**ROTAX MAX 2024: IT ALL COMES DOWN TO THIS!**

*Team SA set for ‘Olympics of Karting’ Rotax Max Grand Finals*

It is almost time! Next week, South Africa’s finest karters will take on the best in the world in the 23rd annual ‘Olympics of Karting’ Rotax Max Grand Finals at the International Karting Circuit in Bahrain.

The eleven-man South African team comprising only South African and African champions, will take on 372 rivals from over sixty countries across the six Rotax classes, to effectively crown the 2023 world champions in each class.

Team SA is headed by three drivers in the top direct-drive two-speed DD2 class. National champion Sebastian Boyd from the Cape is backed by Jozi duo, African Open winner Jamie Smith and young Kian Grottis. Kyle Lawrence will fly the green and gold in the over-31 DD2 Masters. SA champion KC Ensor-Smith is a most exciting prospect alongside Gauteng compatriot Erich Heystek in the top chain-drive open age group Senior Max.

Looking at the junior classes, Johannesburg lads, SA Junior Max champion Wian Boshoff and African champion Kent Swartz are SA’s high school class representatives. East London’s South African under-13 karting champion Caleb Odendaal and quick Gauteng teammate Reagile Mailula will race in the Mini Max Grand Finals. And Gauteng kid Rafael da Silva heads to the Gulf as South Africa’s under-11 Micro Max driver.

A leading light in global Rotax Max karting, South Africans have won no less than fourteen Grand Finals since the first in the year 2000. That’s one less than the UK, but it must be remembered that the Team SA was frustratingly forced to miss two editions of the ‘Olympics of Karting’ thanks to global lockdown travel restrictions.

Durban’s Cristiano Morgado remains the only driver to ever win five Rotax Max Grand Finals. He won the Max title in 2003 before a taking hat trick of DD2 Masters titles from 2011 to 2013. But SA’s success goes far further back. Gavin Cronje won the inaugural Max Finals in Puerto Rico, which Claudio Piazza-Musso followed up on in 2001.

Mark Cronje then won at home at Zwartkops in 2003, before Wesleigh Orr took back-to-back RM1 titles to complete a stunning South African six in a row in 2004 and 2005. Leeroy Poulter was back on top in DD2 in ‘08, Caleb Williams won in 2010 and Mini Max lad Jayden Els was South Africa's youngest winner 2016. Team SA also won the Nations Cup in 2014.

Globally regarded as among the fairest and most driver-oriented championships on the planet, the nature of the Rotax Max Grand Finals makes it among the most level playing fields in world motorsport. Team South Africa certainly has its work cut out in Bahrain, where the entire team will be tested to the limit against the world’s best.

Each driver is handed a brand new kart out the box and identical to all his or her rivals, a Rotax Max race engine, tyres, and fuel for the week of this unique arrive and drive festival of karting. They and their team only have a few practice sessions to prepare and set their karts up from scratch, before a gruelling series of ruthless heats. Only the top 33 qualify for each class final. Bahrain is also unique with several sessions running under lights.

“Team South Africa is ready to rock at the 2023 Rotax Max Grand Finals in Bahrain,” South African Rotax Max boss Ed Murray confirmed. “A strong and experienced team of eleven South Africans has qualified and each will do his utmost to add to South Africa’s rich history in the Rotax Max Grand Finals.

“The Rotax Max Grand Finals are an unforgettable experience. Each driver has qualified for the unique opportunity of representing South Africa by winning championships and races back home. Whatever they achieve, they will treasure these memories for life.”

The Rotax Max Grand Finals commence with the equipment handover before track action commences Wednesday 6 December Practice follows, before qualifying, the heats and then the finals in each class on Saturday 9 December. Follow the action via live stream at rotax-kart.com website and www.kart.co.za.