**ROTAX MAX THRILLS ZWARTKOPS, KILLARNEY**

*Close racing in Gauteng, multiple winners in the Cape*

South African Rotax Max Challenge karting reached its season midpoint with brilliant double header regional rounds on the shortest day of the year, both in Gauteng and the Cape on Saturday. Zwartkops hosted the Northern Regions races, while Cape championship meeting happened at Killarney.

Cape Town exile Jason Coetzee had to play second fiddle to Bradley Liebenberg, who raced to a triple Gauteng premier class win from Coetzee at Zwartkops each time, with Nicolaus Vostanis third from Olerato Sekudu, Gabriel Fernandez, Bjorn Roos and the returning Shayur Harpal. Justin Rogers took the DD2 Masters win.

With Coetzee racing up in Jozi, Joseph Oelz went unchecked in DD2 down in the Cape. Matthew Wadeley staved Ethan Stier and Kyle Visser off for second after championship leader Sebastian Boyd was excluded from the second heat. Conor Hughes took Masters two races to one from Jared Jordan, with Roy Gruer third from Michael Jordan and Jonothan Wiehahn on an impressive 14-kart grid.

The rest of the Cape day however proved most entertaining with multiple winners throughout. Starting in Senior Max, first heat winner Luca Wehrli took the day by all of a point from second race winner Charl Visser and final heat victor Tate Bishop. Ethan Deacon, Cole Hewetson and Jude Stuart chased them home. It was just as close fought at Zwartkops, where a delighted Mauro Da Luz took a third, a second and a win to take the day from race 2 winner Mahummed Wally, and opening heat victor Kent Swartz Kian Spies, Reghardt Lubbe and Tanieka Brent followed.

There were also three winners in both the Cape and Gauteng Junior Max races. Heat 1 winner Jordon Wadeley held on to take the day from final winner Keagan Beaumont, Nicholas Lennox, Sebastiano Human, middle heat winner William Marshall and Anwill April at Killarney. And final raxe winner Luke Hill beat second race winner Gianna Pascoal and maiden Junior first race winner Cristian Verheul with Jesse Swart, Georgia Lenaerts and Reece Butz in chase at Zwartkops in a splendid day of high school racing.

Brodi Dowling beat Renaldo Koen two under-13 Mini Max races to one at Zwartkops with Rafael De Sousa third from Durelle Goodman, Ruvan Maritz and Tshepang Shisinwana. It was unusually straightforward in the Cape Mini Max races, where Max Boshoff sped off to a triple win. Michael Danks took two seconds on the day for second overall from Ruan Lewis, Zac Boshoff, Zach McAuley and Zac Hindley.

Under-11 Micro Max however proved a Killarney cracker as Liam Wharton took the final to steal the day from second heat winner Ruhan Victor and opening race winner Michael O'Mahoney. Jayden vd Merwe, Jake Steyn and Yaqeen Gamieldien looked on in that one. Matthew Shuttleworth went unbeaten to secure Zwartkops Micro honours from Luhan De Wet, Adriaan Steyn, Luke du Toit and Kireev Chetty.

Radhi Harris came back to beat opening heat winner Caleb Lingeveldt two races to one

As Divaaj Govender and Aleena Doutie shared out the thirds and fourths from Lehan Fourie and Ashlyn Beaumont on the Cape baby Bambinos. Alonzo De Oliveira won one Zwartkops Bambino race versus Sebastien Shuttleworth’s two, but De Oliveira’s day was still good enough for the win with Liam de Beer, Aston Verheul, Kiaan Pillay and Enzokhule Ncwane next up.

All of the above, as well as the best karters from KZN and the rest of the country will now gather at Formula K in Benoni for the final round of the 2024 South African Rotax Max National Karting Championships on 6 July. That will not only determine the latest crop of SA champions, but it will also finalise the look of the team to represent South Africa ant the ‘Olympics of Karting’ Rotax grand Finals in Italy in October. Sounds like an excellent way to spend another midwinter’s Saturday…