

ACCIDENT FORENSICS

By Nichole Landwehr



Stan Bezuidenhout and Jackie Smith got involved with Forensic Reconstruction and Investigation while in Canada between 1990-2000. Since returning to Cape Town in 2000 they have investigated over 4 500 accidents for private individuals, corporate entities, SAPS, Fire, METRO Ambulance and Traffic Departments, Netcare 911, ER 24, Insurance Companies, the Road Accident Fund, Rental Companies, National Groups as well as Provincial and National Government. Stan and Jackie have appeared on e-tv, in Popular Mechanics and numerous local, regional and national publications. The team investigates accidents in nearly all provinces across South Africa with the help of the best accident investigation and reconstruction technology in the country.



Cape Town, Friday night, April 8th. A man lies dead (half in - half out of his bakkie) on the West bound lane of Voortrekker Road. Why? Not through any fault of his own. Not even as a result of what you might consider to be normal circumstances of an accident. Rather, 59 year-old Andreas van Wyk has been killed by the sheer stupidity of drivers taking part in an illegal street race. The buzz in Cape Town at the moment is that dicers are getting more involved in illegal racing because they're boycotting Killarney Race track (for a number of reasons that don't make up for the loss of an innocent life). Street races are attended by hundreds of spectators and often rake in as much as R100 000 in prize money. The Voortrekker Rd accident, however, has made many feel that it's just not worth it anymore.

The accident occurred when the dicing drivers lost control and ploughed into oncoming traffic. Both vehicles collided with van Wyk's bakkie, causing his vehicle to be thrown some 25-30m back down the road. When it came to rest, the bakkie's engine was sitting on the front seat of the cab.

Let's take a look at the anatomy of this accident. The IBF generated diagram labelled 1.1 illustrates the events that took place.

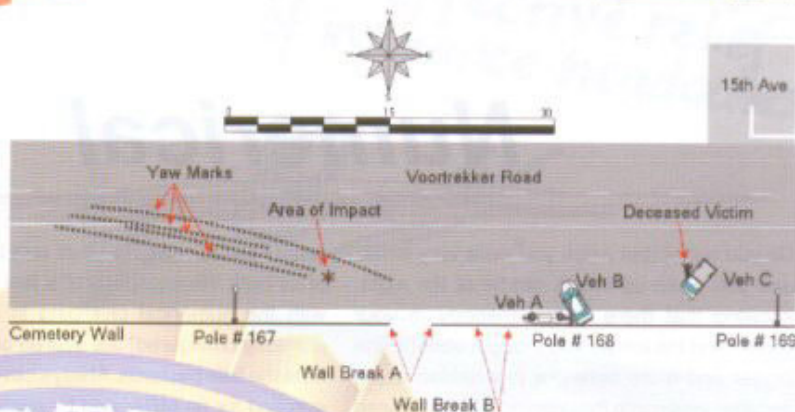
Vehicle A and B were travelling East on Voortrekker Rd, at a speed in excess of 120 Km/h (calculated from yaw marks). This speed is the MINIMUM speed at impact with Vehicle C, AFTER some skidding had occurred further West.

Over a distance of 30m (where the yaw-marks started), the vehicle/s would have initially travelled at a MINIMUM speed of at least 140 Km/h.

Vehicle A and/or B lost control, and started to veer across the road, towards the Southern Side, against the flow of oncoming traffic travelling West, as indicated.

Vehicle C was approaching from the East, travelling West.

1.1



The vehicles (A and B) collided with Vehicle C at the Area of Impact.

Vehicle A then hit the wall (Wall break A), and rotated rapidly, while slapping the wall again (Wall break B), at a higher location.

Vehicle A came to rest with its roof totally crushed, against the wall, as indicated. (1.2)

Vehicle B came to rest, as indicated. (1.3)

Vehicle C was flung back, in an Easterly direction, to where it came to rest. (1.4)

The driver of Vehicle C was flung partially out of the vehicle, as indicated. (1.1)

When you put the photos together with the schematic diagram, it's hard to imagine just how either of the dicers survived.

In an effort to curb such incidents, IBF Investigations (in association with a number of legitimate parties) are currently in the process of implementing Project Handbrake. The initiative seeks to build intelligence about illegal street racing while simultaneously acting as the proverbial 'burr' under the saddle of the participants. A typical bust can involve up to 300 vehicles being catalogued and listed in a database that will soon become available to insurers; a potentially powerful tool. The Voortrekker Rd accident is a good example of how effective the project is; had IBF Investigations not intervened here, the parties involved would have claimed on their insurance. As one of the spectators (who published the following statement on the hondaboys.co.za website under the screen name of *anamorado*) put it: "Your breaks

1.2



1.3



1.4



(sic) fail while dicing at Killarney... maybe you hit a wall... mess your car up... maybe you pass away in the accident! Maybe you just mess the one side of your car up! At Killarney your insurance won't pay up!" If you have any suspicions as to whether or not a claim that comes across your desk may be related to illegal street racing, give Stan Bezuidenhout a call on 083 674 9268 or email stan@ibfinvestigations.com. You can also call Jackie Smith on 073 788 1251.