



U.S. AMBASSADOR TO SOUTH AFRICA TO GIVE COMMAND TO START ENGINES AT AMERICAN SPEED ASSOCIATION FREE STATE 500

DAYTONA BEACH, FL (Tuesday, January 12, 2009) - American Speed Association (ASA) officials are proud to announce that The Honorable Donald H. Gips, Ambassador of the United States to South Africa, will give the command to start the engines at the first ever American style stock car event on Sunday, January 31, 2010. This command will signal the start of the ASA Transcontinental Series Free State 500 at the Phakisa Freeway Circuit in Welkom, Free State, South Africa.

"I am delighted to participate in this unique and historic race which we hope will become a tradition in US and South African sports partnership," Ambassador Gips said.

"We are very excited to welcome Ambassador Gips to the ASA Transcontinental Series Free State 500 event," Dennis Huth, ASA President said. "This event strongly represents the goals that Ambassador Gips stated at his Welcome Reception where he said that the relationship between the United States and South Africa, 'Is a foundation of shared values and friendship, we are realistically at the beginning of our face-to-face working relationship.' We are grateful that he will be part of this event and see this foundation continue to grow."

Ambassador Gips was nominated as Ambassador to South Africa by President Barack Obama on June 4, 2009 and was confirmed by the Senate on July 7, 2009. He presented his credentials to South African President on October 1, 2009. He had previously held the post of Assistant to the President and Director for Presidential Personnel.

Prior to serving in the White House, Gips helped lead then President-elect Obama's Presidential Transition Team as a Co-Chair for the Agency Review team.

From 1998-2008, Gips was Group Vice President of Global Corporate Development for Level 3 Communications, where he led merger and acquisition efforts and was the Chief Strategy Officer.

Gips previously served in the White House as Chief Domestic Policy Advisor to Vice President Al Gore.

Mr. Gips also served as Chief of the International Bureau at the Federal Communications Commission where he was responsible for the WTO negotiations and all spectrum policy, and helped launch the Americorps Program at the Corporation for National Service.

Before entering government, he was an Executive Manager at McKinsey & Company.

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Gips received an MBA from the Yale School of Management and received his undergraduate degree from Harvard University. *

The ASA Transcontinental Series Free State 500 is a 500 km race around the 1.5-mile (2.5 km) oval at the Phakisa Freeway Circuit. This will be the first ever race event on the oval with 24 American style stock cars that will feature drivers from the United States, South Africa, United Kingdom, and Australia. There will be four days of action at Phakisa including practice, qualifying, fan interaction, and the race taking place on Sunday, January 31 at 1 p.m.

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.

The American Speed Association is composed of more than 35 short tracks around the United States, as well as a variety of regional and national touring series around the world. For more information, please call (386) 258-2221 or send an e-mail to info@asa-racing.com. For news and information from all of the racetracks and tours involved in the ASA, visit, www.asa-racing.com.

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(* Source: http://southafrica.usembassy.gov/amb_gips.html)

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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.

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