



Hoërskool Helpmekaar



FOUNDED: 1921
MOTTO: KOMAAAN (COME ON)
ADDRESS: MELLE STREET,
 CNR EMPIRE ROAD & JAN SMUTS
 AVENUE, BRAAMFONTEIN,
 WWW.HELPMEKAAR.CO.ZA



School History

In the 1920s, Afrikaans was fighting for recognition and those who spoke it no longer want Dutch as the language of instruction. They wanted Afrikaans recognised. This battle for recognition started in Paarl in the last quarter of the 19th century, but gathered momentum after the formation of the Union of South Africa in 1910. In 1914 Afrikaans was acknowledged as a medium of teaching and in 1925 it received recognition as an official language of the country. A year later there was the strike and rebellion in the old Transvaal. After this an organisation was founded to enable Afrikaners to help each other. It was called Helpmekaar. In 1921 a school was founded in prefab buildings in Braamfontein. The governing body wanted a name and

settled on Helpmekaar. The Transvaal Education Department was not initially in favour of the name, but eventually allowed it — an Afrikaans school with an Afrikaans name and an Afrikaans motto.

In 1925 stately permanent buildings were erected, which were declared a National Monument 60 years later. The prime minister, JBM Hertzog, laid the foundation stone on 19 September 1925. The motto adopted was just one word: *Komaaan* (Come on), the title of a poem by Jan F Cilliers. It fitted with Helpmekaar — Come on, help one another. The school's colours, chocolate brown and old gold, were chosen in consultation with the pupils. In 1941 the school split into a boys' school and a girls' school, and the Helpmekaars became influential in Johannesburg.

In 1992 Helpmekaar became the first Afrikaans private school in South Africa, and Hoërskool Helpmekaar became Helpmekaar College, a coeducational school with about 600 pupils. The changeover to a private school naturally took courage and effort, but the principal of the day, KS Konig, has rebuilt the school to its current heights.

Helpmekaar has two boarding hostels, which have room for about 70 boarders. It has three houses, named after the streets around the school — Empire, Melle and Smuts. Three famous Helpies past pupils in different walks of life are Mimi Coertse (the famous opera singer), Marius Kloppers (the CEO of BHP Billiton, the world's biggest mining group) and the actor-rugby player Deon Coetzee.

Rugby at Helpmekaar

From its very beginnings rugby has played an important role at the school. The school has about 380 boys and puts 12 teams into the field. Four Springboks are associated with the school — two as staff members and two as pupils. Fien Olivier, who toured Australia and New Zealand in 1921, was a member of staff before going on to be the principal of the school in Kensington. Piet Malan, who played on the flank against the 1949 All Blacks, was for many years on the staff at Helpmekaar. While he was on the staff, in 1964, he was the man who proposed the founding of the Craven Week as part of the 75th anniversary celebrations of the founding of the South African Rugby Board. The man who picked up the idea and ran with it was Jan Preuyt, an East London schoolmaster, once a missionary in Nigeria. Malan had a remarkable record for Transvaal. He played for them for four seasons (1947–51) and captained them for two, was president of Diggers in its glory years, was chairman of Transvaal schools, and, coached the first Transvaal team to the first Craven Week. In 2008, at 89 years of age, Malan is the oldest living Springbok. His grandson, Ernst Joubert, is the captain of the Lions.

The Old Boy Springboks are Franz van der Ryst (who toured the UK, Ireland and France with the great 1951/52 Springboks) and Thys Burger (who played as a loose forward in 1980/81). The actor Deon Coetzee played on the wing for three provinces in his time — Transvaal, Northern Transvaal and Orange Free State. The most prominent of current players is the strong Lions hooker Willie Wepener.



Agterste Ry / Back Row: J.N. Claassen C.M. Jamieson **D. Coetzee** K. Erlank J.
Stoande / Standing: F. Pretorius P. Sonnekus H. Venske R. Joubert I. Sadie C.
Sitende / Seated: B.F. van der Merwe Mr/Mr J. Preuyt (Bestuurder/Manager) D.R. La M

In its heyday Helpmekaar had great battles with Fakkell and Linden, schools also affected by the population shift in Johannesburg. To win the Administrator's Cup, which was open to all schools in the Transvaal was a great achievement. Helpmekaar won it in 1938, 1962 and 1975. It still competes in the competition, now called the Beeld Trophy. As a private school it takes part in the Private Schools Rugby Festival every two years, and every year its "A" teams go on tour.

Several Helpies have been to Craven Week. The most recent has been prop Werner Engelbrecht in 2007. Four players have been chosen for SA Schools since 1974: Willie Oosthuizen (1976, who captained that side), Pikkie van der Merwe (1978), Deon Coetzee (1979) and Jan Bosch (1991). Thys Burger was at the 1972 Craven Week and Werner Engelbrecht represented the school there in 2007. The 2007 side has probably been the best in recent times. They reached the semi-finals of the Beeld Trophy for big schools. They beat St John's 29-21 in a thriller and had big wins over Parktown, Dinamika, Randburg, Hans Strydom, Potchefstroom Volkies and Tech, Uitsig and Wesvalia. Only one game was lost that year and Werner "Chubby" Engelbrecht was the star of the side, having played over 50 games for the First XV at prop. He is now contracted at Pukke and Helpies Master-in-Charge of rugby, Eugene Marais, believes he is one who will go all the way.

Helpmekaar continues to be a leader in Afrikaans private education as well as on the rugby field. The current coach of the First XV is Gert Lindeque, the former Transvaal centre.

Internationals

South Africa:
Frans van der Ryst

"When I was at Helpmekaar, it was one of Johannesburg's top rugby schools, competing with Monument and Affies. There were over 800 boys when I was at the school. Since the school has gone private there has been a bit of a rebuilding phase, and of course it will take some time to grow and adjust. But it has done really well, and has maintained many of the traditions that have been around for a long time, which is so important to a school's foundation.

Being a good rugby school certainly helped my future, as well the high standard of coaching that the school offered. Hans du Bruyn, who is still involved with Craven Week sides, was my coach at the time."

**— Cheese van Tonder
(1983, Transvaal and Free State)**

"Helpmekaar has plenty of good tradition. The coveted 'bruintruie' is worn by First XV members only. Our other teams play in a white jersey. There are specific traditions when warming up and the song before the start of the game is special. And then, as coaches, we are trying to instill a more attractive style of running rugby at the school."

**— Eugene Marais
(First XV coach)**