

SA ENDURANCE NATIONAL CHAMPIONSHIPS TO BE DECIDED AT BLUE RIBAND SAES: NINE-HOURS OF KYALAMI

PREVIEW: SA ENDURANCE NATIONAL CHAMPIONSHIP RD 5

SA GT NATIONAL CHAMPIONSHIP RD 9 and 10

KYALAMI GRAND PRIX CIRCUIT, 15 – 16 DECEMBER

The Kyalami Grand Prix Circuit will burst into life with 44 cars entered for the SAES: Nine-Hours of Kyalami for the Southern African Endurance Series' season finale where 13 championships go down to the wire including the prestigious SA Endurance National Championship, SA Endurance Index of Performance Championship and the SA GT National Championship.

Double points are at stake in the SA Endurance National Championship, opening up a five-way fight for overall title honours while a host of South Africa drivers that have excelled overseas are in the line-up.

SAES co-founders Xolile Letlaka, Izak Spies and CEO Wayne Riddell are the driving force behind bringing the Nine-Hours of Kyalami to Gauteng, with the aim of growing the motorsport audience for the benefit of the sport as a whole. Affordability is key to this objective and ticket prices start at R50 for general access on Friday and R100 for Saturday is the first step to lowering the barriers of entry to South African spectators.

With regular visitors from across SA's borders, the future vision is to take the two spectacular SAES Championships into other African countries, embracing the "Southern African" aspect of the Promotor's name.

A major coup for the Southern African Endurance Series is securing live SuperSport coverage of all the races from 14h30 on Friday until the chequered flag falls at 21h00 in Saturday. The SAES YouTube channel will also livestream the entire event, sharing the action with motorsport fans across the world.

SA ENDURANCE:

Just seven points separate the Into Africa Racing Lamborghini Huracan GT3 entry of Xolile Letlaka, Stuart White and Mikael Pitamber and the Stradale Racing Mercedes-AMG GT3 entry of Charl Arangies.

The Into Africa trio has a wealth of current GT3 experience; White did development testing in a new Ferrari 296 GT3 in Europe and raced a Ferrari 488 GT3 in the Italian Championship where he claimed a win and three podiums, adding another win and several podiums in the McLaren Trophy. Letlaka took in two European rounds of the GT Open Championship while Pitamber became the youngest ever GT Open winner after claiming victory in Monza in a SPS-run Mercedes-AMG GT3, a feat he repeated in Spain at the end of the season.

With a stellar line-up with recent international experience, the Lamborghini crew should start as odds-on favourites.

Not to be outdone, Charl Arangies comfortably won the SA GT Extreme National Championship as well as the overall Extreme Supercars title. Neveling has plied his trade in both the Extreme Supercars series as well as the GTC SupaCup Championship and is race fit. Kwanda Mokoena, the reigning SA Endurance Champion joins the Stradale Motorsport Mercedes-AMG GT3 team having competed in a few GT Open races this year.

Third in the title chase, Mike McLaughlin and co-driver Steve Clark have the fearsome Backdraft Roadster at their disposal, powered by a mighty 7-litre Chevvy motor. They scored a superb second overall at Zwartkops last time out and will be looking to boost their title chances at Kyalami with another top drawer result.

Hein Lategan has a long shot at the title but has armed himself with a "secret weapon" in the shape of Keagan Masters, who competed in the Mobil 1 Porsche Cup this year (which is a support race for Formula One), finishing third in the Rookie Cup, so he has all the latest information on how to set up and drive the BBR Racing Porsche 911 GT3 Cup to its maximum potential. They are joined by Verissimo Tavares who missed two rounds due to business commitments.

Another team in with a chance of snatching the title is the Cape Town-based Dolphin Engineering entry of Byron Mitchell, Peter van der Spuy and Nian du Toit. Their Play.co.za Juno-Nissan has been a consistent points scorer this season and given another clean run, may be able to cause an upset.

Not bothered by the fight for the overall championship but dead keen to win the SAES: Nine-Hours of Kyalami is Nick Adcock, Michael Jensen, karter Jonathan Thomas and Leyton Fourie in their new Adjust4Sleep/Rico Barlow Racing Nova Proto NP02, powered by a Mustang V8 motor. The car has only appeared once and will be watched with great interest especially as Adcock and Jensen won the Asian Le Mans Series race in Sepang two weeks ago, taking the championship lead in the process thanks to a second place in the first of two Malaysian races. Fourie competed in – and won - the German BMW M2 Championship and successfully completed a test in the Nova Proto with times that impressed the team owner.

The Giannoccaro family of Ricky, Gianni and Giacomo will compete in their G&H Transport Lamborghini Gallardo, joined on this occasion by Ant Blunden, all regulars in the G&H Transport Supercars series.

Rounding out the Class A entries is the visiting Mozambique-based Sphere Motorsport Toyota Altezza. Powered by a rumbling 4 litre V8 engine, Sergio Alvares, Paul del Re, Pedro Garcia and Rufino Fontes will be a leading contender amongst the tin-top machinery.

Class D will be a frenetic place to be as Volkswagen Motorsport's trio of Daniel Rowe, Jonathan Mogotsi and newly crowned Polo Cup Champion Charl Visser will be pulling out all the stops to win both the Class D and Index of Performance titles. Rowe, having raced with different co-drivers during the season, is alone in his Index chase and only 21 points off the lead, thanks to his factory VW Polo SupaCup's Swiss clock-like reliability.

Market rivals Toyota has entered a pair of Gazoo Racing Toyota 86s in their quest to repeat their one-two Index victory at last year's Cape nine-hour with their GR Yaris. The 86 cars were raced by motoring journalists this year and the top four in the Gazoo Racing National Challenge have been rewarded with the Nine-Hour drive. Champion Setshaba Mashigo, Chad Luckoff, Mark Jones and Dennis Droppa take on Toyota Management in a second car. Mario de Sousa, Anand Pather, Leon Theron and journalist Brendon Staniforth, who finished fifth in the Challenge standings will enjoy their own race-within-a-race.

Looking to usurp the factory VW squad is the Kalex VW Polo SupaCup of lady racer Karah Hill, Jurie Swart and Keagan Campos. All three have vast saloon car experience and should be a real contender for victory following a bumper-to-bumper strip down and re-build.

The similar Graphix Supply World Polo SupaCup driven by David and Robert Franco and will be joined by Polo Cup rising star Jason Loosemore and ready to battle their VW rivals and end their season on a high note.

Lady racer Fabienne Lanz is sharing her Target Corporate Karting VW Golf with Regard van Zyl and Mario Rossi and are ready to take on the Polos in what is sure to be a frantic class D war.

Another Mozambique team making their second appearance in the SA Endurance championship is the Korridas Racing VW Golf driven by Bruno Campos and Marcos Rodrigues. The Cape Town-based Hintenaus family is bringing a BMW to the class D party.

Class E, the home of Backdraft-Lexus V8 cars is a hotbed of championship action. Kyalami sees Lenovo join as a support sponsor with cash prizes up for grabs.

Seven of the top eight in the Index of Performance Championship log all come from Class E, where the fairytale story belongs to rookie Jean-Paul Briner who is leading the Index of Performance Championship while CJ Blackman, his wingman had to miss the last round and has dropped to third in the standings. The Tradecor Backdraft will be the one to keep tabs on as the title race goes to the last kilometer of the season.

In the Class E title race, the top five are separated by seven points; the defending champions Harm and Barend Pretorius (Pesty Racing) are a solitary point ahead of Briner, while six points further back is another father and son duo Crisjan and Ben Morgenrood Sr in their Ben Morgenrood Group Backdraft with Benjamin on hand to assist their title aspirations.

Following two non-finishes this season, the enthusiastic PPLE/Adapt Backdraft trio of Philip Meyer, Mark Harvey and Dean Wolson are out of title contention but will race as hard as ever as will Team Qhubani's Fikile Holomisa, Baphumze Rubuluza and Xolela Njumbuxa, who have also had a less than ideal season with two non-finishes.

Two factory Backdraft team have entered, driven by veteran race and rally driver Trevor Graham and Karshan Naidoo while the second car is crewed by Gian Gabbiani, the son of former F1 driver Beppe who raced for Surtees and Osella in the late 1980s. He is joined by fellow Italian Huober who is a classic car restorer and dealer and has raced powerboats while Mark Owens, sixth in the class standings has been drafted into the team.

Brandon Dean, Barry Ingle and Cape-based Masters V8 racer Fabio Tafani will take on the Backdraft of Gavin Rooke - who usually races with Owens and shares sixth in the standings – and Richard van Heerde in another exciting clash within the Backdraft battle.

More international flavour permeates Class E as former American Drag racer Dan Hirsch and Italian bike racer Manuel Grandi team up in another Backdraft. Hirsch has competed in the Simola Hillclimb and the Illuma 24-hour race while Grandi raced motorcycles for ten years as well as trucks in Europe amongst his extensive career.

1-Hour Dash:

Nine cars have entered the 1-Hour Dash Championship, headed by a pair of Chevy V8-powered Ginetta G57s driven by Craig Jarvis and Simon Murray. The Ginetta was originally designed as a LMP2 car and is

an exciting machine to watch. Another sports-prototype machine entered for the 1-Hour Dash is the Xena Chemicals Ligier-Honda JS49 which will debut in the hands of Andrew Horne this weekend.

Michael Stephen leads the 1-Hour Dash Championship by eight points from veteran Oval and V8 racer Roelf du Plessis. Stephen's Ultimate Outlaws Audi R8 GT3 Evo has been almost untouchable this year while the Ultimate Outlaws McLaren MP4-12C has been in the thick of the action all year and will be joined by Ultimate Outlaws team boss Izak in his brand new Lamborghini Huracan GT3 Evo 2 which landed in South Africa last Monday.

Francis Carruthers is bringing his Pilbeam-Nissan from Cape Town to take on the big sportscars while Gianni Giannoccaro is fielding his mighty G&H Transport Nissan GT-R which is more than capable of holding his own with the big guns.

Nicky Dicks (Curvent Porsche 996 RSR) will battle it out with the Nissan while a private race takes place between three Class D Volkswagen SupaCup entries of Anthony Pretorius (Bucketlist Racing) and Kyle Robinson (AF Fans) will be joined by Mike Verrier in his Volkswagen Golf. 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.

SA GT Championship:

Michael Stephen has won six of the seven rounds of the SA GT National Championship to date in his Ultimate Outlaws Audi R8 GT3 Evo and is on the cusp of earning his 19th National Championship. His lead of 28 points, with 70 available over the weekend, is by no means a done deal as Aldo Scribante has been a model of consistency in his Scribante Concrete Lamborghini Huracan GT3.

In an effort to boost his chances, Stuart White helped the team with set-up changes at the final Sprint race last month. The bright yellow Cemza Cement Lamborghini Huracan GT3 of the outgoing SAGT Champion Silvio Scribante, will play his part in helping his brother in the championship fight.

Stephen and the Scribante brothers are also fighting for the Pro Class Championship but will have to keep a keen eye on their rear-view mirrors for the Into Africa Aston Martin Vantage GT3 of Stuart White, who will be out to win both races. The young Free State driver holds the outright lap record at Zwartkops Raceway and would like another record to be written against name.

Three drivers are fighting for the ProAm title, currently headed by Andrew Culbert in his Bigfoot Express Mercedes-AMG GT3. 29 points behind Culbert is the Ultimate Outlaws McLaren MP4-12C of Roelf du Plessis following a non-start at the last round, which dented his title hopes.

Revving up for the Nine-Hour race is the Into Africa and Southern African Endurance Series promotor Xolile Letlaka in his Lamborghini Huracan GT3, also entered in the ProAm class. He is joined by fellow SAES shareholder Izak Spies in his ProAm Ultimate Outlaws Lamborghini Huracan GT3.

Spies is assured of third in the ProAm standings as his main rival Paul Hill will be absent from Kyalami due to another unfortunate operation on his shoulder.

Sun Moodley (Bigfoot Express Mercedes-AMG GT3) is two points away from leading the Am Championship, but with his title rival missing Kyalami, is virtually assured of his second consecutive championship title.

Both Craig Jarvis and Simon Murray's Ginettas, competing in the 1-Hour Dash, have entered the GTO class of the SA GT Championship, offering spectators an extra opportunity to see these rarely-seen machines in action.

The Team's Championship is too close to call. Ultimate Outlaws is 14 points clear of Scuderia Scribante with the odds stacked in Ultimate Outlaws' favour as they have three cars entered versus the two for Scuderia Scribante.

BigFoot Express is assured of third place in the Team's standings.

Kyalami VIP and VVIP Experience:

SAES has crafted a VIP package for discerning guests costing R1000 per person. The package includes all meals, a cash bar, a private viewing area at the Legends Boma as well as access to the Paddock Lounge above the pits and the stellar line-up of musicians that includes Cassper Nyovest, DJ Zinhle, Mörda and the Kings of The Weekend.

Tickets can be further upgraded to a VVIP package which includes a hot lap in a racing car around the world-famous 4.5km track.

General Admission Tickets:

Tickets cost R50 per person for Friday entry and R100 per person on Saturday for general access. Spectators are welcome to bring their gazebos, braais and refreshments and park against the fence to watch the action.

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