



## AMERICAN STOCK CAR DRIVERS GIVE PHAKISA FREEWAY OVAL THE THUMBS UP

Phakisa Freeway's 2.5-km banked oval race track in the Free State has received an enthusiastic thumbs up from the first professional stock car driver to have driven around it. American Geoff Bodine, a veteran of 27 years of NASCAR racing and a former winner of the blue-riband Daytona 500, was in South Africa for a few days to help promote the first-ever ASA/NASCAR-type race in South Africa, the Free State 500, which will be run over 207 laps – 500 km at Phakisa near Welkom on Sunday, January 31.

Bodine, who retired from competition in 2005 and now works for the Make-A-Wish Foundation as a volunteer, chauffeured members of the media and Phakisa Freeway dignitaries around the track on a hot summer's day and gave them their first experience of American stock car racing.

Together with compatriot 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 four cars at Phakisa, the two Americans were full of praise for the only circuit of its kind in Africa and predicted a successful inaugural Free State 500 in January.

"Ron and I were surprised to discover that there was a track like this in South Africa. It's similar to the Las Vegas Speedway in Nevada (one of the fastest oval tracks in America) and I'm sure it will provide real close and exciting racing in the Free State 500," said Bodine.

"South African race fans are in for a big treat. These cars race side-by-side at speeds of around 200 mph (over 300 km/h), lap after lap, and there's no motor sport in the world where the fans can get so close to the action (the front row spectators at Phakisa, protected by high safety fences, will be just metres away from the dueling America V8 monster cars)."

A joint initiative of the Free State government and the American Speed Association (ASA) based in Daytona Beach, 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.

Journalists from the print, radio and television media enjoyed a few laps of the circuit in two Chevrolet Monte Carlo SS stock cars, which, together with 23 other cars, were shipped from the USA for January's historical race. Among the dignitaries were Dhilosen Pillay, CEO of Phakisa Major Sport Events and Development Corporation and the day's activities were attended by Free State premier Ace Magashule and Phakisa chairperson Thabo Pietersen.

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 for the four days of action 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). Pics can be downloaded from [www.motorpics.co.za](http://www.motorpics.co.za).

Ref ASA PR FREE STATE 500 THUMBS UP Revised.