

FREE STATE 500 ENTRY LIST FINALISED

The full entry list for the 25-car field for South Africa's first NASCAR-type stock car race at Phakisa Freeway near Welkom on January 31 has been announced.

The ASA Transcontinental Free State 500 is a joint initiative of the Free State Government and the American Speed Association (ASA) based in Daytona, Florida and will see drivers from America, Australia, Brazil, Great Britain and South Africa compete against each other in the 207-lap 500-km race around the 2,5-km banked super oval.

Six South Africans have been offered the chance to compete on Sunday and are currently negotiating with the American teams to race one of their qualified cars. They are: Johan Spies, 41, from Cape Town, who is the 2008 and 2009 national super saloon champion on short tar ovals; Johan Cronje, 50, from Welkom, the 1992 V8 sprint car short oval champion, Johan Coetzer, 19, from Welkom, a multiple Free State and Northern Cape short oval champion; brothers Jaco (29) and Danie (26) Correia, from Welkom and Klerksdorp respectively, who compete in the WesBank V8 championship; and Gugu Zulu, 31, from Johannesburg, the reigning national rally champion in class A5 and a former Sports 2000 and WesBank V8 circuit racer.

Among the visiting drivers are former NASCAR great and Daytona 500 winner Geoff Bodine and Ron Barfield Jr, a former Nationwide NASCAR driver who owns the ASA member track Dillon Motor Speedway in South Carolina and who will be fielding several of his own cars in the Free State 500. Former Renault Formula 1 driver Nelson Piquet Jnr of Brazil will make his American stock car racing debut at Phakisa. There are two women in the field: Tiffany Daniels from West Salem, Wisconsin and Toni McCray from Highland, California.

The youngest drivers in the race, at 19 years of age, are Welkom's Johan Coetzer and American Marc Davis from Maryland. Davis is NASCAR's only African-American owner/driver, having competed last season in the NASCAR Truck Series.

Official practice for the Free State 500, which boasts the biggest prize fund of any motor sport event held in South Africa \$300 000, is on Friday with qualifying on Saturday. Qualifying promises a full afternoon of action for spectators with four separate qualifying races to determine grid positions for Sunday's 207-lap 500-km race.

In addition to the on-track action, there will be air displays on Saturday and Sunday, a pit crew tyre-changing competition on Saturday and laps of Phakisa Freeway with a race driver.

Tickets for the four days of action can be obtained from Computicket outlets countrywide or go to www.computicket.com. Prices range from R20.00 on Thursday to R 330.00 on Sunday. Spectacular discounts for Saturday/Sunday tickets are available. All tickets include a 90 minute Pit Walkabout on all days.

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Issued on behalf of the Free State 500. For further information please contact Charmaine Fortune on 011 462 6243 or visit www.freestate500.com. Pics can be downloaded from www.motorpics.co.za.
<http://www.racingwest.com/series/asa-transcontie/2010/1/>

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