

Dunlop continuing to build a strong South African heritage on a 130-year foundation

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The iconic Dunlop tyre brand, manufactured by Sumitomo Rubber South Africa (Pty) Ltd, is known for being at the forefront of the tyre industry, developing quality and innovative products that consumers know and trust for the last 130 years.



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“It is fitting that in Heritage Month, as our Dunlop 130-Year celebrations draw to a close, we reflect on our unprecedented history of firsts in the tyre industry, our heritage of pioneering groundbreaking developments that have changed the world, and how we have brought access to Dunlop tyre excellence to Africa,” says Riaz Haffeejee, CEO of Sumitomo Rubber South Africa.

The Dunlop brand’s legacy of quality and reliability has stood the test of time, dating back to the invention, by John Boyd Dunlop in 1888, of the first practical pneumatic tyre. As part of the brand’s heritage of firsts, the first Dunlop factory in South Africa was opened in Durban in 1935 – manufacturing the first locally produced tyre – a beaded-edge 30cm car tyre. The establishment of the Dunlop steel-radial tyre factory in Ladysmith followed in 1973.

Dunlop went on to become the first South African tyre company to produce a 17 and 18 inch UHP (ultra-high performance) tyre. In 2002 the South African land speed record was set at 388,538km/h with Ladysmith produced Dunlop SP Sport 7000 DW-rated passenger tyres. The first super single truck steer axle tyre was manufactured in 2004 and in 2007 the Dunlop Interactive

Display Module, the first interactive touchscreen customer tool of its kind for the tyre industry, was introduced.

Sumitomo Rubber South Africa was established in 2014 after parent company Sumitomo Rubber Industries Ltd acquired rights to the Dunlop brand for the African continent in 2013. Showing both confidence and commitment to the local economy, Sumitomo Rubber South Africa’s extensive investment from 2014 into the upgrading and extension of the world-class Ladysmith manufacturing facility increased production of passenger car and SUV tyres to meet the continent’s need for quality tyres. Further investment resulted in the establishment of a dedicated truck and bus radial (TBR) tyre manufacturing facility at the Ladysmith plant, which was officially opened in 2018, improving access to world-class TBR tyres.

The launch, in 2018, of the next-generation tyre, the Dunlop SP Sport FM800, which incorporated the latest in design and technology, brought all-round tyre performance improvements to passenger car drivers. The Dunlop Grandtrek range release was another coup for 2018 enabling Dunlop to bring to market an exceptionally comprehensive SUV/4X4 range, meeting the diverse needs of drivers from suburban and highway road users to off-road adventurers and professionals tackling challenging terrain.



John Boyd Dunlop

The extensive Dunlop Dealer Network currently boasts over 500 retail stores across Africa. Designed to satisfy the needs of every sector of the market, the Dunlop Zone and Dunlop Express cater for the suburban consumer, the Dunlop Container programme to the township consumer and entrepreneur, and the Dunlop Commercial Channel to the fleet, truck and bus owner.



Ladysmith factory

Haffeejee says, “Despite the challenging economic climate, Dunlop is still positioned as a household name. Consumers have spoken and again shown their confidence in their loyalty to and love for our tyres, by voting Dunlop the #1 Tyre Brand in the 2019/2020 Ask Africa Icon Brands Survey.” This win comes as the seventh triumph since 2011 and is testimony that Dunlop continues to be the consumer’s brand of choice. The Ask Afrika Icon Brands Survey, run by Target Group Index Southern Africa (Pty) Ltd, surveyed over 23000 consumers representing nearly 27 million adult South African consumers.

Dunlop also continues to gain vehicle manufacturer approval with the brand selected as the original equipment supplier for tyres with vehicles

such as the Toyota Hilux Black Edition and Toyota Fortuner 18-inch derivatives leaving the factory floor fitted with Dunlop Grandtrek AT25 and Toyota Landcruiser 70 Series models with Grandtrek AT1 radial tyres.

“We look forward with excitement to what the future holds for the Dunlop brand on the African continent,” says Haffeejee. “We will continue to invest in research, development and innovation and deliver quality tyre products to the market, prioritising safety on the roads as the custodian of #SaferthanSafe, enabling consumers to take on any journey they choose - whether on- or off-road – with confidence,” he says.

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Sumitomo Dunlop



Sumitomo Rubber South Africa, known as Sumitomo Dunlop, is a leading tyre manufacturing organisation in South Africa. Sumitomo Dunlop manufactures the Dunlop, Sumitomo and Falken tyre brands for Africa.

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