**TEAM GREEN’S GOLDEN HANDSHAKE**

*Kawasaki ends cross country season in winning style*

Pepson Plastics Kawasaki Factory Racing with Scottish Cables and Motul closed its 2023 cross country season in winning style as the team clinched another two championships at the Carletonville GXCC Gauteng series finals on Saturday.

Jaycee Nienaber gave notice of is 2024 intentions when he stormed to a flag-to-flag overall and open class OR1 victory to snatch that class title. South African Masters champion Pieter Holl meanwhile added the regional title to his National title with another win on Saturday.

It was a case of what could have been for Wian Wentzel, who led until a last lap issue dropped him to fourth in 250cc OR3, but that was good enough for third in that chase. Young Jaden Boyce enjoyed a positive outing as he came to grips with his 250cc machine, while 65cc Junior lad Jake Pretorius stopped after taking a tumble.

It was a matter of do or die for Jaycee Nienaber, who had no option but to win to be sure to take the title. “I knew today that I needed to give it my all, “a delighted Jaycee explained. “Second just would not be good enough, I needed to get the top step on the podium. And yes, my Pepson Plastics Kawasaki didn't miss a beat and we bought it home for the win!”

Jaycee indeed ended up tied on points with rival Ian Rall in the GXCC OR1 title chase, which meant that it was Saturday’s race win he had over Rall’s best of a second place, that tipped the scales Nienaber’s way to bring the championship in an epic end. “Today man and machine were a formidable team and nothing was going to stop us. Huge thanks to Iain and our incredible Pepson Plastics team for making it happen. GXCC OR1 champion, what a win!”

Masters champion Pieter Holl was proud to fix his second red number one plate to his Kawasaki on Saturday as he added the regional title to his 2023 national championship on Saturday. “Today was another special day in a wonderful year as I added the GXCC Masters title to my national championship,” Pieter admitted.

“I rode my brand new bike with my old suspension and It worked well today. I was second earlier on, before I made my move on Wayne Farmer for the lead in the dust. I then stopped to help a guy who fell hard and had to pass Wayne a second time, so I am more than happy with this win, even though Carletonville is not my favourite race because it’s dangerous in the dust.

“Iain kept me up to speed throughout from the pits, so I could plan to race as always and that’s just one small reason why I have him and my Pepson Plastics Kawasaki team to thank for these double championships. It’s been an incredible year and I am so grateful for what everyone has done to make this happen!

Wian Wentzel was disappointed to end fourth in OR3 as he clinched third in that title chase. “What a day!” Wian smiled’ “I finally figured out my start which put me in a good position and I made a pass for the lead on lap 2. “I however had to nurse a small hole in my radiator and then I made a small mistake, which cost me the win.

“So it goes with racing, the tough days make you stronger. All in all I had a good season and a lot of positives to look back on.” Wian goes straight in for surgery on the shoulder injury that blighted him all season on Monday. “I’m looking forward to a good break as I recuperate and can’t wait to come back swinging next year!”

“We certainly ended the 2023 season in style at the Carletonville GXCC,” Pepson Plastics Kawasaki Factory Racing with Scottish Cables and Motul team boss Iain Pepper concluded. “Congratulations to Pieter and Jaycee on their splendid winning performances today and through your championship winning GXCC season. “You have done us proud.

“Wian was a little unlucky today, but we look forward to seeing him back fitter and faster next year and well done Jaden on your ride today. Also a word of thanks to all our other riders and every team member for another great effort throughout 2023. Now it’s time to take stock, rest, and regenerate for the season ahead. Pepson Plastics Kawasaki Factory Racing will be back and fighting for more wins and more titles in 2024!”

*\*Pepson Plastics Scottish Cables Motul Kawasaki Factory Racing salutes Gilberts Mining & Engineering, the Reinhardt Transport Group, Michelin, Arai, Bikewise, Acerbis and Renthal handlebars for their support.*