

Tschops proves again he has what it takes to get to top

Bobby Cheetham
Senior Editor, Motoring

Illustration: Avusa.co.za

In his professional racing career Tschops Sipuka has achieved many firsts. Earlier this month Tschops again rewrote the records when he made motor racing history after he was both runner-up and winner of the Formula 1 Volkswagen national championship single seater race in South Africa.

He bathed in his best previous result of second in East London in June in his third-ever Formula 1 Volkswagen race after only joining the series in court there at Kilarney in Cape Town in May. "I'm very proud of Tschops, I think, he showed that he is one of our most versatile and talented racing drivers," said Sipuka's mentor Terry Moss and number one supporter throughout an 11-year career that saw

him become the first driver of colour to win a national championship (the 2002 Polo Cup). "This was a big day for me," said Sipuka.

"It has been a long time coming and I have worked hard for this and all my other achievements so far. As always, I have to thank Terry for his support and encouragement and for giving me the opportunity to show what I can do behind the wheel of a single-seater racing car."

But Tschops is not sitting back and enjoying his achievements, he has a burning desire to race overseas. He has competed in Formula 1 Volkswagen at the famous Nurburgring circuit in Germany, in the 24-Hour VW Beetle Fun Cup at Spa-Francorchamps in Belgium and in the Continental Tyres International truck racing series in South Africa.

He has also successfully completed rookie tests in Formula 1 Palmer Audi at Spa, in Formula 1 BMW at Sepang in Malaysia and in the Indy Pro Series at Phoenix International Raceway in Arizona in the United States.

Sipuka started racing in 1998 and first made history when he won the 2002 VW Polo Cup series and became the first

driver of colour to win a national motor racing championship. He repeated the feat in 2003, was awarded Protea colours and was selected as the Bridgestone Motor Sportsman of the Year by the South African Guild of Motoring Journalists.

World of Wheels caught up with the job-setting motor racing star and asked him a few questions.

Tschops, with all the achievements behind you what does this mean to you?

"It's very significant for me, primarily, because of all the hard work behind the scenes and the time it took to get to a winning mode."

How do you feel when you look back having driven for Nissan and the closest to a win you got was a second?

"The win brought so much sobriety from a perspective of perseverance and the will within to dig more and more to succeed. I choose not to think about the negatives but embrace the positives from those who cheered me on, particularly the mechanics and the race engineer."

Getting back to the Terry Moss Racing Team and winning ways, did this bring back good memories?



SERVICE PROVIDER . . . One of the most important tasks a racing driver can perform is providing critical information to his race engineer. Here Tschops takes time out in the blistering sun to do this.

For a moment this brought tears to my eyes as I reflected on where it started and where I

am and most importantly what one has achieved with this particular team.

It is a moment that I battle to find words to describe. How did you find the ad-

vertisement from a saloon car to a single seater racing?

"It's not a difficult one if you're searching within and focus self-fulfillment. There is a lot where your patience is tested by the level of understanding your input and the sponsor being able to interpret a from the telemetry into a kable solution in order to be forward."

And in a single seater it's everything from braking to corner entry, also found it mentally challenging because you have to be active faith. This is not an easy task if you are not at one with the car.

"Mostly appears when you're in a take corners at speeds which you would not normally take with a saloon car. I have to be constantly pushing to find the limits of the car. You would then go through a process of mental exercises where the brain is so and the will within your-

"Says push because if you're not you will lose. When you went to the US 1 year and did well testing Phoenix and Indianapolis, it was your intention? I had been longing to test international stream of motorsport with the greatest intention of racing on that level."

However, I have not come across many sponsors who would look at being exposed in the US through motorsport."

However though, I am still pushing to fulfil that vision. Someone, somewhere will perhaps see the opportunity and synergy for this cause and bring it to life, God willing. The idea behind testing for the Indy Life series was to create a platform that would showcase my talent and, hopefully, take it to the next level."

That could be the Indy 500 or NASCAR which gets major publicity and these events are also very well organised."

Do you find that colour works to your advantage in pulling the right sponsorship deals?

"Well, not at all. I personally believe if colour was a foundation to bring about the right results, it's certainly not that way in Motorsport."

If that was the case I would not be in South Africa now because we have a lot of wealthy black businessmen who could be supportive and take pride in seeing a man of colour achieve in a sport that is mostly perceived to be white dominated.



PUNISHING . . . Getting ready to climb into his car, Tschops Sipuka fastens his helmet for another punishing session on the track during his test session in the United States.

ICON . . . Motorsport team owner Brian Stewart has lived and breathed racing for the last 40 years, winning championships as a driver and as a team owner. Tschops Sipuka and Stewart take a breather after a grueling test session.



US TEST . . . Tschops in his racing car in the United States after undergoing a test session.



HISTORIC MOMENT . . . Tschops Sipuka, behind the wheel of his Formula 1 Volkswagen racecar in Welkom, became the first black driver to win a national championship single seater race in South Africa.

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