**CHAMP KWANDA CO-DRIVES CHARL TO TITLE**

*Mokoena aboard as Arangies takes Endurance title*

2022 South African Endurance champion Kwanda Mokoena returned from international GT racing duty to co-drive 2023 champion Charl Arangies to a dramatic South African Endurance title at the season-ending Nine Hours of Kyalami on Saturday.

Mokoena was called up late to fill the third seat of the Stradale Racing Mercedes-AMG GT3 alongside champion elect Arangies and Arnold Neveling. The drama however started early when crash damage forced the trio to change cars to the team’s Audi R8 GT3 LMS Evo on the eve of the race, but still they qualified well in fourth.

Arangies, Neveling and Mokoena were into a handy lead an hour and a half into the race and stayed there until mid-distance, after which they sat a handy third. But the Audi broke a side shaft as Arangies attempted to leave the pits after taking over from Mokoena in a mid-race stop. “It all seemed fine until Charl tried to leave the pits,” Kwanda explained.

“It should not take too much time but they’re making a plan to build a replacement out of drips and drabs, and we should be back out soon. But this is endurance racing, and you know what they say, It ain’t over till that fat lady sings!” The team lost 24 laps off returned in seventh as the fight-back began. Then to make it even more of a challenge, it began to rain.

Undaunted, the trio pushed hard in atrocious conditions and often pouring rain, and fought back to fifth, when the pendulum finally swung their way. Arangies’ sole remaining title rivals’ Lamborghini ground to a halt to retire and all the Stradale trio had to do from there, was to finish where they were, for Charl to take the title.

“It was a nerve-wracking final hour!” Kwanda admitted. “Waiting for the finish under such huge title pressure is always a challenge, but Arnold brought it home and I’m delighted to hand the SA Endurance championship, the first under the new SAES dispensation, over to Charl. “I was honoured to be called up and I’m proud to be part of the team that did it!

“Thanks to Charl and Stradale for this wonderful weekend. It was a bit of a rollercoaster ride, but that’s how it goes and we pulled it off in the end, so that’s job done!” Young Mokoena now takes a well-earned break before embarking on his next international racing adventure with winter season preparation for next year's GT3 season with HRT Mercedes.