**TAKING A LOOK AT SPINNING….**

Time to delve into the crazy world of 'spinning' and we don’t mean fishing, a fitness class involving exercise bikes, nor the making of textiles.

No, the sort of spinning we’re talking about here is rather more high-octane and lends new meaning to the phrase ‘burning rubber’.

The sport of 'spinning' is the latest craze in South Africa. Stunt drivers called ‘spinners’ take their driving passion to audacious levels in breath-taking fashion.

Typically, the driver will perform a number of tight manoeuvres so that the car spins round, creating a cloud of smoke and dust, before the driver casually steps out the car (while it’s spinning round driverless, engine revving, tyres screeching), jigs around it (as the vehicle continues to spin), leaps onto the bonnet (again while the car’s still spinning), on to the roof, lifts up the bonnet, balances on the window frame, before re-entering via the door (or through the sunroof) to take control of the vehicle once again.

All this in front of adoring crowds who can’t get enough of their spinning idols’ skill and fearlessness.

**A BIT OF HISTORY….**

Although it has only become a legalised spectator sport in the last few years, spinning started back in the 1990s as a gangster ritual in South Africa’s townships, giving it a fearsome reputation.

When a gangster was killed, his friends would steal a car, spin it at his funeral and then set it alight as a sign of respect. Battles between drivers were played out in the streets and clashes with the police were common.

Vernon Hendriks, known as Veejaro, is one such legend. If it hadn’t been for spinning, Veejaro says his life would have turned out quite differently.

Magesh Ndaba lives in the township of KwaThema in Johannesburg where he is known as the King of Spin. He was 10 years old when he started driving; he would put four pillows on the car seat so he could see over the steering wheel. Despite cult status afforded to the best spinners, it does not mean they can earn their living solely from the sport. Magesh’s day job, involves driving an altogether different kind of vehicle – the local school bus.

Behind the scenes of spinning, an army of mechanics work constantly to maintain these spinning machines to a high standard.

A set of tyres can only hold out for five minutes of spinning given the mad manoeuvres involved.

**GETTING STARTED…**

**For the first-time racer**, the fun actually begins with admission into the pits. With the run card in hand, you first stop at the tech booth to prove the legality of your racing machine. Most tracks will check under the hood and inside the vehicle, looking for loose batteries, coolant-overflow containers, the proper safety gear, and so on. If you are competing with your daily car, chances are you won't need more than a valid driver's license.

According to the Motorsport SA (MSA) Spinning rulebook, any driver who competes at an MSA sanctioned track needs a valid competitor license and has to join a MSA affiliated Spinning club.

Safety rules are important and safety attire are mandatory regardless of elapsed time.

**LICENSING**

Before anyone enters into any motorsport event in South Africa, a competitor needs to obtain a competition licence. All motorsport in South Africa is governed by a body called Motorsport South Africa – referred to as MSA which has many functions. MSA is the licensing authority for competition licences and application has to be made via them.

In turn, all motorsport in South Africa runs under the international guidelines laid down by one of two international bodies and MSA is the sole affiliate to these bodies as well as the SA Sports Council. These are:

The FIA. (Federation de Internationale de l’Automobile) This is the body that controls all car racing.

The FIM. (Federation de Internationale de Motocyclisme) This is the body that controls all two-wheeled racing.

The licence can be applied for via online at [www.msaonline.co.za](http://www.msaonline.co.za).

When applying for your licence you will need proof of club membership. You can download the club list from the MSA website and contact any one of the Spinning clubs. Once you have joined a club, ask them to send you a letter as proof of membership which you will need when you apply online. Secondly you would need to take out one of the Medical Insurance options with MSA.

There are three types of licences that can be applied for and these are:

**Club licence** – This licence is a restricted licence that allows competition in club events and provincial events although no points can be scored in any regional championship with a club licence.

**Regional Licence** – This licence is also a restricted licence and allows competition in all club and provincial championship events although points can only be scored in the provincial championship in the province in which the competitor resides. No competition is allowed in any national championship events with a regional licence, other than if a regional championship event is combined with a national championship.

**National licence** – This licence allows competition in any event in South Africa as well as Lesotho and Swaziland which fall under MSA.

Once you have obtained your licence you need to download the General Competition Rules as well as the category specific rules (in this case Spinning) from the MSA website. Make sure that you read through these books and familiarize yourself with all the rules and regulations of the competition. The SSR handbook will contain most of the information you need for your vehicle/motorcycle and general rules.

The concept is for the competitor to find their feet first in club events and use them to gain confidence and skills. Once you have mastered the club events, you can then move onto regional events. Similarly, keep on at your regional events until you think you’re experienced enough and fit enough to enter into a national.

Our advice to all new competitors is to not rush into higher levels regional or national too soon. By gradually getting into club events one can gain confidence and skill and will be able to cope with the very physical demands of the sport. If a new competitor moves into regionals too quickly they’ll find the going tough and may get a little disillusioned.

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