**NEW SOUTH AFRICAN TOURING CAR ERA STARTS SATURDAY**

*Premier South African Touring Cars blast off at Killarney this weekend*

The newly renamed South African Touring Cars make their much anticipated new era debut at Killarney International Raceway’s season opening National Extreme Festival on Saturday. South Africa’s premier wings and slicks tin-top race series has gone through a radical transformation leading up to the change from Global Touring Cars. The new name now concludes that evolution, and as they say, when the flag drops, the bulldust stops. That finally happens in Cape Town this weekend.

The changes will however do little to generate the love lost between South African Touring Cars’ two championship favourites. Johannesburg teenager Saood Variawa intends to continue his winning ways aboard his Gazoo Racing Toyota Corolla, as much as double series champion Robert Wolk is determined to do the same in his new Chemical Logistics BMW 128ti. The action has always been explosive between these two and there’s no reason that Killarney, and the rest of 2024 should be any different.

Hot on their heels or will that be playing interference for their team leaders, expect Variawa’s Gazoo Toyota teammates, veteran Michael van Rooyen and Nathi Msimanga to be in the thick of it. Wolk’s wing man, South African Touring Car rookie Andy Schofield is more than just a race car pilot. He swaps the cockpit of his day job Boeing for his FlySafair Chemical Logistics BMW 128ti for the first time at Killarney this weekend.

There’s also a most definite dark horse at play at Killarney on Saturday. Cape Town home hero Julian van Der Watt will debut a brand new Chemical Logistics Volkswagen Golf on his favourite racetrack. Judging by Julian’s great form on home turf, the rest had better watch out. South African Touring Cars also welcomes another rookie at Killarney. Pretoria lad Anthony Pretorius makes his SATC debut aboard a Bucketlist Toyota Corolla. Anthony’s Polo Cup winning ways also make him one not to be overlooked.

It's just as interesting in SATC SupaCup, which is no longer just a Volkswagen SupaPolo-only class for 2024. Among the SupaPolo regulars, champion Bradley Liebenberg will be chasing a third SupaCup title in his Sparco entry. He will no doubt once again have his hands full with old rivals, Volkswagen Motorsport man Jonathan Mogotsi, Keegan Campos’ Campos Transport car, home hero Angri Racing LTR lad Tate Bishop, and Kalex lass Karah Hill.

Charl Visser will no doubt be another thorn in Liebenberg’s side. The Volkswagen Motorsport lad won his drive by taking the 2023 Polo Cup title, while VDN Auto MTown racer Dean Venter has similarly stepped up from Polo Cup. Nathan Hammond makes a comeback after a year away, and Nicolaos Vostanis moves up from the GR Yaris League. But the big SATC SupaCup news is all about the debut of Toyota’s all-new SupaStarlet in ’23 Yaris League champion Sa’aad Variawa’s young hands.

So, it’s a matter of lighting that South African Touring Cars touch paper, stepping back five paces and watching it all explode into action this weekend. South African Touring Cars races two heats on Saturday’s diverse and action-packed National Extreme Festival program. See you at Killarney!