nature of sports induced injuries, paramedics often don't have very long to act in the event of such emergencies.

“Following the tragedy of Australian cricketer Phillip Hughes' death on the cricket field in November, followed shortly by the accidental death of Israeli cricket umpire Hillel Oscar, the spotlight has been placed firmly on injuries in sport,” says Pierre Spies, Springbok, Bulls eighth-man and *iLiveSafe* Brand Ambassador. “As a professional sportsman, I've had firsthand experience with injuries on the field and let me tell you – there is nothing glamorous about it. In that moment, you think about life and death and you completely place your trust in those around

you.”

The problem with injuries on the sports field is that they can progress from being moderately serious, to critical, in a matter of minutes. This can be attributed to the fact that the paramedics who are next to the field are often in the dark regarding the athlete’s crucial medical information such as blood type, allergies and medical history and they have to source this information in order for them to take control of the injury and stabilise the patient as soon as possible. It is also up to the paramedics to liaise with the nearest hospital and communicate the necessary information with them should the injured sportsman require further medical attention.

“About ten years ago, I witnessed how a young man in the prime of his life got kicked in the head during a school rugby match and sadly died later that same night in ICU,” comments Hugo Minnaar, Paramedic and Chief Executive Officer of IMS (International Medical Services). “As soon as the incident occurred, myself and my wife, as the paramedics on duty, rushed to the young man’s side to find him confused and vomiting and he rapidly deteriorated on the field, so we had to start artificial breathing on him.

The boys’ parents were there, but they were hysterical. I can still remember the questions I asked his mother and she only looked me in the eyes with no answers, simply overcome by shock and fear.”

Hugo and his team immediately packaged the injured boy and started emergency transportation to the Montana hospital where they had a trauma team anticipating their arrival. Sadly the young man

didn't survive the injury...and sadly he is not an isolated case in Hugo's career either.

"I have witnessed far too many fatal injuries in my life," he says. "And I do believe that if more sportsmen and women made use of a rapid identification system such as the one *iLiveSafe* has on offer, more tragedies would be avoided in the long run."

iLiveSafe's yellow armband is very easy for paramedics to identify and figure out. Within seconds of an injury, they could have access to an *iLiveSafe* members' unique number and they could get his entire medical history and medical aid details from the *iLiveSafe* contact centre. This is especially crucial in circumstances where the parents and friends of the injured are too traumatised to talk – the armband will become their lifeline and their voice.

"I think we have reached a point where we seriously need to re-evaluate the way we approach injuries in sport – the prevention and treatment thereof," concludes Pierre. "We need to give every sportsman and woman – starting on a school level and carrying straight through to university level and the professionals - the opportunity to enjoy what they do, while resting assured that they will be given the best care should an injury occur."

For more information on the iLiveSafe range of service offerings, please visit www.ilivesafe.co.za or send an email to marketing@ilivesafe.co.za. You can also follow the company on Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn where you will stay up to date and informed on everything from family to personal safety.

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Photo Caption: *iLiveSafe brand ambassador Pierre Spies wearing his armband during a training session, preparing for the 2015 Superugby season.* **Photographer:** Johan Reynders

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