

## **SA ENDURANCE NATIONAL CHAMPIONSHIP LOCKED AND LOADED FOR ZWARTKOPS DEBUT**

### **SA ENDURANCE NATIONAL CHAMPIONSHIP**

#### **ZWARTKOPS RACEWAY, PRETORIA**

**3<sup>RD</sup> AND 4<sup>TH</sup> MARCH 2023**

Zwartkops Raceway will be bursting at the seams with over 33 entries and 72 drivers for the opening four-hour race of the SA Endurance National Championship this weekend as the Summer Motorsport Festival hits Pretoria for the first time.

To celebrate the SAE recently receiving National Championship status from Motorsport South Africa after a successful season last year, the race promoters Southern African Endurance Series are offering free access to motorsport fans to watch this fascinating form of the sport where the teams play as important a role in the outcome as the drivers do.

Heading the entries is the reigning champion 18-year-old Kwanda Mokoena who will partner with Andrew Rackstraw for the four-hour race driving his championship-winning MJR Motorsport/Amandla Coal Audi R8 GT4. Mokoena became the youngest – and first Black Endurance champion last year.

Back for another tilt at the championship is last year's runner-up Hein Lategan partnered by Verissimo Tavares in their Black Bull Racing Porsche GT3 992 Cup car, who will come up against the similar Toys-R-Us Porsche GT3 of Mo Mia and Lee Thompson.

Gunning for the title is Stradale Motorsport's Charl Arangies and Clint Weston in their Mercedes-AMG GT3 but will have to overcome Xolile Letlaka and Stuart White in their Into Africa Mining Lamborghini Huracan GT3. White raced for the Emil Frey Lamborghini team in Europe last year and has huge amounts of experience of the machine he will be driving.

Another exciting entry is the MP17/Rico Barlow Racing Ligier-Honda JS53 Evo for Mikael Pitamber who will share the open sports car with Gavin Cronje and have Capetonians Byron Mitchell/Peter van der Spuy's Juno-Nissan SS2 to contend with.

Not to be outdone, the Backdraft Slingshot Chevy-powered trio of Mike and Brian McLoughlin and Rob Clark is capable of challenging at the front of the field, as seen by their second place in Gqeberha last season.

Top Mobil 1 V8 racers Franco di Matteo, Julian Familiaris and Warren Lombard team up in an adapted Ford Mustang V8 in class A and will give the European brands a run for their money.

Class D is the domain of the tin-tops headed by the Volkswagen Motorsport entry of Keagan Masters and Daniel Rowe who know their way around a Polo SupaCup car. VW Motorsport plans to contest the full championship to showcase the varied capabilities of the Polo SupaCup car, which ranges from sprints to 9-hour endurance races.

A real contender for the Index of Performance Championship is Ricky and Gianni Giannoccaro in their Bisc/G&H Transport Toyota Yaris GR. The little four-wheel drive Yaris scooped Index honours at the final SAE event last year so is a feisty car to compete in.

Karah Hill and Jurie Swart line up in a Kalex-backed VW Polo SupaCup and will face off with historic racers Mario and Claudio Rossi and Regard van Zyl behind the wheel of their FAS-Scuderia Rossi Alfa Romeo MiTo.

Bucketlist Racing has two entries in Class D, a Volkswagen SupaCup Polo with Chris Rooke and an unnamed co-driver, while Kris Budnik takes on the German armada with a BMW 340i.

Class E is a race-within-race amongst no less than 11 identical Backdraft-Lexus Roadsters. The prestigious Index of performance Champions Harm and Barend Pretorius (Team Pesty) will be back to defend their title and aim to add the National title to their trophy cabinet but will have to work hard to beat their main rivals Fikile Holomisa and Baphumze Rubuluza in their Team Qhubani entry.

Qhubani Racing almost snatched the title in the final round last year and will be looking for revenge, as will the all-Morgenrood entry of Benjamin, Crisjan and Ben (Ben Morgenrood Group), who were in the title fight until five minutes from the end of the season last year.

An exciting entry is that of the all-lady racer crew of Fabienne Lanz and multiple national rally and rally-raid navigator Elvéne Vonk who will have to contend with drifting racer-lady Clare Vale who is teamed with Dean Hogg in a The Truckman Backdraft. Another Truckman/Tradecore Steel entry consists of Jean Paul Briner, Anthony Hoare and CJ Blackman.

Ranged against the Backdraft teams is the lone Xena Chemicals/ Camtech SA Nash-Volkswagen of Andrew Horne and Gerald Buys. The little 2-litre VW engine appears outgunned against the rumbling V8 Lexus Backdrafts on paper, but the little Nash weighs about the same as a toaster and is nimble.

Backdraft founder Tony Martin teams up with Mags Govender and Mark Owens in a factory entry along with Brian Martin and Trevor Graham in a second Backdraft entry. Regular SAE entrants Mark Harvey, Phillip Meyer and Dean Wolson will be in the thick of the action in their Pple Group/Adapt Backdraft and looking for a good result after completing a full rebuild of the car.

Brandon Dean and Jarryd Wray round out the Backdraft entries in their Mad Max Backdraft.

Five teams will take part in the SAE 1-hour; Michael Stephen races his Ultimate Outlaws McLaren MP4-12 and takes on the similar McLaren of Ultimate Outlaws teammate Izak Spies.

Kishoor Pitamber and Gavin Cronje are behind the wheel of a NGK Pablo Clark-run Mercedes-AMG GT3 while Roelf du Plessis continues to test and assess the viability of V8 machines in endurance racing in an Ultimate Outlaws Chevrolet Lumina. Paul Hill, who won in Gqeberha last season will be out again in his Kalex Aston Martin Vantage GT3, looking for a repeat of his coastal adventure.

Practice and qualifying for the SA Endurance Championship takes place on Friday with the four-hour race starting at 10h25.

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