



HERO OF THE MONTH

At the age of 21, volunteer rescue swimmer Robin Fortuin saved six people from drowning in the rip currents at Monwabisi Beach near Cape Town. For his bravery, he was named winner of Centrum Guardians, a cause marketing campaign that seeks to honour the men and women of South Africa's emergency and rescue services.

FORTUIN

FAVOURS THE BRAVE

BY EUGENE YIGA



IMAGE SOURCE: CENTRUM GUARDIAN

WHAT HAPPENED AT THE RESCUE FROM DECEMBER 2013?

It was a normal day. Senior Coxswain Vaughn Seconds and I decided to take a patrol. We had strong rip tides. I told Vaughn to stop. I saw some people in the water who might be in difficulty. I just had my wetsuit on and the rescue torpedo buoy with me. I got to the first guy. As soon as I could stand in the surf, I gave him a push and let the wave take him out. I immediately went back for the next one. And then I went back for the third one. My body was physically exhausted.

WHAT HAPPENED WHEN YOU REALISED THERE WERE FOUR MORE PEOPLE IN THE WATER?

I told Vaughn I would go back. I pushed my body to limits that I never knew I had. All of a sudden, the swell picked up from two metres to about four or five metres. Our boat suffered some damage. I swam out to the first three and got them out. I could see the seventh guy, but he was just in the current going a little bit faster than I could swim. He looked me straight dead in my eyes and he shook his head. And I shouted, 'No, just hold on!' I tried to go under. The water was so murky I couldn't see anything. That was the last I saw of him. If it wasn't for my torpedo buoy, I probably would have drowned myself.

HOW DO YOU FEEL ABOUT BEING VOTED AS CENTRUM GUARDIAN OF THE YEAR?

I'm extremely proud. It's a huge achievement in my life. I want to say a big thank you to my station and to all my seniors and crew who helped train and get me to the point where I am today. I did the rescue with their help and with years of experience put into me. It just shows that the training that was put into me actually paid off in a big way. It doesn't matter where you come from. Anyone can be a hero.

1 DECEMBER 2013 THE NATIONAL SEA RESCUE INSTITUTE (NSRI) STRANDFONTEIN VOLUNTEER SEA RESCUE DUTY CREW SPOTTED A NUMBER OF SWIMMERS CAUGHT IN A RIP CURRENT AT MONWABISI BEACH. WITH ITS DANGEROUS RIP CURRENTS AND VIOLENT SWELLS, THE SWIMMERS HAD TO BE RESCUED IMMEDIATELY IF THEY WERE TO SURVIVE. WHAT FOLLOWED NEXT IS NORMALLY ONLY SEEN IN HOLLYWOOD BLOCKBUSTERS, EVEN FOR RESCUE SWIMMER, ROBIN FORTUIN.