

No escaping her motor racing destiny - motoring journalist Jeanette Kok-Kritzinger

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Born to parents who were heavily involved in rally racing, motor journalist Jeanette Kok-Kritzinger's destiny was sealed. She admits having been born with a steering wheel in hand.



“As the story goes, my mum found out she was three months pregnant while rally navigating for my dad while he was racing, and they said that their little boy or girl will be born with a steering wheel in the hand. And so it came to pass,” says Kok-Kritzinger.



Jeanette Kok-Kritzinger

With almost three decades in the motoring circuit, Kok-Kritzinger is well known as the co-host of the Wiele2Wiele motoring radio show with her husband Carl. Wiele2Wiele is broadcast on 28 radio stations in South Africa.

Jeanette is one of six motoring journalists participating in the Toyota Gazoo Racing SA (TGRSA), an exciting addition to South Africa's premier motorsport series, the 2022 National Extreme Festival. It pits automotive journalists against each other driving the new Toyota GR Yaris shod with Dunlop 225/40 R18 racing tyres. This year, Dunlop South Africa is proud to be the official tyre sponsor of three of the race events – Global Touring Cars (GTC) including SupaCup, CompCar Polo Cup and the new TGRSA, as well as providing Dunlop's racing support service for free to competitors racing on Dunlop tyres.

Jeanette's career in motorsport started in her early adult life.

“I got involved in motorsport after doing an advanced driving course for my 21st birthday, many years back. I started car circuit racing in 1995, which was literally 27 years ago. I raced cars until around 2001 and motorcycles up to 2015. In 1999, I started sharing my passion for motorsport on radio and since 2009 host a motoring radio show called Wiele2Wiele, where we talk cars, motorcycles and motorsport,” she says.

The lure of motorsport runs in her blood, and despite thinking she had retired from the sport at one point in her career, the attraction did not want to leave.

“I love everything about the sport. The adrenaline rush, the speed, outsmarting your opponents out on the track. I even love the nerves before a race even though I question why I’m there in the first place. But once the checkered flag drops, when the red lights go off, and the racing starts, I remember why motorsport is part of my DNA and who I am. Motorsport makes me feel alive,” she says.

One of her many career highlights, she says, was the opportunity to race the TGRSA with the “awesome” Toyota GR Yaris team. “To be able to race again after I thought I’d hung up my racing gloves forever. Getting the opportunity to live out my passion at the ‘young age’ of almost 50, is by far the biggest milestone in my racing career,” she says.

Off the field, Kok-Kritzinger is ‘navigator’ for her family, keeping everyone on track. “I’m a mom of two boys. Zian is 14 years old and in Grade 8, and Xander is 12 years old and in Grade 6. I’ve been married for 23 years to Carl and he’s been my biggest supporter throughout my career and without him and my parents helping with the boys when I’m on launches or racing, I will never be able to live out my passion,” she says.

This Women’s Month, Kok-Kritzinger urges women interested in the sport to start out like she did with an advanced driving and skid-pan course, a vehicle handling course and then a high-performance course. “Advanced driver training paved my way to get involved in motorsport. There are many advanced driving centres throughout South Africa and my advice would be to start there if you are interested in motorsport,” she says.

But more than that, she says her tried and tested advice is to never stop dreaming. “You are never too old to live out your passion. Never stop dreaming. If you told me more than a year ago that I will be racing again, I would probably have thought that’s crazy. But, here I am, racing again as an ‘old tannie’ [aunty] and enjoying every minute of it. You never know what opportunities are waiting for you around the corner. And then, no matter what your passion is, try to inspire others. If we can encourage and inspire others through the life lessons we learnt, it makes everything – the good and the bad – worthwhile. While pursuing your dreams, remember to press the pause button on your life’s remote control. Tomorrow is another day and not everything needs to be finished today,” she says.

Lubin Ozoux, CEO of Sumitomo Rubber South Africa (SRSA), which produces the iconic Dunlop tyre brand, said: “Dunlop Tyres has a heritage steeped in motorsport. We’re no stranger to the track and have seen, and supported, the industry’s growth. But seeing more women taking the helm on the raceway and competing for the title is exciting and inspiring. We are committed to encouraging more women like Jeanette to go after their dreams, and add their name to the motorsport mix.”

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