

The Kyalami 9 Hour: Revved up and ready to race

 By [Naresh Maharaj](#)

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Endurance racing is back at Kyalami and this time, it promises to be bigger and better than ever. A total of 13 cars are entered for the Kyalami 9 Hour, including ten GT3 cars that will go the full distance in the Intercontinental GT Challenge, to be held this weekend, starting from Thursday until late on Saturday.



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The entry list features representation from four brands, three of which are registered manufacturers in the globe-trotting GT3 series. Mercedes-AMG, fresh off back-to-back victories in the Liqui-Moly Bathurst 12 Hour, has a total of four registered entries, although three will battle for Pro-Am class honours. The No. 999 GruppeM Racing Mercedes-AMG GT3 Evo of Maro Engel, Mikael Grenier and Raffaele Marciello, which finished third at Bathurst, is the manufacturer's sole Pro class representative.

SunEnergy1 Racing, which won the Australian enduro with Kenny Habul, Jules Gounon and Luca Stolz, sees Stolz moved to SPS Automotive Performance's Mercedes for this weekend, with Silver-rated Yannick Mettler completing the SunEnergy1 line-up, which will also be run by the German squad.

Stolz will team up with Reece Barr and Miguel Ramos in the No. 20 Mercedes, while the all-South African line-up of Charl Arangies, Arnold Neveling and Clint Weston will drive a Mercedes with local team Stradale Motorsport.

Team WRT will have its two BMW M4 GT3s for the Bathurst trio of Sheldon van der Linde, Dries Vanthoor and Charles Weerts, plus Maxime Martin, Augusto Farfus and Philipp Eng, who replaces Valentino Rossi in the line-up.

Porsche, the third IGTC manufacturer for 2023, will have a solo Type-991.2 Porsche 911 GT3 R competing in Pro-Am with the EBM-assisted Grove Racing effort for Stephen and Brenton Grove and Earl Bamber.

While not registered to score points, Audi will have two Pro class entries with Tressor Attempto Racing, featuring five factory drivers. Mattia Drudi, Ricardo Feller and Patric Niederhauser form one line-up, while the second Audi R8 LMS GT3 Evo II will be driven by Markus Winkelhock, Dennis Marschall and Alex Aka.



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South African squad MJR Motorsport also has an Audi entered for its countrymen Marius Jackson, Mo Mia and Kwanda Makoena. Three additional cars are on the entry list although will only contest the first hour of the race, with the NGK Pablo Clark Racing Mercedes, BigFoot Express Racing Mercedes and MJR Motorsport Audi R8 LMS GT4 all contesting the Kyalami SuperCup, which will run as a race within the race.

Track action kicks off with a pair of test sessions and Free Practice on Thursday, with pre-qualifying and qualifying on Friday and the nine-hour enduro taking the green light on Saturday at 1pm.

The event has gone all out to deliver a motorsport extravaganza with over 180 race cars in six categories. Spectators are guaranteed at least 12 hours of racing per day, starting Thursday.

Amongst the many attractions of the K9H Motorfest will be a historic car demonstration. Prizes can be won at the Mercedes-Benz simulators at the ATK Arena and the Toyota Gazoo Racing Team will be doing gymkana demonstrations at the Skid Pan, next to the food court.

General access tickets range from R250 on Thursday to R550 on Saturday. Braais are permitted and on-site parking tickets can be purchased on the Ticketmaster website.

Saturday's VIP Pitlane Hospitality for R5,175 includes a premium track location with access to the viewing deck. Lunch and dinner are included and an all-day bar is available from 10am to 10pm.

Adam Brown, Kyalami 9 Hour event director, commented:

“ The 9 Hour has proven itself to be the premier event on the South African motorsport calendar, and a top-rated stop on the international tour. We are delighted to confirm the 2023 event as the second round of the season, and we are especially excited to launch the K9H Motor Fest. The Motor Fest adds dynamic content to the successful formula for all our motorsport fans, partners and industry stakeholders. The 2023 Kyalami 9 Hour now possesses all the ingredients

necessary to become a flagship event of the motoring sector in South Africa. ”

ABOUT NARESH MAHARAJ

Naresh Maharaj is a petrol head who loves cars and writing about them. He is also a Member of the SA Guild of Motoring Journalists. Naresh is also an international sports correspondent and an acclaimed corporate MC and voice-over artist. Naresh is a sports/news producer for community radio stations and also an award-winning sports journalist. Contact Naresh on nmaharaj321@gmail.com.

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