



Media Information

## **STAR-STUDED LINE-UP TO PRODUCE THRILLING ACTION AT SA RALLY-RAID CHAMPIONSHIP SEASON-OPENER IN MALALANE**

The #TeamHiluxRally-Raid Nkomazi 400, round one of the SA Rally-Raid Championship opens the 2024 season on 19 and 20 April in the Malalane area of Mpumalanga, and will see a star-studded line-up that promises to produce exciting racing action at this ever-popular event.

With the SA Rally-Raid Championship (SARRC) now consisting of one overall championship with various class championships to cater for the different vehicle specifications, the #TeamHiluxRally-Raid Nkomazi 400 will pave the way for an interesting new season, while teams can look forward to a race route that will provide them with some familiar terrain as well as all new sections.

31 teams will come under starters orders on Friday, 19 April at the Nkomazi Fuel and Gas Depot where the Start/Finish, the Designated Service Point (DSP) and Race Headquarters will be situated. And with national titles in three class championships up for grabs at the end of the season, the action will be real from the start.

Fierce competition can be expected in the FIA Ultimate T1+ Class where no less than 21 teams, including two international teams, have entered. The defending champions, Gareth Woolridge/Boyd Dreyer (Neil Woolridge Motorsport Ford Ranger T1+) will have their work cut out against the rest of the field. There will, however, be two more teams in this camp with Lance Woolridge/Kenneth Gilbert, who could not complete this event last year, positive of a better start to the season while Wors Prinsloo/André Vermeulen will also aim for good points with their NWM Ford Ranger T1+.

The season opener will see eight Toyota Hilux entries on the start-line in this class with four teams competing under the Toyota Gazoo Racing banner with the IMT EVO, an updated version of the 2023 model. The 2019, 2020 and 2021 champions, Henk Lategan/Brett Cummings will no doubt go all out for a second consecutive #TeamHiluxRally-Raid Nkomazi 400 victory while Lategan, who missed the final race of 2023 as well as the 2024 Dakar Rally due to a shoulder injury, would like nothing more than to start the season on a high, chasing a fourth title together with Cummings.

The young racing sensation, Saood Variawa and his French navigator, Francois Cazalet, have already completed hundreds of racing kilometres together this year competing in two international Rally-Raid events, of which the Dakar Rally was one, and will aim to continue their impressive performance since joining forces last season.

There was some seat swapping between the other two TGR teams. For 2024, Guy Botterill, who came close to the national driver's title last year, has teamed up with Dennis Murphy who navigated for Ginie de Villiers for many seasons, with the seat next to the racing veteran now being filled by the experienced lady navigator, Elvéne Vonk. The combinations of youth and experience as well as new pairings in the TGR team, will certainly result in them being serious opponents to the rest of the field.

Three more teams will again participate with their Toyota DKR Hilux T1+ vehicles. The two brother pairings of #TeamHilux Rally-Raid, local Malalane businessmen, Johan and Werner Horn and Fouché and Bertus Bignaut, as well as Gary Bertholdt/Danie Stassen will line-up for more of the action alongside Hennie de Klerk and Juan Möhr who will be out in their Toyota Hilux.

Red-Lined Motorsport will also be out in full force with three of the six teams taking on the Nkomazi 400 in the FIA Ultimate T1+ Class. Chris Visser/Albertus Venter missed the last two events of 2023, but would like to prove a few points with their new weapon of choice, the Red-Lined REVO T1+ GTR while the Dutch couple, Dave Klaassen and Tessa Rooth, who are no strangers to the South African Rally-Raid Championship, will be out in a similar vehicle. Klaassen Junior, Pim (19), who competed in South Africa last year, will make use of the services of local navigator, Rikus Hattingh, in the REVO T1+ for this event.

The two King Price Xtreme teams, Jayden Els (SVR), now with Henry Köhne as his navigator and Schalk Burger/Armand du Toit (VW Amarok) will also be in the mix.

The CR7 Twin Turbo of Brian Baragwanath/Leonard Cremer has been properly introduced to rally-raid racing by completing a tough 2024 Dakar Rally and the team would like to show what it can do on local soil.

Rounding off the impressive 21 vehicle Ultimate T1+ field will be the very competitive 2x4 Century Racing CR6 vehicles.

Lance Trethewey has acquired the services of Botswana motorcycle racer, Vincent Crosbie while the Farmers Meat team of Lood du Preez/Juandré Kruger and Eugene Bierman/Marius Lombard will put their two-wheel drive CR6's through the paces. They will be joined by Mark Corbett and his son, Luke, who competed in a few races last year in the Century Racing CR6 Turbo.

A variety of vehicle manufacturers will be represented in the Adventurer T1 Class where a hat-trick of titles will be on the list of the 2022 and reigning champions, Eben Basson/Leander Pienaar (#TeamHiluxRally-Raid Toyota Hilux). If the previous season was anything to go by, the competition will again be extremely tough as the 2023 podium finishers will give the champions a run for their money. Johan de Bruyn (Red-Lined REVO T1), who won the class at this event last year, will have the experienced Adriaan Roets next to him and a victory will be the perfect start for them while the consistent father and son duo of Johan and Sean van Staden (Renault Duster), who finished the season in third place, will have a go at the title again.

Two more Red-Lined VK56 vehicles will challenge the rest. Philip Botha and Roelof Janse van Vuren only participated in selected races last year, but will be at it again this season while Gerhard and Rudi Heinlein will also be back in action. The German father and son drivers, Jürgen and Daniel Schröder, are familiar faces at the SARRC and both will again team up with SA navigators in their Nissan Navara vehicles for more kilometres under the African sun. Jürgen rounded the 2023 season off in fourth place and will have his regular navigator, Stuart Gregory next to him while Ryan Bland will be in the hotseat next to Daniel.

Three Can-Am Maverick vehicles have entered in the SSV Class where the defending champion, Geoff Minnitt will be out for more fun with Rodney Burke (Hydro Power Equipment) while the Eastern Cape based pairing of former motorcyclist, Darron Gudmanz, will make his debut with Quintin Lessing reading the notes. Another interesting entry is that of lady driver and motocross racer, Puck Klaassen, who completed the Dakar Rally earlier this year together with her father in a Porche in the Classic Car Category. She will make her debut in the SARRC and will be behind the wheel of the Moto-Netix Racing Can-Am Maverick with former national champion, Ian Mostert, in the navigator seat.

The #TeamHiluxRally-Raid Nkomazi 400 starts on Friday, 19 April at 09:30 with the 11 kilometre Castrol Qualifying Race that will determine the starting order for Loop One, which gets underway at 12:30. On Saturday, two loops of 169 kilometres awaits competitors with all the action starting and finishing at the Nkomazi Fuel & Gas Depot just off the R570 on the outskirts of Malalane. Spectators can view the action from various vantage points along the route and are welcome to meet the teams and view the vehicles at DSP.

The race can also be followed on the RallySafe App which is available as a free download from the iStore and Google PlayStore or on Facebook: [sacccsauto](#); Instagram: [sacccs\\_auto](#) and Twitter: [@SACCS.Auto](#)

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