



## The SA Army Young Lions Youth Development System

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**O**n Sunday, 12 December 2010, a group of 52 learners from five schools in the Cape Peninsula embarked on the adventure of a lifetime. As part of the South African Army's Young Lions Youth Development Programme (YLYDP), they travelled to Verkeerdevlei Military Training Area north of Touwsrivier to participate in a week-long summer camp, which ended Sunday, 19 December 2010.

The YLYDP is the most recent youth development programme operated by the South African National Defence Force; others include the Young Falcons (South African Air Force), the Navy Sea Cadets (South African Navy), and the University Reserve Training Programme (URTP). The Young Lions programme was initiated in 2009, and rolled out in 2010. The first intake of students was taken on an outing to the African Aerospace and Defence 2010 exhibition, which took place at Ysterplaat Air Force Base in September.

The programme targets learners in Grades 9, up to the age of 18 years, who have a sense of adventure and who wish to be exposed to the South African Army environment. They remain in the programme until Grade 11 (in Grade 12, they focus on completing their matriculation). Schools in previously disadvantaged areas near Fort iKapa, such as Langa, Bonteheuwel and Du Noon, have been approached, in accordance with the demographics of the country.

Only learners who are good at school and who have no failing grades are accepted into the programme. As the focus is on leadership development, the headmasters and teachers assist in the selection process. They have to ensure that students will be able to cope with the additional demands of participating in the YLYDP. Students are encouraged to study Mathematics, Science and Geography, as these skills in particular are needed in the military. In addition,





they must be South African citizens, may not have a criminal record, and must be medically fit according to medical standards.

Enrolment is voluntary, but they are required to participate in regular training, which includes one weekend a month (Friday afternoon to Sunday afternoon), and one 10-day camp during the holidays. Failure to attend two or more consecutive training sessions, or behaviour unbecoming to a military student according to the strict code of conduct, or a change in medical category that affects their participation, leads to expulsion from the programme.

Once the learners have been assessed and accepted into the programme, they undergo up to three years of training in a variety of subjects and skills. They develop their military skills and become better and more responsible citizens. They wear uniforms with specific insignia, the South African flag on the left sleeve, a nametag on the right breast pocket, and a rank that identifies them as a cub lion, young lion, junior young lion and senior young lion.

They receive proficiency badges for specific skills in subjects that includes; community service, communication, drill, military skills, first aid, fire fighting, physical competence and fitness, completion of two years service and completion of three years. Outstanding

performance in specific subjects is rewarded by certificates.

During the course of the programme, potential candidates for the Military Skills Development System (MSDS) are identified and recruited. Candidates who undergo training at a specific Reserve unit (in this case, the Dukes) establish a strong link to such a unit. They are more likely to join the unit when their MSDS service is completed.

The objectives of the Young Lions Youth Development System are the following:

- Contributing towards nation building by fostering a sense of patriotism towards the RSA and creating proud and loyal citizens of the country;
- Creating awareness of the role, purpose and function of the SANDF;
- Exposing students to a military environment and culture, and instilling discipline;
- Encouraging a sense of adventure, strengthening self esteem and creating a sense of achievement. Encouraging team building and developing individual capabilities, while having an enjoyable and exciting experience. Students are, exposed to route marches, field craft, the leadership training range, paintball shooting, a parachute facility, abseiling, obstacle crossing, climbing walls, and simulation.





- Teaching students about humanitarian aid, animal and environmental awareness, community service, and promoting active participation in such projects;
- Creating sound values, a positive attitude and a healthy lifestyle, and nurturing students' emotional and intellectual awareness, together with their physical and psychological fitness;
- Cultivating their personal character and skills, and encouraging them to use their talents to their full potential;
- Developing basic military skills, for easy transition into the MSDS, this includes map reading, musketry, field craft, drill, and buddy aid;
- Improving their confidence and communication skills by participating in group discussions and inter-group activities;
- Stimulating an interest in science, maths and geography;
- Educating students with regards to the SANDF Reserve System. Consequently, when they complete their 2 years of MSDS, they will know what is expected of them and which Reserve unit they would like to join, and if selected for Regular Force, they will have a better understanding of the Reserves, which too can only benefit the Reserves.

The camp was held under the auspices of the Cape Town Rifles (CTR), also known as the Dukes, a

Reserve regiment based at Fort iKapa in Goodwood, Cape Town. Three other Infantry Reserve units are currently involved in the YLYDP, namely, Regiment De La Rey (RDLR) in Potchefstroom, the South African Irish Regiment (SAIR) in Johannesburg and First City (FC) in Grahamstown. It is envisaged that two additional units, Durban Regiment (DR) and Kimberley Regiment (KR), will join the programme in this year.

The learners, accompanied by their parents, arrived at the CTR headquarters on the Sunday morning and met with their instructors. One by one, they handed in their documentation that included their medical and indemnity forms, and signed in at the main hangar. Here their metal trunks (or "trommel") containing all their kit as well as their brand-new uniforms with nametags were neatly lined up in three rows. Once all the students had formally registered, they were welcomed by Captain John Ecclestone, and instructed to change into their brand new uniforms. The supervising corporals and sergeant majors of the Dukes ensured that the youngsters' clothes fitted properly, that the buttons were aligned down the middle in line with the belt, and that their boots were laced correctly.

Accompanied by their families, they returned to the main hangar for a final briefing by Capt Ecclestone. He praised them for looking so neat in their uniforms, and remarked that the parents





could already see a positive change. He reassured them that their children would be looked after well and promised that they will return home much fitter and stronger, equipped with new skills.

After a formal group photo with the instructors and the officers and all their equipment was stowed away, the members climbed aboard the bus for the trip Touwsriver. A full and exciting programme of activities was scheduled for their week at the Touwsrivier Training Area. The group was divided into two platoons and a platoon leader was allocated for each platoon, as this is the management structure used by the Defence Force when managing a company. Platoon leaders and instructors were selected prior to the start of the course, and underwent cadre training. Training took place both collectively and individually. Working within platoons encourages teamwork and competition.

Their days started early, with reveille at 05h30, followed by roll call and breakfast. Regular inspections were conducted of the sleeping quarters. The inspections improved during the course of the week. Working as a group was encouraged, and when needed corrective actions were done with the whole group and not one specific individual. This created stronger bonds within the platoons, which in turn improved the teamwork. Physical training was

used to improve discipline, and to promote the added advantage of improving their general fitness and physique. All disciplinary actions acted as structured corrective training in order to alter the individual's discipline.

Early mornings were taken up with marching and drilling. This helped with the developing of their physical co-ordination and stamina, as well as discipline and teamwork: "The object of drill is to develop, in the individual soldier, that sense of instinctive obedience that will assist him, at all times, to carry out his orders. That the foundation of discipline is based on drill has been proved over and over again." (Source: Drill All Arms Précis Infantry Formation).

There were daily field craft training consisting of theoretical lectures and practical sessions. Other lectures included personal hygiene, safety, an introduction to military culture and the military code of conduct, visual training, elementary observation, camouflage and concealment, first aid and buddy-aid.

Buddy-aid is utilised to be the first line of medical treatment available to the soldier in the field, and teaching them the use of buddy-aid is not only for use in a military environment, but also for personal use within their communities.

Other lessons included communication, and





environmental matters. The use of tools to communicate is very useful, as technology plays a vital role in today's world. Although these were introductory lectures, they will learn more detail as their training progresses. Environmental matters are always an integral part of training and they are taught how to maintain personal hygiene in the field. A particularly important part of survival in the field is obtaining potable water; by properly caring for the environment in bases in the field and whilst living in the field, a sustainable water source can be ensured.

They were also taught the basics of reading topographic maps, identifying terrain and determining coordinates. Learning about the environment through map work, geography and living in the field is extremely valuable for survival. Knowledge of one's country as well as other countries is very useful, not only to soldiers, but also to all. Knowing the geography of your country is helpful in promoting your country. Furthermore, as a soldier, knowing where to get resources and knowing the lay of the land before going into an area is of value. Map reading is vital to many walks of life today – for pilots and sailors, as well as in land surveying, cartography and military applications.

The members were taught how to set up a camp, and participated in team-based leadership training exercises. Setting up a base in the field

or going camping, activities that are tied in closely with environmental aspects, needs to be planned. Planning is part of leadership development and of being a leader. Moreover, learning organisational skills, in the often stressful and fast-paced world of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, is important for future success in many careers and areas of life. Leadership development forms part of the future topics covered in training.

Each of the students kept a diary for the duration of the camp. The dairies formed part of the overall evaluation and were handed in after completion of the camp. The Company Commander and the Company Sergeant Major read the dairies and commented in writing. The members will receive the comments the next time they attend training. The dairies gave the instructors insight into the thoughts of the students, and will help with improvements to the programme. Another objective of this was to see how the instructors can help the students in the writing process, as well as in the planning of further communication lessons. They will be taught basic Conventions of Service Writing (CSW), which will develop them with gathering their thoughts and putting these onto paper. In addition, this will also help them with writing at school.

Their conduct, neatness and fitness levels were assessed on a continuous basis, and the natural





leaders were identified and encouraged to adopt leader roles. There was also a night exercise, in which they were taken to the field before sunset and shown the lie of the land before nightfall. Their objective was to crawl up to a siren and 'Capture the Flag' without being observed by the instructors – an exercise that was thoroughly enjoyed by all.

Heavy rain on the Thursday disrupted the programme, and the instructors opted to do indoor activities instead. The members were taught how to pack and carry equipment for trekking, backpacking or going to the field with kit.

In addition to the formal learning activities, they also played sports, such as volleyball, mini cricket and soccer. The platoons competed against each other. Sport and relaxation is very important in the development of the members.

At the braai on the Saturday night, both the students and their instructors had a wonderful and relaxing time. For many of the students it was a first attempt to braai their own meat, and with much humour, they quickly learned how it was done. They then treated their instructors to some very entertaining performances, which included singing and dancing routines. While the boys showed up with a well-rehearsed song and impressive harmonies, the girls acted out a Christmas story, which – given the season – was

very appropriate. Throughout, they displayed a great sense of camaraderie.

The passing out parade, which was held at Fort iKapa on Sunday 19 December 2010, was attended by the parents with Brigadier General (Brig Gen) Les Fouché as the dignitary. The two platoons proudly displayed their marching skills to their admiring families and friends, impressing all the visitors and guests with their increased levels of self-confidence, personal neatness and teamwork. Brig Gen Fouché praised the Young Lions for having completed the summer camp. Trophies in recognition of best achievements were presented to Cadets Booyesen (Field Craft), Le Roux (Best Overall Student) and Pietersen (Neatest Student).

Very positive feedback was received from the participating schools after the students had returned from the summer camp.

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