**EPIC NATIONAL, AFRICAN ROTAX ACTION IN THE CAPE**

*Rotax Max Nationals begin, African titles settled at wild Killarney*

A combined South African Rotax Max National season opener and the annual winner-takes-all wildcard African Open delivered epic karting at Cape Town’s Killarney Kart Track over the weekend. With over 120 entries including a strong continental contingent from as far afield as Mozambique and Namibia, the twisty Killarney dished up a whole lot of great racing on a cloudy Cape autumn’s weekend.

The hybrid weekend saw practice on Thursday and early Friday, before qualifying and first National heats in each class on Friday afternoon. That was followed by two more National heats each on Saturday, both of which also served as the qualifying heats for the African Open Finals in each class, which finally closed Saturday’s on track action.

While the National races counted to each driver’s championship tallies, the respective African Open winners meanwhile won their place on the South African team for October’s Rotax Max ‘Olympics of Karting’ Grand Finals in Napoli, Italy. They will be joined by the champions in each class except for Bambino, once crowned after the forthcoming iDube KZN and Zwartkops, Pretoria Nationals.

Reigning South African Rotax DD2 champion Sebastian Boyd picked up where he left off with two wins to one over Cape compatriot Jason Coetzee’s one to take the National day. Jozi lads Nicolaos Vostanis and Bradley Liebenberg were third and fourth from two more locals, Matthew Wadeley and Ethan Stier. Gauteng drivers Karabo Malemlela, Olerato Sekudu, Dusan Radojevic, and Jaden Jacobs rounded off the top ten.

Boyd then added the African Open DD2 crown to his weekend tally as he once again booked his seat in the South African team for those Italian Grand Finals. Vostanis ended second from Coetzee, who lost his close second to a loose nose cone penalty, with Wadeley, Stier, Sekudu, Malemlela and Radojevic in pursuit.

Cape drivers also dominated in DD2 Masters, where a delighted Jared Jordan bounced back from practice problems to score a triple win over Conor Hughes and Bjorn Roos. Justin Rogers ended fourth from Mozambican visitor Cristian Bouché, Roy Gruer, Jonathan Pieterse and Grant Veenstra. Bjorn Roos then benefited Jared Jordan running into trouble in the African Open race, to take the win and the National Team Grand Finals Masters seat. He beat Hughes, Rogers, Bouché, Gruer, and Michael Jordan.

A consistent Luca Wehrli benefited the wild 28-kart war Senior Max chaos around him to trot to three third places and steal a surprise overall win from Jonno Wilson and Tate Bishop. With 22 karts within a second on the grid, Charl Michael Visser led Muhammad Wally for most of the opening heat before both dropped back after a final lap skirmish to leave Joshua Smit to a maiden Junior National win. Visser however bounced back to win the second and third races and end up fourth overall from Mikel Bezuidenhout, Wally, Mauro Da Luz, and Smit. Roshaan Goodman and Storm Lanfear were next up.

SA Polo Cup champion Visser however made no mistakes as he secured his Rotax Grand Finals Senior Max seat in Italy in October with a close African Open win over Wally, Bishop and Naidoo. Quick Jono Wilson, who broke the Killarney Junior max lap record, and Wehrli both dropped a couple of places on nose cone penalties, with Storm Lanfear and Mauro Da Luz behind them.

Local lads, race 1 and 3 winner William Marshall, Keagan Beaumont and middle race winner Reese Koorzen dominated the wild 21 kart high school Junior Max races despite three red flag race stoppages through the weekend. Jack Moore ended fourth from Georgia Lenaerts, Gianna Pascoal, Kegan Martin, and Jordon Wadeley. William Marshall then added the African Open trophy to his cabinet as he booked his Grand Final seat with that race win over Koorzen, Beaumont, Pascoal, Hill and Lenaerts.

A 25-kart under-13 Mini Max field heralded somewhat of a sensation as young Aaryan Singh quite literally appeared out of nowhere to trot to a dominant three-win overall victory. He left Mini regulars Tshepang Shisinwana, Durelle Goodman, Max Boshoff, Michael Danks, Ruan Lewis, Ronaldo Koen and Ruvan Maritz to fight over the scraps. Singh then added the African Open win and Team SA Mini Grand Finals seat to his tally with Rafael de Sousa, Boshoff, Lewis, Brodi Dowling and Koen in chase.

Michael O'Mahoney bounced back from a tough opening heat to win races 2 and 3 as he stole the under-11 Micro Max overall win back from Liam Wharton, Matthew Shuttleworth, Jayden van der Merwe, and Adriaan Steyn. Slater Smith was next up from Ruhan Victor, with race 1 winner Luke du Toit 11th after a final heat exclusion. Michael O'Mahoney then added the African Open Micro Max win over Victor, Steyn, Wharton, du Toit and van der Merwe.

Local lads dominated the baby Bambino races as Radhi Harris defeated Yaqeen Gamieldien two wins to one with Caleb Lingeveldt and Ebrahim Khalpey third and fourth in the National action. Alonzo De Oliveira was next from Sebastien Shuttleworth, Aston Verheul, and Caleb Rogers. Yaqeen Gamieldien then turned the tables on his pals to take the African Open win from Lingeveldt, Harris, De Oliveira, Russell Josephat and Khalpey.

“That was without doubt the best South African karting event in the last two decades,” Rotax Max South Africa’s Ed Murray concluded. “The event had a carnival atmosphere from Wednesday onwards and pits were buzzing right through the week. Best of all, our Rotax Max Challenge technical changes and new age engine cylinders have truly delivered a new level of parity to deliver the best racing in years. You could throw a blanket over the top trains most classes all weekend. That’s what Rotax Max Challenge is all about!”

Rotax Max Challenge now reverts to a bout of regionals each in the Cape, Gauteng Northern Regions and KwaZulu Natal, before re-joining for the second round Nationals at iDube, near Camperdown, KZN on Saturday 4 May.