

Speedway League Racing in South Africa, Pt. 2: 1977 – 2003

In the decades that followed the first league speedway era in South Africa, - 1947 to '59 - , other small scale leagues were initiated, though not all ran to conclusion.

1977/'78, “Imperial Paint Products League Championship”:

A short lived league project was started in the early first half of the 1977/'78 season, to have involved Wembley, Pretoria (Mahem), Durban and Dunswart but the latter promotion pulled out. The Wembley programme of Dec.9th advertised an IPP Lge match, Lions v. Durban Hornets, for Jan.6th but by then the stadium had permanently closed for redevelopment and only 2 matches are believed to have been staged.

Dec. 9th 1977: Wembley 29: P.Prinsloo 10, N.Close 8, G.Long 5, B.Stephens 4, J.Bruins 2.

Pretoria 18: B.Harkins 11, B.Rourke 5, B.Strydom 1, G.Baynes 1, C.Davies 0.

Dec.14th 1977: Pretoria 26: B.Rourke 10, B.Harkins 8, B.Strydom 7, C.Davies 1, G.Baynes 0.

Wembley 22: P.Prinsloo 8, N.Close 6, J.Bruyns 3, B.Stephens 3, J.Stevens 2.

1982, “S.A. National League”

In preparation for a National League in 1982 Buddy Fuller re-constituted the SA. Speedway Control Board at the end of '81. The league was to include East Rand Stars (formerly Dunswart Devils), Durban Hornets, Pretoria Eagles and Tarlton Tomahawks, with a fifth team, Daleside Giants, meeting them in occasional challenge matches. The project went as far as to name teams' make-up, (see article, p.2), each to include one of the 4 visiting American riders, but for reasons unknown the competition never materialised.

See **APPENDIX I** for more detail.

1997 - '99, “National Speedway Association League”:

This league ran for at least 2 seasons and included visiting overseas riders and was run on a 4TT basis, each of 4 tracks staging a single home meeting. Match results are unknown at present, but the fixture dates were as follows:

1997/'98: Brakpan Feb.13th; Walkerville Feb.14th;
Klerksdorp Feb 21st (tbc); Newcastle Feb.22nd (tbc).

1998/'99: Walkerville Feb.6th; Newcastle Feb.13th;
Brakpan Feb.19th Klerksdorp Feb.27th.

2002, “South African Elite League International Series”:

The teams in this league were not town/track based but were sponsor-named, and they used the 4TT format.

Rd.1 @ Walkerville 2.2.'02:

Champion Spark Plugs 29, Southern Yamaha/Minolta 26,
Performance Plant Hire 21, LK Tuning 18.

Rd.2 @ Walkerville 9.2.'02:

LK Tuning 25, Performance Plant Hire 16,
Champion Spark Plugs 16, Southern Yamaha/Minolta 14.

Rd.3 @ Walkerville 16.2.'02:

LK Tuning 28, Champion Spark Plugs 28,
Southern Yamaha/Minolta 21, Performance Plant Hire 17.

Rd.4 @ Bloemfontein 23.2.'02:

LK Tuning 32, Champion Spark Plugs 25,
Performance Plant Hire 25, Southern Yamaha/Minolta 7.

The league was decided on overall points scored and hence the standings were as follows:

1st: LK Tuning 103 3rd: Performance Plant Hire 79
2nd: Champion Spark Plugs 98 4th: Southern Yamaha/Minolta 68

2003/'04, “South African League”:

Four teams agreed to participate in this league in 2003 but Wembley withdrew at the final moment. Though a Walkerville team rode they staged no home meeting.

Rd 1, Mar. 29 @ Brakpan: – Brakpan Rebels 32, Walkerville Wizards 33;

Rd 2, May 31 @ Rustenburg: – Rustenburg Red Devils 31, Walkerville Wizards 32;

Rd 3, July 12 @ Brakpan: – Brakpan Rebels 20, Rustenburg 21.

Result: 1st Walkerville 4pts, 2nd Rustenburg 2pts, 3rd Brakpan 0pts.

A concluding play-off of the 'South African League Final' towards the end of 2003 between Walkerville and Rustenburg for the 'SA Club Champion's Trophy' was twice rained off. One further attempt was scheduled for 31st Jan 2004 as a curtain raiser to the new season, but when this meeting was again cancelled the competition was never completed.

See **APPENDIX II** for match reports and heat details.

If you can provide any further results or missing information on the above events, please contact Speedway-SA via the pro-forma on the Contacts page.

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APPENDIX I.

The following article relates to the failed 1982 league proposal, and was first published in 'Speedway Scene' , Ed'n No.7, Dec.1981, Jo'burg.

“SPEEDWAY GROWS”

“Two of the most important steps in South African speedway were taken at a meeting in Johannesburg on November 30 with the formation of the 'South African Speedway Control Board' and the revival of the National League. The request for the formation of the Control Board came from Dunswart promoter Buddy Fuller who felt that the sport had reached the stage when it was necessary for the promoters and organisers to liaise on dates and meetings. He pointed out that he had not known about the projected opening meeting at Tarlton on November 21st, - which was washed out by rain - , until he had read about it in the daily press.

The Control Board will be responsible for drawing up a calendar for meetings and for allocating riders to teams for the National League, which will get under way in 1982. It will comprise Buddy Fuller (Dunswart), Nico van der Berg (Pretoria) and Nick van Rensburg (Tarlton) as well as the South African Speedway Association executive. Chairman will be John Louw and Riders Representative will be Arthur Bruins.

Their first decision was the revival of the National League which had flourished in the country in the 1950's. The teams will comprise East Rand Stars (formerly Dunswart Devils), Durban Hornets, Pretoria Eagles and Tarlton Tomahawks. A fifth team Daleside Giants, will contest challenge matches against these teams.

Although there was still no track in Durban, Mr Fuller said that negotiations were still under way and looked very promising, and in view of this he felt that a Durban side should be included in the National League. It will be the second side from the golden past to be revived and both it and Pretoria Eagles were winners of the old National League.

Mr Fuller also announced that four American riders would be competing in South Africa early next year and they would be allocated to the four teams. Their places would be taken by local riders once they had returned home. The teams are as follows, in their riding order:-

Durban Hornets:

- 1 U.S.A. rider to be nominated.
- 2 Ernest Blignaut, 3 Noddy Naude
- 4 James Olivier, 5 A.N. Other,
- 6 Gary Marsh, 7 Peter Niemandt.

Pretoria Eagles:

- 1 U.S.A. rider to be nominated,
- 2 Marcus v.d. Berg, 3 Wayne Coughlan,
- 4 James Bruins, 5 Arthur Bruins,
- 6 James Gilson, 7 Kevin Tebbutt.

East Rand Stars:

- 1 U.S.A. rider to be nominated,
- 2 Ge Kemp, 3 Denzil Kent,
- 4 Angie Rippamonte, 5 Rob Lassen,
- 6 Ashley Meade, 7 Brian Davey.

Tarlton Tomahawks:

- 1 U.S.A. rider to be nominated,
- 2 Mike Cothill, 3 Gary Prommel,
- 4 Martin Cox, 5 Alan Simpson,
- 6 Mike Marsh, 7 Ronnie Louw.

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APPENDIX II.

SOUTH AFRICAN SPEEDWAY LEAGUE, NSA, 2003

Intro.

Under the guidance of the National Speedway Association, the South African League was to be revived, with an opening match between the Brakpan Rebels and the Walkerville Wizards.

At least four teams were to be formed, each with 5 riders, and league matches run on a 10-heat formula, rider pooling, with guests used to overcome staffing number issues. An interesting feature was the fact that team scores not only included the points actually scored by the riders, but also the riders' bonus points! This

may have been an unusual step, but would do much to encourage team riding. (The Brakpan versus Walkerville match was actually decided by the bonus points, otherwise the result would have been a 30-all draw.)

The league was run on a points home-and-away type system, with the eventual winner receiving a major trophy at the year end. The winning team and the riders that helped that team win were to be worked out on the average points a rider had scored for the team that he'd represented at the time.

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Match Reports:-

South African League, Round 1. Saturday, March 29, 2003. BRAKPAN REBELS 32, WALKERVILLE WIZARDS 33

The opening league match at Brakpan was a great success, except for the absence of Bobby Devine and Alex Lakatos, who experienced motor vehicle problems on their way to the track. This meant that the home team was two riders short, and it was agreed that Byron Bekker, who was originally drafted into the Wizards team had to be moved to the Rebels in order to give them a chance to compete.

With only seven riders around, Martin Bekker was nominated as the team rider of the night, and ended the day suffering from fatigue, since he had to ride no less than eight times in the 10 heat match!

Nevertheless, the rider allocation system worked well. There were always four riders on the line and the crowd loved the battle between the Rebels and the Wizards. The meeting produced some great racing and the team character certainly appealed to the riders and the crowd. Eugene Smith top scored with 16 points for the winning team, while Byron Bekker and Ian Hutchinson each scored 14 plus 1 bonus for the Brakpan Rebels.

In the 'Future Stars' event newcomer Shaun Fish, a 17-year old from Boksburg, recorded a 12 point maximum from his four rides to win. Terrance Capitaio was second, and the only female rider in South African speedway, Yolandi Deysel, scored three points from four races on her public debut.

Heat Details:

- Ht.1: 1:12.25 Smith 3, B.Bekker 2, M.Bekker 1, K.McGuire 0. 2-4 (2-4)
- Ht.2: 1:13.24 Smith 3, Hutchinson 2, Thompson 1, Crock 0. 2-4 (4-8)
- Ht.3: 1:16.40 B.Bekker 3, Thompson 2, M.Bekker 1+1, McGuire 0. 3-4 (7-12)
- Ht.4: 1:13.14 Hutchinson 3, B.Bekker 2+1, Smith 1, M.Bekker 0+1. 6-2 (13-14)
- Ht.5: 1:16.53 B.Bekker 3, Thompson 2, M.Bekker 1+1, Crock 0. 3-4 (16-18)
- Ht.6: 1:16.14 Smith 3, Hutchinson 2, Thompson 1, Crock 0. 2-4 (18-22)
- Ht.7: 1:14.68 Smith 3, B.Bekker 2, M.Bekker 1, McGuire 0. 2-4 (20-26)
- Ht.8: 1:20.61 Hutchinson 3, M.Bekker 2, Crock 1, Thompson 0. 4-2 (24-28)
- Ht.9: 1:17.00 Hutchinson 3, M.Bekker 2, Crock 1, Thompson 0. 4-2 (28-30)
- Ht.10: 1:14.19 Smith 3, B.Bekker 2, Hutchinson 1+1, M.Bekker 0. 4-3 (32-33)

BRAKPAN 32 (30+2): Byron Bekker 14+1 (from 6 rides), Ian Hutchinson 14+1 (6), Rhett Crock 2 (5), Kagan McGuire 0 (3).
WALKERVILLE 33 (30+3): Eugene Smith 16 (6), Martin Bekker 8+3 (8), Neil Thompson 6 (6).

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South African League Round 2. Saturday, May 31, 2003.

RUSTENBURG RED DEVILS 31, WALKERVILLE WIZARDS 32

The Rustenburg Red Devils gave their debut in the South African League at home versus top of the table Walkerville Wizards. The ten heat league match was completed before the stockcar programme, and what a proud display the bike section performed for the good sized crowd. Both teams were led on the track for the pre-meeting parade by beautiful girl mascots, Lauren Bekker for the Wizards and Cherie Crock for the Devils.

Devils were a rider short for this match, and had to use the Rider Replacement facility, since Warren Meier had to withdraw in preparation for his world championship debut in Belgium the following week.

The Rustenburg track was once again in a superb condition and the racing was great right up until the final heat - well, almost!

Things got off to a shaky start, with a couple of non-finishers in the first heat. Lakatos won from Martin Bekker, but Thompson fell and broke a clutch lever, and Pretorius also fell and was lapped by the other two.

With bonus points in South African League racing counting for the team scores, second and third positions by Ian

Hutchinson and Rhett Crock gave the Devils a 4-3 heat advantage over the race winner Byron Bekker in heat 2.

Wizards hit back with a 4-2 as Smith won from Lakatos and Thompson held off the challenge of Pretorius. A 6-1 by Eugene Smith and reserve Deon Swart in heat 4 put Walkerville firmly in the lead before heat 5, which turned out to be the race of the day.

Devils' captain Alex Lakatos took the lead from Swart and Martin Bekker. On the back straight Lakatos had some problems and Bekker took advantage, followed by his team mate Swart. Lakatos tried everything he knew to split the team riding Wizards' pair, and on the line it was Swart who took the lead, with a dead heat



finish for second place between Lakatos and Bekker. According to the SA rules, both riders were awarded 2 points, but no bonus point was given to Bekker, thus the result of heat five was a 5-2 win for the Wizards.

Somewhat surprisingly, the Devils came back into the game with a maximum 6-0 win in the next heat by Hutchinson and Pretorius. Initially Byron Bekker had led this race from his team mate Neil Thompson, who crashed out, allowing Hutchinson into second place, before Bekker blew his engine.

Byron was back on the track again in the following heat, riding the Walkerville club's spare, which is an old Grant Baynes Jawa, that now belongs to their team manager Hansie Kleynhans.

It was good enough for him and partner Jonathan van Wyk, who had to overcome an injury from falling in heat 2, to hold off Rhett Crock and secure the team a much needed bonus point, while Lakatos took the win.

Smith was well in the lead for the Wizards in heat 8, when suffering engine failure and handing the win to Hutchison, with Martin Bekker doing a great job in splitting the Red Devils not allowing them the bonus point.

Martin Bekker then won the penultimate heat, with the Devils finishing 2nd and 3rd to take a vital bonus point and tie the overall scores at 29-all, with one heat to go.

Smith gets the gate from Lakatos and Hutchison. Lakatos team rides and holds off Byron Bekker who finds an inside line on turn 4 but Lakatos sees Bekker making a move and cuts right across the race line of Bekker causing one of the most dangerous accidents seen in S. A. for a long time. The race is stopped and Lakatos receives the black flag for instant disqualification. The re-run with only two riders sees Smith take the win for the Wizards.

Heat Details:

Ht.1: 1:25.95 Lakatos, 3, M.Bekker 2. (Pretorius R, Thompson R) 3-2 (3-2)
Ht.2: 1:22.81 B.Bekker 3, Hutchinson 2, Crock 1+1. (Van Wyk F) 4-3 (7-5)
Ht.3: 1:19.83 Smith 3, Lakatos 2, Thompson 1, Pretorius 0. 2-4 (9-9)
Ht.4: 1:19.54 Smith 3, Swart 2+1, Hutchinson 1, Crock 0. 1-6 (10-15)
Ht.5: 1:23.65 Swart 3, Lakatos 2 & M.Bekker 2 *dead heat*, Crock 0. 2-5 (12-20)
Ht.6: 1:20.25 Hutchinson 3, Pretorius 2+1. (B.Bekker R, Thompson F) 6-0 (18-20)
Ht.7: 1:22.72 Lakatos 3, van Wyk 2, B.Bekker 1+1, Crock 0. 3-4 (21-24)
Ht.8: 1:24.85 Hutchinson 3, M.Bekker 2, Pretorius 1. (Smith R) 4-2 (25-26)
Ht.9: 1:24.36 M.Bekker 3, Pretorius 2, Crock 1+1, Thompson 0. 4-3 (29-29)
Ht.10: 1:27.82 Smith 3, Hutchinson 2. (B.Bekker F/N, Lakatos X) 2-3 (31-32)

RUSTENBURG 31 (28+3): Ian Hutchinson 11 (5), Alex Lakatos 10 (5), Wiekus Pretorius 5+1 (5), Rhett Crock 2+2 (5), Warren Meier R/R.

WALKERVILLE 32 (30+2): Eugene Smith 9 (4), Martin Bekker 9 (4), Deon Swart 5+1 (2), Byron Bekker 4+1 (4), Jonno van Wyk 2 (2), Neil Thompson 1 (4).

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SOUTH AFRICAN LEAGUE Round 3. Saturday, July 12, 2003.

BRAKPAN REBELS 20, RUSTENBURG RED DEVILS 21

The Brakpan Rebels are still win-less in the South African League. They lost their second match of the season, again at home and again by just one point.

Deciding factor was an engine failure suffered by Rebels' captain Ian Hutchinson in heat 4, which produced the only maximum heat advantage of the match, a 6-1 for the Red Devils (Note: under SA League rules bonus points count towards a team's total points!).

Brakpan had an encouraging start to the match, as Martin Bekker beat Rustenburg captain Warren Meier in heat 1 and Ian Hutchinson / Rhett Crock took first and third places in heat 2. Meier was the first Red Devil to win a race (heat 3), before Neil Thompson and Jonno van Wyk took first and second ahead of Brakpan rookie Shaun Fish in that crucial heat 4, when Hutchinson failed to finish. This gave the visiting team the lead by 15 points to 12, with two races left.

Crock and Fish combined for second and third places behind heat 5 winner Van Wyk, which gave Brakpan a 4-3 advantage and reduced the deficit to just two points before the last heat decider. But another 4-3 heat win in that last race was not enough to avoid overall defeat. The Devils' number one Warren Meier took command and kept Bekker and Hutchinson behind, with Neil Thompson in last place.

Heat Details:

Ht.1: M.Bekker 3, Meier 2, van Wyk 1+1, Fish 0. 3-4 (3-4)
Ht.2: Hutchinson 3, Thompson 2, Crock 1, McGuire 0. 4-2 (7-6)
Ht.3: Meier 3, M.Bekker 2, Crock 1+1. (McGuire R) 4-3 (11-9)
Ht.4: Thompson 3, van Wyk 2+1, Fish 1. (Hutchinson R) 1-6 (12-15)
Ht.5: Van Wyk 3, Crock 2, Fish 1+1, McGuire 0. 4-3 (16-18)
Ht.6: Meier 3, M.Bekker 2, Hutchinson 1+1, Thompson 0. 4-3 (20-21)

BRAKPAN 20 (17+3): Martin Bekker 7 (3), Ian Hutchinson 4+1 (3), Rhett Crock 4+1 (3), Shaun Fish 2+1 (3).

RUSTENBURG 21 (19+2): Warren Meier 8 (3), Jonno van Wyk 6+2 (3), Neil Thompson 5 (3), Kagan McGuire 0 (3)

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2003 SOUTH AFRICAN LEAGUE TABLE

Pos.	Team M	W	D	L	For -	Ag.	Pts
1 st	WALKERVILLE	2	2	0	0	65 - 63	4
2 nd	RUSTENBURG	2	1	0	1	52 - 52	2
3 rd	BRAKPAN	2	0	0	2	52 - 54	0

2003 SOUTH AFRICAN LEAGUE RIDERS' AVERGAGES

	M	R	P	B	TP	CMA	
WALKERVILLE WIZARDS							
1	Deon Swart	1	2	5	1	6	12.00
2	Eugene Smith	2	10	25	0	25	10.00
3	Martin Bekker	2	12	17	3	20	6.67 (7.20 incl. Guest rides)
4	Byron Bekker	1	4	4	1	5	5.00 (8.00 incl. Guest rides)
5	Neil Thompson	2	10	7	0	7	2.80
RUSTENBURG RED DEVILS							
1	Warren Meier	1	3	8	0	8	10.67
2	Alex Lakatos	1	5	10	0	10	8.00
3	Jonathan van Wyk	2	5	8	2	10	8.00
4	Wiekus Pretorius	1	5	5	1	6	4.80
<i>also rode (guest riders):</i>							
5	Ian Hutchinson (Brakpan)	1	5	11	0	11	(8.80)
6	Rhett Crock (Brakpan)	1	5	2	2	4	(3.20)
7	Kagan McGuire (Brakpan)	1	3	0	0	0	(0.00)
BRAKPAN REBELS							
1	Ian Hutchinson	2	9	18	2	20	8.88 (8.86 incl. Guest rides)
2	Shaun Fish	1	3	2	1	3	4.00
3	Rhett Crock	2	8	6	1	7	3.50 (3.38 incl. Guest rides)
4	Kagan McGuire	1	3	0	0	0	0.00 (0.00 incl. Guest rides)
<i>also rode (guest riders):</i>							
5	Byron Bekker (Walkerville)	1	6	14	1	15	(10.00)
6	Martin Bekker (Walkerville)	1	3	7	0	7	(9.33)

An early start of the rainy season in November had forced the cancellation of several scheduled race events. While there was no need to re-stage the annual Best Pairs event, every effort was made to re-run the proposed play-off final of the South African League. Top of the table Walkerville was due to host Rustenburg in a one-off final for the "SA Club Champion's Trophy" donated by Hansie Kleynhans.

After being rained-off twice, the N.S.A. was prepared to give it one more try. The plan was to stage the League Cup final between Walkerville and Rustenburg, being held over from the 2003 season, as a curtain raiser for the 2004 season on January 31. But when the meeting again got cancelled in January, this competition was never completed.

Christian Weber. September 26, 2013

Walkerville Wizards

-- 2003 --

Rustenburg Red Devils

