**ZWARTKOPS’ SPLENDID DAY OF PASSION & SPEED**

*Annual festival kicks SA race season off in classic style*

A packed Zwartkops Raceway thrilled an enthusiastic crowd with on track thrills, race heroes and eye candy to satisfy even the most ardent of race fans on Saturday. Spearheaded by a field of ancient Formula 1 cars, most of them also carrying tremendous South African history, there were sports, GT, and saloon car races aplenty, legendary drivers and cars on parade and much more at the Pretoria racetrack.

Peppered with machines that Jim Clark, Jackie Stewart, Stirling Moss, Jack Brabham, Bruce McLaren, and others raced back in the World Championship, never mind John Love, Dave Charlton, Pieter de Klerk, and Syd van der Vyver, and the rest in the SA series, the International Historic Single Seaters of the 1960s brought back so many special memories of the South African Grand Prix, and Formula 1 championship.

Not that their new drivers cared a hoot for these classic racer’s history and value, as Cooper T53 Climax duo Charlie Martin and Rudi Friedrichs were flat out on the limit all the way, with Eddy Perk driving the very Cooper T79 Climax that John love oh so nearly won the ’67 SAGP in, Mark Shaw’s Lotus 21 and a gaggle of Loti and Coopers in pursuit. Behind them, Christian Dumolin’s Maserati 250F just like Fangio raced, loomed large like a roaring great red shark. Charlie Martin went on to make it a double in race 2, from Shaw and Gans.

With their F1 thirst quenched, the crowd was then treated to some fine Kyalami 9 Hour and Springbok Series Sports & GT action. Larry Wilford’s Lola T70 was quick out the box, leaving Jonathan du Toit’s Chevron B8 to deal with the superbly driven Hennie Groenewald Trans Am Chevy Camaro. Hennie duly got the better of Jono with brother Mark du Toit’s Lola T70 in pursuit from Kennet Persson’s mighty Can Am McLaren M1. Andre Bezuidenhout’s turbo Porsche 911 RSR kept Rui Campos’s atmo car in check for the GT win. Race 2 delivered the same top four as race 1, but Campos turned the GT tables on Bezuidenhout for fifth.

A regular annual Festival of Speed highlight, the monster Legends V8s made for a spectacular show as ever. Former Formula 2 international Nicky Pasterelli barged his Ford Galaxie to the front to hold Ben Morgenrood’s Ford Mustang, Seef Fourie’s Mercury Cougar, Mark du Toit in a Ford Fairlane, Lee Thompson, Jonathan du Toit’s Galaxie and Dutch visitors Rueland de Waard’s Camaro and Michiel Campange’s Fairlane behind for the opening race win. Pasterelli hit trouble in race 2 to leave overall winner Mark du Toit to take that win, from Thompson, brother Jono, and Campange.

Zwartkops scions, Mark and Jonathan du Toit then went on to add yet another 45 minute Pre-68 Sports and GT Tourist Trophy to their cabinet. They drove their Ford GT40 recreation to both overall and Index victory in that regular Passion for Speed highlight, from Peter Bailey’s similar car. Josh and Jake Dovey steered their Ginetta G4R home third ahead of Johan de Bruyn’s Porsche 911R, Dino Scribante in a Chevron B8, Thomas Falkiner’s Ford Mustang, and Rui Campos driving an ex-Group N BMW 328i.

The racing was punctuated for a lunchtime South African legends parade to also honour Basil van Rooyen that included 94-year 7-time Kyalami 9-hour winner David Piper riding in a D-type Jaguar, Geoff Mortimer driving a Chevy Can Am, Sarel van der Merwe in the ex-van Rooyen Mustang, the famous John Love Cooper T79 and Clive Puzey driving his actual 1964 Cooper Climax, among others in tow. SA champion Robbie Wolk then upped the ante with a few flying demo laps aboard Roberto Moreno’s Jordan F1 racer.

Getting back to the local action, Ian Schofield and his Formula Atlantic March 77B took advantage of Andre Bezuidenhout thinking that the standing start was a parade lap, to storm to the opening SA Historic Single Seater race win. Josh Dovey ended third in his Formula 3 Chevron B20 ahead of Formula Ford gang, Dean Venter’s Titan Mk4, Andrew Horne in a Royale RP31 and Alan Kernick’s Tempest, and the recovering Bezuidenhout. Bezuidenhout made up for his faux pas to take race 2 from Schofield, Venter, Dovey and Horne.

A wonderful variety of South African historic saloon car races also delivered great on-track action. PE visitor Rudolf de Vos’ Chev Can-Am dominated the opening International Race Supplies & Roofsure MHCC race from Mike McLoughlin’s Backdraft Roadster, Dawie Olivier’s BMW 335i, Mario Rossi in an Alfa Romeo GTV6 and Paulo Lopes’ Fiat 131. De Vos then beat Olivier, Rossi, Lopes and Rudi Friedrichs’ Backdraft in the second heat. De Vos then went on to add a double Evapco HRSA Sprint win to his tally over Andre van der Merwe’s Porsche RSR, Jannie van Rooyen in a Scirocco, George Avvakoumides Porsche 911, and Jason Loosemore’s Escort. Avvakoumides was second from van Rooyen in race 2.

Robert Clark led a Honda Ballade Evapco HRSA Youngtimer 1-2-3 over Mike O'Sullivan and Andre de Lange. O’Sullivan turned the tables on Clarke and de Lange in race 2. And Gary Stacey’s Ford Sierra XR8 led a Modified class back-to-front Evapco HRSA Pursuit 1-2-3 over John Gouws’ Scirocco and Paul Manegold in an Alfa Giulia, with Fines winner Jandre Bezuidenhout fourth in his Porsche 944. Carel Pienaar’s Ford Escort took the opening Marlboro Crane Hire Little Giants and U2 win from Alan Poulter’s Volvo 122s, Marc Miller’s Alfa Sprint, Ford Escort duo Deon Schwabsky and Djurk Venter, and Rory Nossiter’s Mini. James Temple’s Escort beat Poulter, Pienaar and Francesco Lombardi’s Alfa Romeo in race 2.

If that was not enough classic historic racing, Zwartkops’ Passion for Speed also hosted a trio of opening round Gauteng regional races. Cape lad Nian du Toit threw a spanner in the regular BMW M Performance Parts Race Series works by taking pole position before storming off to a dominant double victory in the opening A and C race. Rivals Leon Loubser, Fabio Fedetto and Anthony Pretorius followed, while Ryan Naicker took Class C from Rob Gearing and Jan Eversteyn. Du Toit beat Loubser Pretorius and Fedetto in race 2 as Gearing took Class C from Hein van der Merwe and Naicker.

The opening BMW B, D and E race was red flagged following a scary turn 4 crash. Andreas Meier was soon back to beat Nek Makris, Carlo Garbini and Lorenzo Gualtieri in B. Ludovic Caron took Class D from George Economides and Nicholas Herbst, and Zaheer Seedat beat Arri van Heerden to the E win. Gualtieri then turned the tables on Meier, Jaco Storm and Oz Biagioni in class B race 2, where Shaun Dodd beat Farhaad Ebrahim and Seeda to E honours.

Jonathan du Toit and his Lamborghini Huracan GT3 EVO benefited Franco Scribante retiring his wild Porsche 911 to take the opening Extreme Supercars powered by Dunlop win from Silvio and Aldo Scribante’s similar Huracáns and Gianni Giannoccaro’s Nismo GT-R. Franco Scribante however bounced back to take race 2 from du Toit, Silvio Scribante and Giannoccaro. Mackie Adlem was on top from the outset of the 2024 Lotus Challenge season opener as he sped to victory from Rudi Barnard, David Jermy and JP Nortje in race 1, and from Barnard and Sean Hewitt in the second race. Sean Hepburn meanwhile took both Locost class wins, first from Nick Hodgson and Davide Favo and Andrew Fulton, and then Fulton and Nick Hodgson.

Following such a brilliant Zwartkops show, Cape Town race fans should take note: Passion for Speed now heads for the second half of its South African tour at the Killarney International Raceway this coming Saturday 3 February. Don’t miss this exceptional show with that splendid twist of Table Mountain looking on…