ROTAX MAX OPEN A TRULY AFRICAN AFFAIR

Huge African entry brings continental flair to wildcard Open

The Rotax Max African Open may be set to crown Africa’s 2023 karting champions and qualify them to represent the continent at the ‘Olympics of Karting’ Grand Finals at Bahrain in December. But this year’s wildcard races have also drawn a truly representative African entry list. The Zwartkops International Kart Track meeting over has 32 drivers heading to Pretoria from as far afield as Angola, Mozambique, Zimbabwe, and Namibia to join the hundred-plus field.

The winner of four of the African Open classes on Sunday, will join Rotax Max’s South African champions already crowned at the beginning of September, at the Grand Finals. They are Sebastian Boyd in DD2, KC Ensor Smith in Senior Max, Junior Max champion Kent Swartz and Mini Max racer Caleb Odendaal, at the ‘Olympics of Karting’. DD2 Masters champion Kyle Lawrence and Micro Max champ Rafael da Silva will race alone.

There’s no guarantee that all the classes will only see South Africans progress, with hot riders from those other African countries in the mix on Sunday. Local lads Kian Grottis, Nicolaos Vostanis, Dusan Radojevic, and Cape lad Reza Levy as well as Zwartkops specialist Jamie Smith, albeit flying the British flag. All will be chasing to join Sebastian Boyd in the Grand Finals. They however have Namibian gang, Ezequiel Dos Santos, Ivan Vorster, Zane Beuthin and Justus Beulker to deal with too.

With SA champion Kyle Lawrence confirmed for the one over-31-year-old DD2 Masters seat, the pressure is on local lot Jonathan Pieterse, the very quick Bjorn Roos, Philippe Chapat among the over-40 DD2 Vets, Jonathan Kairuz, Ma Ming, Robert Fulton, Grant Veenstra and Llewellyn Sutherland to take the other National Team slot. Their job will be made all the more difficult by the likes of rapid Namibian Mark Villinger, Angolan hopeful Cleusio Serrao and Cristian Bouche down from Mozambique.

It's no different in Rotax Senior Max where SA champ KC Ensor Smith has already booked his seat to the Emirates. Local lot Troy Snyman, Olerato Sekudu, Kian Spies, Roshaan Goodman, Matthew Wadley, and Ethan Bostander will also have their fair share of African disturbance this weekend. They include Namibians Kian Fussell, Kobus Reynecke, Chucky van Dyk, and Darius Kotze. And local hotshot Muhammad Wally driving on a Kuwaiti licence.

Junior Max is oddly enough the only class without any continental entries. With Kent Swartz’ Grand Final ticket already booked, it will be down to karting girls, Gianna Pascoal, and Georgia Lenaerts and the lads, Jonno Wilson, and Wian Boshoff, Jordon Wadeley, Mauro Da Luz and Amani Kinyua, Jesse Swart and Cole Hewartson to fight it out for that plum second seat.

Under-13 Rotax Mini Max however makes up for that with a full and varied African entry list casing that seat alongside SA champion Caleb Odendaal. Locals Reagile Mailula, Kegan Martin, Durelle Goodman, and Taylin Patel, Franco Gibhard, Caleb Moss and Joshua Moore from PE, and Emma Dowling will be on form at home. They however have Namibians Joshua Hanstein and Paul Oosthuizen, Andre, and Goncalo Bettencourt out of Mozambique, Lucas Campos all the way from Angola and Tawana Shambaro down from Zim to deal with too.

Micro Max also has a long line of under-11s looking to join SA champion Rafael Da Silva in the ‘Olympics of Karting’. They include South Africans Matthew Shuttleworth, Cristian Verheul, Ronaldo Koen, Brodi Dowling, Callum du Toit, Ruvan Maritz, and Benjamin Gibhard, among others. African opposition comes from Namibian quartet, Milan Fischer, Hermann Schouw and Mandune and Nande Kaiyamo, and Angolan Kiamy Guedes.

The baby Bambinos may not qualify to race in the Rotax Max Grand Finals, but the winner will receive a South African Team 2023 Grand Final race suit. That has not prevented 22 kids from entering already in the biggest class of the day to determine the African Bambino champion.

South African champion Adriaan Steyn leads a cracking local contingent including Luhan de Wet, Ronald Venter, Yaqeen Gamieldien, Alonzo De Oliveira, Lwashu Mathebula, Slater Smith and Sebastien Shuttleworth. They will however have to overcome a Namibian onslaught including Rocco van Eeden, Neil Zain, Russell Josephat, Gury Dos Santos, Mila and Miko Botha, Nic Kruger and Ned Hannam. With.

The African Open comprises several heats, but all that counts on the day is the finale in each class that will not only crown the various Rotax Max African Karting Champions at Zwartkops on 1 October, but also see those drivers into the South African team for those Emiarati Grand Finals in December…

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