

Formula Vee driver Theo Vermaak puts pedal to the metal to raise profile of open wheel racing

Issued by [Sumitomo Dunlop](#)

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Don't make the mistake of asking Formula Vee driver Theo Vermaak for a driving joke. He's got plenty to share as a show of his love for driving. But while his skill on the track has left others in his dust, his jokes, legend has it, can be found at the starting grid. What he is serious about, is steering Formula Vee to greater heights.



Formula Vee driver, Theo Vermaak, has extended his passion for driving to increasing the spotlight on the open wheel racing category.

"I grew up next to the racetrack watching my dad, Ernie, racing since the early 90's when I was still in nappies. I remember sitting in his yellow Golf that he raced in Wesbank Modifieds. When he started the car, hearing those racing sounds and feeling that sense of excitement and energy in that environment impacted me and influenced my journey into the racing world," said 32-year-old Vermaak, of Kempton Park.

Vermaak did not undergo training in racing, and his skill is due to experience and seat time on track.

"My first time getting into a race car was a Formula Vee back in 2014 at Kyalami. I had no racing experience nor had I been out on track. Our sponsor, DOE Quality Parts bought a Vee and wanted to use it purely for advertising purposes in their showroom. They told us we can race it with a full sponsorship. It was a great car to race, and dad and I took turns racing in it. In 2019 the sponsor decided to have another car on the grid, so we built a brand-new Forza chassis. So now I have my own car, and dad still races the old car. If it wasn't for DOE Quality Parts and StartMyCar I would not be here today having the time of my life behind the steering wheel of a Vee, surrounded by so many great and amazing people," said Vermaak.

Counting his win at the 2022 Association Championship, where Formula Vee cars use Dunlop SportMaxx tyres, as his best and hardest thus far, Vermaak said it was a sweet victory as their season started out poorly, having had to chase throughout the season to make up all the lost points.

“My hardest race thus far was the last event of 2022, fighting for the Association Championship. We went into the last event five points, behind. With the dismal weather that weekend, I told myself to get a good qualifying position and found myself in the top 6. With our grid scramble I then started second on the grid. In race 1, I had to ensure a good result to maximise the advantage I had from the qualifiers. I just focused and made sure to not spin off in the wet weather. My opponent at the time crashed out on the first lap so my focus was just to finish. So that gave me the big W for the Association Championship,” he said.

But Vermaak is trying to steer another win – for the sport as a whole.

“In 2016 I helped on the Formula Vee Association committee. The aim of the committee is to represent the Association and its members and look after the running of the series, and to promote and safeguard the longevity of the series for the future. Formula Vee has been going since 1965 and we will be going strong for the years to come. I took a break, and got back on board in 2020, and since 2021 I have been serving as the Chairman. My aspiration is to further build the category with the help of the committee as well as our members,” he said.

Vermaak described Formula Vee as the simplest but most impactful category.

“It is such a great category with amazing people, members and drivers who are part of it. We have an open pit policy, so our members/drivers welcome the public inside if they have a keen interest in what we do. At the end of the day, it is not about horsepower in your engine, but pure driver talent and experience on how to drive a Vee fast and smooth,” he said.

Looking forward, Vermaak said financial help from sponsors was always welcomed.

“This helps us promote the series and help our drivers. With motorsport relying on marketing and social media platforms, it requires a lot of funds to keep us in the spotlight of motorsport fans. We can only get this right through sponsors wanting to join with us and assist financially. In return we market their brands. Without members we have no racing, without racing we have no category, and without sponsors none of what we do will be possible. Our goal for the next few years is to increase the grid size to 30 cars. There has been a huge demand for Vee as of late which shows we are on the right track. There is a current production line of new Vees on its way so we will soon be on that 30-car field.

Aside from racing and chairman duties, Vermaak is a flight attendant, and restores classic Italian cars as a side job.

To wrap up his love for all things automotive, Vermaak shared his favourite joke: “What do we want? Race car noises! When do we want them? Neeooooooooooooowwww!”

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