**ZWARTKOPS SEASON OPENER DAZZLES**

*First round Regional Festival thrills Pretoria fans*

A balmy early Autumn Pretoria afternoon greeted race fans and competitors alike for Zwartkops Raceway’s opening round Regional Extreme Festival on Saturday. Perfect conditions for a fine day of racing to play out some great thrills and action.

Thundering Thomas Reib’s Lumina got his Mobil 1 V8 Supercar season off to a flying start when he beat champion Julian Fameliaris’ Jaguar XKR, Warren Lombard and Terry Wilford’s Mustangs, Sam Dahl in a Falcon, and Auke Compaan to the first race win. Fameliaris fought back to take the second heat from Reib, Lombard, Dahl, Compaan and Wilford. Julian’s race 2 winning margin was enough to see him to take the day too.

Everyone in PABAR VW Challenge had always known Chris Dale as the jolly uncle dicing near the back of the Class A pack. The old men however banished that thought forever, when Chris literally came out of the blue to dominate Zwartkops’ season opener from a just as surprising Luigi Ferro in second. Former C champion Ian Walker and Durban lad Shiren Rajpaul shared the B wins, but second in each race, Mo Karodia took the day. Michael Zapheriou took a maiden double Class C win from 16-year old Christopher Tait.

Two packed BMW M Performance Parts Race Series heats created many a thrill. Leon Loubser beat Fabio Fedetto to the first win, while Andreas Meier took Class B from Nek Makris and Renier Smith, and Bennie Luyt beat Hein van der Merwe and Guy Martins in C. Racing on their own, Nick Herbst took the opening D heat from Cobus Bohmer and Craig Herbst, while Eddie Rodriguez beat Shaun Dodd in E. B men Sav Gualtieri, Meier and Reiner Smith topped race 2 with Loubser seventh, while Martins turned the C tables on Luyt. Claudio Jardim took Class D from Herbst and Dodd won E from Rodriguez.

Lendl Jansen came out of the DOE Formula Vee partnered with CIM Lubricants corner punching as he took a close first race win from ’22 champion Peter Hills. ’23 champion Jaco Schriks followed from MD Bester, Brandon Hills, and Kyle Watt. Race 2 was much of the same albeit with Schriks much closer to winner Jansen and Peter Hills. Bester, Watt, and Brandon Hills trailed this time.

Lenard Archer’s BMW took the opening 111 GT and Saloon race from Class A rivals, Melanie Spurr’s Golf, Piet Potgieter, GT winner Braam Muller’s Subaru, Lindsay Clur’s VW, and Johan Labuschagne in another Subaru. Mike Malherbe won Class B, Elke van Vledder’s Golf C, and Marius Malherbe Class D. George Economides’ turbo Golf took the second race from GT rivals Louis Cloete’s Beetle and Dawie Olivier in a BMW. Lucas Bezuidenhout’s Lexus won Class A, Mike Grobler B, van Vledder C and Trevor Stinger D.

Last but not least, racing with the 111s, Mark du Toit’s long awaited BMW took the SuperHatch from Seten Naidoo and Ish Baloyi’s Hondas, George Aldrich in a Peugeot 206, and Alex Mack. The Regional Festival now looks forward to joining the National Extreme Festival for Kyalami’s long weekend blockbuster on 21 April.