

## 14 DRIVERS IN THE FIGHT FOR THE SA ENDURANCE CHAMPIONSHIP AT KILLARNEY 9-HOUR

### Preview: SA Endurance Championship Round 7

#### Killarney International Raceway, 9 - 10 December

- Top two SA Endurance drivers separated by two points on overall championship table
- Index of Performance title contested by 12 drivers
- Classes A, C, D and E titles up for grabs
- Southern African Endurance Series hosts biggest 43-car field in the history of the Killarney 9 Hour
- Six Le Mans 24 Hour, three Daytona 24 Hour, three Petit Le Mans, a 24-Hour Nürburgring, Kyalami 9 Hour and two Sebring 12 Hour victors on the grid
- Two ex-Formula One drivers on starting grid
- Nine artist line-up for the largest motorsport music festival in South Africa

After 2 923.42km and 940 laps of hard racing around the country, and with double points on offer at Killarney, the SA Endurance Championship has no less than 14 drivers in the hunt for the overall title after the organizers Southern African Endurance Series streamlined the classes to produce closer racing.

It can't get much closer for the top two drivers, Kwanda Mokoena and Hein Lategan heading the points log just two points apart! With six championships at stake, fans can look forward to some frenetic racing with a stellar line-up of international drivers joining in the fun.

Kwanda Mokoena heads the title race by two points from Hein Lategan with Tschops Sipuka in third spot a further nine points back. 18-year-old Mokoena has raced his Amandla Coal/MJR Motorsport Audi GT4 to two victories, one second and two third place results while Lategan (BBR Racing Porsche 911 GT3 Cup) boasts one victory, three second places and a third to his name. Sipuka shared the Audi with nephew Mokoena from round three onwards but uncle and nephew go to different teams this time out and will again be rivals vying for the title.

All three leading contenders have upped the ante for the season finale showdown; Mokoena will make his GT3 debut in an Amandla Coal/MJR Motorsport Audi R8 GT3 Evo2 and will be joined by 22-year-old Andrew Rackstraw (also debuting in the class) and Dennis Marschall, an Audi GT3 factory driver with vast Audi R8 experience.

Lategan will be joined by his usual co-driver Verissimo Tavares and son Henk, a double SA Rally Raid Champion and Dakar stage winner; the younger Lategan proved his mettle on the black stuff in East London earlier this year.

Sipuka joins the Into Africa Mining/Africa Race Together Lamborghini Huracan GT3 Evo squad with Stuart White and Xolile Letlaka. White raced Lambos all year in the Fanatec GT Challenge Europe series, claiming third in Silver Class in his first year abroad and is fearsomely fast in anything with four wheels.

Nine Backdraft Class E teams are in with a mathematical chance of the title, as is Michael Stephen and Nick Adcock.

The prestigious Index of performance Championship has 12 drivers vying for top honours, nine of whom are Backdraft Roadster teams. Benjamin Morgenrood (Morgenrood Ford and Mazda Backdraft) leads the chase on 212 points from Barend/Harm Pretorius (Team Pesty Backdraft). Sipuka is fourth, four points ahead of Mokoena followed by veteran saloon car champion Ben Morgenrood.

Whatever the championship permutations, teams still have to drop their worst score of the year, adding a further dimension to the final outcome of the various battles.

### **Class A Entries:**

The overall winner should come from the 12-car Class A field, the largest of the year.

Lategan/Tavares/Lategan, Mokoena/Marschall/Rackstraw and Sipuka/White/Letlaka will all fight it out in the top class.

They will come up against the trio of Team Africa Le Mans Ginetta G55 GT3s, the first driven by five times Le Mans 24-hour winner Emanuele Pirro and his sons Cris and Goffredo.

Pirro Sr raced in Formula One for Benneton in 1989 and Dallara in 1990/91, won the Italian and German Touring car championships before becoming a factory Audi works driver for the German brand's Le Mans campaign. Cris is a performance engineer at Alfa F1 while "Goofy" is a graduate of the prestigious Cranfield engineering school and currently works in the Italian F3 championship.

The second Nissan 4.3l 8-cylinder Ginetta will be driven by Anthony Reid, a well-known Ford and Nissan driver in the British Touring Car Championship and Le Mans podium finisher. Reid teams up with multiple V8 and Production Car Champion Hennie Groenewald and Murray Shepherd, who has extensive experience in a variety of different cars ranging from historics to tin-tops and slicks and wings machinery.

The third Ginetta, powered by a 3.7l Ford motor, features a four-man team of former F1 driver Jan Lammers, Sarel van der Merwe, Western Province Motor Club President Greg Mills and Chairman Tim Reddell.

Lammers' racing career includes 41 Grands Prix racing for Shadow, ATS, Ensign, Theodore and March. He also took part in 24 Le Mans 24-Hour races, famously claiming Jaguar's first victory in 31 years in 1988. The Hollander was twice World Sports Car Champion and his most recent Le Mans outing was in 2019, sharing a car with Mills. He is currently the Sporting Director of the Dutch Grand Prix.

"Supervan" as Sarel is fondly known to his fans, won 11 South African Rally Championships, raced in the IMSA championship and at Le Mans, with a best finish of third in a Porsche 956 in 1984.

Another trio of South African drivers with international experience, Mikael Pitamber has teamed up with Gavin Cronje and Nick Adcock in their Aidcall247/Autolift/Rico Barlow Racing Ligier JS53 Evo Honda.

Pitamber raced in the DTM Trophy this year after his outright victory in the opening round of the SA Endurance series. Adcock raced a Ligier LMP3 car in the European Le Mans series, finishing fourth in the standings. Cronje competed in such series as Euroseries 3000 and the Formula Renault 3.5 Series. He won the inaugural Formula Volkswagen South Africa Championship in 2008 with Morgado Racing. He was runner-up in the 2009 Formula Le Mans Cup season.

An interesting entry is the V8 Ford Mustang of Julian Familiaris, Franco di Matteo and Warren Lombard from the Mobil V8 series. The trio finished second, third and sixth in this year's championship respectively. The Mustang has required 23 modifications to convert it from a sprint car to an endurance car, including a larger 110l fuel tank, cooling for the fuel, differential, oil and aircon for the drivers. Headlights, indicators, quick fuel filler, quick lift jacks and a host of other changes have been made.

SAGT driver Mo Mia has teamed up with Lee Thompson in the Toys-R-Us Porsche 911 GT3. Mia claimed a third place with Mokoena in Port Elizabeth back in May, while Thompson has won in everything he raced from Formula Vee through all the saloon car categories.

Francis Carruthers and Steve Humble have entered a Nissan V6-powered PilbeamMP84 LMP2-spec car under the Harp Motorsport banner. The car has a chequered history, having been a works car in the USA and was owned by AC/DC lead singer Brian Johnson. Humble won the Endurance championship in 2014 and won the first ever Killarney 9 Hour. Carruthers has raced for 11years and currently holds the King of Killarney title.

Dolphin Engineering has entered a Nissan 3.2l powered Juno SS3 driven by Peter van der Spuy, Byron Mitchell, a top contender in Formula Libre where he races a Formula VW single seater and is a top sim racer having won the 2022 Champion MSA IRacing GTE series; Sean Moore is a competitor in the Master V8 series.

Rounding out the Class A entry is the all-Maputo team of Sergio Alvares, Cristian Bouche, Paul Del Re and Rufino Fontes in a Toyota Altezza, powered by a 4.3l Lexus V8 motor.

### **Class D Entries:**

No less than 13 modified saloons have entered class D. The championship is headed by David and Roberto Franco and Danie Van Niekerk in their Graphix Supply World Volkswagen Polo SupaCup. The Cape Town trio have missed a few races but are comfortably ahead of their rivals Karah Hill (Kalex VW Polo SupaCup) and Christopher/Anthony Pretorius (Bucketlist Racing VW Polo SupaCup).

For this round, Hill has teamed up with none other than Michael Stephen and regular Polo Cup racer Jurie Swart, while Heinz Bose joins the Pretorius siblings who finished a remarkable fourth overall at the opening round at Red Star. This time out, the Pretorius boys will be in a BMW 340i.

Mike McLoughlin/Steve Clark are the big guns in their Backdraft Slingshot2 powered by a 7l Chevvy motor. The duo has a second and a pair of fourth overall finishes to their name so far.

Pieter Zeelie, well-known for his exploits in his outrageous Toyota MR2 at the Simola Hillclimb, is joined by Johan de Beer and Rob Clark in another Bucketlist Racing VW Polo SupaCup.

VW Motorsport has entered their two stalwart drivers Daniel Rowe and Keagan Masters in their Polo SupaCup. Rowe won the GTC2 championship in 2016 while Masters took the overall GTC title in 2019 and know how to pedal Volkswagen very quickly.

Mike Verrier has joined up with Polo Cup teenage hotshot Tate Bishop who finished fifth in the championship this year and 17-year-oldr Kai Van Zyl who races in the Cape GTi Challenge; the trio are debuting the former Johan Fourie Volkswagen Golf production car, suitably modified for endurance racing by Nian du Toit with backing coming from AidCall 24/7. Verrier is a well-known Cape racer in the Sports and GT series as well as the Knysna Hillclimb, where he races a mildly modified Shelby CanAm-Nissan.

Mohamed Dangor/Kishoor Pitamber return with their new Creative Ink VW Polo SupaCup, painted in "surprise orange" which makes it hard to miss. The car made a shaky debut last time out but much development work undertaken by the team has made the car a real contender.

Ricky, Jimmy and Gianni Giannoccaro team up with Ant Blunden in a near-standard G+H Transport Mazda MX-5. The Giannoccaro trio are well known racers of more powerful exotic cars in the G+H Sprint series and their downgrade to a lesser-powered car will be watch with interest.

Sam and sons Damien and Nathan Hammond will be out in their Trinity Protection Services VW Polo SupaCup; a massive accident to both cars in the opening SupaCup race forced them to miss several rounds so they will be looking to end their year on a high note.

A pair of Toyota Yaris GR Cup cars will make their Endurance debut piloted by the media members who competed in the Toyota Gazoo Club Championship. Title winner Ashley Oldfield teams up with fellow journo Thomas Falkner (2<sup>nd</sup>), Mark Jones (4<sup>th</sup>) and Jeanette Kok Kritzing (5<sup>th</sup>) in the #33 Yaris while Toyota executives Leon Theron, Anand Pather, Mario de Sousa share their #95 Yaris with journalist Sean Nurse who ended 3<sup>rd</sup> in the Yaris Cup title standings.

Rounding out the Class D entries is the Four Brits and a Bok foursome of Craig Rapp, Robi Bernberg, Adam Richardson and Paul Ugo in a BMW 328 turbo.

### **Class E Entries:**

The fiercely fought Index of Performance Championship is headed by Benjamin Morgenrood who will be joined by his father Ben who has won just about everything in SA saloon car racing and brother Crisjan.

Their Ben Morgenrood Ford and Mazda-entered Backdraft-Lexus leads the Class E battle by 18 points from the Team Pesty (named after a family pet ostrich) father and son duo of Harm and Barend Pretorius, who won last time out with a solid fourth place overall result. While Morgenrood has finished every race and has to drop a worst score to date of 27 points, the Pretorius' can drop a zero for a non-finish, leaving the Pesty Backdraft in the pound seats.

Baphumze Rubuluza/Fikile Holomisa (Team Qhubani Backdraft) are tied for fifth in the class battle having been a model of reliability until round six and will be joined by Xolela Njumbunxa as a third driver for the 9-hour.

Phillip Meyer/Mark Harvey and Dean Wolson return to the fray after missing the last round, electing to rebuild their Pple group/Adapt Backdraft ahead of the 9 hour and in preparation for the 2023 season.

Mark Owens, Trevor Graham and Richard van Heerde join forces in a Backdraft-Lexus who will face off with Meredith Wills, Michael Gaines, former off-road class D champion Manfred Schroder and Reg Sutton in another Backdraft Roadster.

An interesting entry is the Italian duo of Gianmaria Gabbiani and Alberto Huober, who will be joined by Mags Govender. Gabbiani has raced go-karts, single-seaters, touring cars and stock cars and won a Class One World Powerboat Championship and scored two Endurance Powerboat World Championships. Huober is a classic car restorer and dealer and has also raced powerboats.

Wayne Lotter and Belgotex CFO Steve Truter add a further Backdraft and the race-within-a race will be watched with interest.

Ranged against the fleet of Backdrafts is the nimble Xena Chemicals Nash-Volkswagen of Andre Horne and Gerald Buys. Horne sat out most of the season as he re-built his car and is raring to show the bigger cars a thing or two. Jacques Smith, Maputo-based Paulo Ellison and Brian Reed add variety to the class with their BMW E36.

### **One-Hour Dash entries**

Eight teams have signed up for the One-Hour Dash, which sees the cars race for the first hour of the 9 hour race.

Mike Verrier will wow the crowds with his Harp-Motorsport-run Shelby CanAm-Nissan V6 before joining his teammates in the Class D VW Golf production car. The Shelby features a sequential gearbox and is the only racing car in South Africa with a DRS-enabled rear wing.

Paul Hill, the outright winner of round five of the Endurance championship, will be out in his wailing Aston Martin Vantage GT3 with SAES co-owner taking part in his brand new Audi R8 LMS GT3 Evo2. This will be Spies' first outing in his new machine as it will be driven by Michael Stephen in the two SAGT races.

Fellow SAGT racers Sun Moodley and Andrew Culbert with both compete in the Dash in their Bigfoot Express Freight Mercedes-AMG GT3s, fresh from their two SAGT outings, the second of which takes place just 75 minutes after the final SAGT race.

Jan-Willem De La Porte is sharing his 1965 Ford Mustang V8 with Arnold Neveling, the latter having raced a wide variety of cars this season, ranging from an Audi R8 GT3, Volkswagen SupaCup and Polo Cup, to a Backdraft Roadster.

Ray Farnham wheels out his Birkin 7-Opel while Andrew Moffett is out in his 1247cc Mazda-rotary-powered Lola T86.

SA Endurance track action gets underway on Thursday with six hours of open practice ahead of the three official practice sessions on Friday at 08:25, 10:05 and 12:35. Qualifying takes place at 14:00.

The Killarney 9-Hour starts with grid formalities at 11:30 ahead of the National Anthem at 12:02. The race gets underway at 12:15

### **SOUNDSTAGE:**

The stellar line-up includes Zonke whose rise to stardom came in 2011 following the release of her third album, Ina Ethe, which was certified double platinum and was nominated at the 18th South African Music Awards. She went on to win six awards including Female Artist of the year in 2016.

Watershed is a multi-platinum selling band who have released five studio albums so far, along with a greatest hits album during their 20 year career. They have received two SAMA awards for best pop album and are also multiple winners of SA's best band award by People Magazine.

Cape Town's own award-winning, chart-topping live electronic band GoodLuck whose sound fits nicely between the worlds of electronic-pop and accessible dance music, while taking subtle influences from genres as varied as afro-house, jazz and beyond.

Mdu Masilela has a successful career dating back to the 1990s. His contribution to the South African music industry has been recognized with a Lifetime Achievement Award at the 2015 SA Music Awards and is famous for being one of the founders of the Kwaito music genre.

Other artists set to keep the crowd on their feet include Shekhinah, (born Shekhinah Thandi Donnell) who is a Pop/R&B vocalist and songwriter born in Durban, as well as Oskido who has reached a prominent status in the South African music industry, more so in popular youth culture.

Dean Fuel, one of Cape Town's best loved DJ's uses music to bring people together while the beat of DrumPope and the genius comedy of Jason Goliath round out the entertainment overload.

Tickets for the SAES Cape Motorsport Festival are available at <https://bit.ly/SummerMotorsportFestival>

Issued by Eric Buijs (Media Manager SAES)

[eric@saeseries.com](mailto:eric@saeseries.com)

+27 82 66 246 10