

Dear Parents

This past weekend (Friday to Sunday) a group of seven staff went to the Cederberg with the prime goal of checking on the water situation and the opening of new routes. I am delighted to say that we are more than happy with the water levels in the mountains – we will not have to do any water drop offs, pools are full and the streams we expected to find water at, are running well. The dam is another story and it will only be on Sunday when we decide if we will water ski or not. Some staff are driving up to look at the situation. Safety is our primary goal in this decision and if we feel we do not have sufficient width of water to ski on and thereby have the potential to drop someone into shallow rocky water, we will not ski – it is just not worth the risk. We are purchasing stand up paddleboards as a backup.

Thank you so much to those of you who have already responded to our plea for craft material or cash to cover the costs of the community work your sons will be involved with. The response has been quite humbling – so thank you so much! The packing of the craft work takes place next week. If any of you are still able to donate, then please continue to do so!

There are three exciting improvement projects your boys will be involved with:

- the laying of a rubber floor in and around the jungle gym at Grootkloof Primary (school next to Jamaka). Groups going there are Krakadouw, Tafelberg and Wolfberg. We're very grateful to Jeremy Stewart of Seamless Flooring for his sponsorship of this project.
- the erection of a jungle gym for Elizabethfontein, donated by the Hooper family. Groups going there are Krakadouw, Apex and Sneeberg.
- the installation of cement paving stones around an outdoor chess board at Elizabethfontein. We've just ordered 250 pavers costing R8000.

SNAKES & REPTILES

Shaun Boddington from the Imhoff Snake and Reptile Park in Noordhoek spoke to the boys this past Thursday. This is his annual visit to Bishops and we have used him for all Epics plus a good number of Adventure Courses (the programme that ran prior to the development of Epic). He gives both a lecture and demonstration of different snakes and what to do, what not to do. I wrote a few points down:

- There are more people killed by human bites (between 70 to 80) in a year than those from snake bites (under 20).
- 99% of those who are bitten and get to medical care survive but 1% don't – due to allergic reactions to the venom.
- A puff adder can bite 2 to 3 times in 1 second. Its venom is cytotoxic.
- The neurotoxic venom from a Cape cobra can kill a person in 20 minutes.
- The haemotoxic venom from a boomslang is the most lethal (1 drop can kill up to 100 cows).
- The venom spat out from a black spitting cobra can go up to 3 metres and if the eye is affected and not washed out thoroughly, a patient will go blind within 20 minutes.
- We need to keep a look out. Puff adders will be on the paths and will not necessarily move away. Highly unlikely that a cobra will wait and a boomslang will only bite if it is seriously pushed to do so!

- Snakes seek heat but **SAFE** heat. It is therefore highly unlikely to impossible that a snake will curl up in your sleeping bag with you in it! It is just too dangerous for itself to do so.
- Venom moves through the lymphatic system so if bitten keep the bitten part below the heart. The lymph system then has to work against gravity to move the venom upwards.
- Don't use tourniquet's, don't suck the venom out (pointless unless you have a special syringe and can do the job in a few minutes of being bitten – 2 to 3% could be taken out this way) and don't panic. Call for immediate medical help.

It was wonderful seeing the boys' reactions. The majority said they feared snakes and our hope is they now respect them. Essentially the snakes have more of a right to be where they are than we do – if we understand how they will respond, there is no good reason why any of our group should be bitten or spat at. Boys will cover snake bites and other emergency situations in the first aid course they complete this coming week.

EPIC SEMINAR

This starts with refreshments at 7.30 am on Monday 6 Nov at the Frank Reid Pavilion. Father Terry and Guy Pearson will open the seminar at 8.00 am. Boys will do a two day first aid course, a half day hike, a back pack check and equipment hand out, they will ride bikes and we cover a wide range of special topics – History, Geology, Our relationship with Nature and Team Building.

We will provide all refreshments (at the start of the day for Mon, Tues, Wed, morning tea time for all days except Thurs and all lunches except Thursday and Friday). I've attached the schedule if you're interested in seeing how it all comes together!

Khaki's with no tie is what we are recommending. Boys must remember that on Friday there is an assembly, so blazers and ties will be needed then.

LETTER FROM DAD (Father figure) – Due Monday 6 Nov

These are due this coming Monday. If you know there is going to be a delay, then please email Liz King (lking@bishops.org.za) to make alternative arrangements. She will be asking house directors to follow up on those who have not yet done this.

BACK PACK CHECK – Wednesday 8 Nov

This is happening on Wednesday. All boys to bring their packed bags (including the first hike food) to school on Wednesday. Leave the bag in the room where you will be meeting during open period and lesson 5. The list of venues is attached.

PRACTICE HIKE – Thursday 9 Nov

Meet at 0715 – venues to be announced. Remember to wear your boots, a wide brimmed sun hat, bring some snacks, water, sun screen and a warm top. No need to hike with your back pack but a day pack is a good idea. We are hiking regardless of the weather – just as it would be when in the Cederberg!

BLESSING OF BOOTS – Sunday 12 Nov

This takes place in the Memorial Chapel at 6.30 pm. All are invited. Boys wear their boots and Epic tops (if it is not too hot).

Remember that hiking and solo boxes need to be handed in to Phil Court (G2) by Thursday 9 November. Around 30 boys have not yet collected their boxes! This is a job your sons must do.

A gentle reminder that we do not expect to see any parents (particularly dads) in and around the Cederberg area until 2 pm on Tuesday 28 November. The past few years have seen some groups camping or in bungalows at places we frequent. Let your son (and staff for that matter) “be” for the full duration of Epic – rather do this sort of activity at another time, despite the fact that it sounds like such a good plan!

Kind regards

Graham