

## EVERYTHING ON TRACK FOR THE INAUGURAL FREE STATE 500 AT PHAKISA

Preparations for the first-ever American Stock Car race in South Africa are well advanced with 24 American stock cars having already arrived in the country for the inaugural Free State 500 at Phakisa Freeway near Welkom over four days culminating with a 207 lap race on the Super Oval on 31 January 2010.

A joint initiative of the Free State government and the American Speed Association (ASA) based in Daytona Florida USA, the "Battle Between Two Continents" (as the event is being billed) will see drivers from both countries compete against each other in the Transcontinental version of America's most popular motor racing formula.

The Phakisa Freeway's 1.5-mile (2.5-km) oval track, which is the only one of its kind in the country that can accommodate the monster American V8 stock cars, is undergoing minor alterations and refurbishment to meet ASA requirements, according to event technical manager Etienne "Oom Jim" Swanepoel. This includes widening of the pit lane by two metres and filling in the few cracks in the track surface.

The asphalt banked oval, which is D-Shaped and runs in an anti-clockwise direction, was built in 1998 and is modelled on the Las Vegas Speedway in Nevada, one of the fastest oval tracks in America. It has never been raced on and only two racing drivers have completed any laps in anger, Sarel van der Merwe at the time of the official opening and WesBank V8 racer Danie Correia in October. Correia completed some 20 laps in his #12 Liqui Moly Chev Corvette as part of a shakedown of the track for the information of the Free State 500 promoters.

"Initially the track was very dusty and I 'cleaned' it up a bit in my road car before testing it properly with the racing car," said Correia. "It wasn't as bumpy as I expected - in fact it was surprisingly smooth – and was in very good condition. We didn't have the right diff or gear ratios in the car, which was set up for the race meeting at Zwartkops, so we weren't really able to determine just how fast the oval can be lapped. We managed a top speed of over 250 km/h before running out of revs and track and I reckon top speeds in excess of 300 km/h are possible.

The cars arrived by container ship and will be delivered to Phakisa on Monday, December 14. The promoters are putting the finishing touches to many exciting side shows and promotions leading up to the event and on race weekend. These include the official Miss Free State competition.

Tickets can be obtained from Computicket outlets countrywide or go to [www.computicket.com](http://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.

Ends

Issued on behalf of the Free State 500. For further information please contact Charmaine Fortune on 011 462 6243 or visit [www.freestate500.com](http://www.freestate500.com).

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