

## ABSA OFF ROAD CHAMPIONSHIP / AFRICAN HERITAGE

### NISSAN TRIO ENTER AFRICAN HERITAGE CROSS COUNTRY

A trio of Nissan crews have thrown their hats into the African Heritage ring in the Eastern Cape from July 27 to 30.

The African Heritage race is round two of the FIA Cross Country World Cup and round five of the Absa Off Road Championship. Norwegian driver Ivar Tollefsen and British co-driver Quin Evans have entered the FIA event in a factory Nissan Navara, and will be joined by South Africans Mark Corbett and Rudi Balzar in the Century Property Development Nissan Navara.

Both crews plan to compete in the 2008 Paris Dakar. For Corbett and Balzar it will be their first attempt at the classic race.

Another South African crew, Henri and Maurice Zermatten, have entered the African Heritage on an invitation basis. They will campaign the Ryobi Nissan Hardbody but will not be eligible to score points towards the World Cup.

The three Nissan crews join the X-Raid BMW team in the African Heritage Cross Country event. The organisers are also awaiting an entry from a top Italian team, and are expecting around 70 entries for the race.

Tollefsen and Evans have been competing this season in the Absa Off Road Championship and currently share third place in the overall Production Vehicle standings with Castrol Toyota crew Mark Cronje and Chris Birkin. The Nissan Navara was built at Nissan SA's motorsport headquarters in Midrand, and the pair have been using the SA championship as preparation for the marathon classic.

"South Africa has probably the strongest domestic off-road championship in the world," said Tollefsen. "The terrain for your events is varied and highly challenging, the racing is highly competitive and the events are professionally run and of a high standard.

"It is the ideal preparation for the Paris Dakar, and Quin and I wanted to fully familiarise ourselves with the Nissan Navara. The help and co-operation we have had from the Nissan motorsport people has been fantastic, and we are thoroughly enjoying South Africa."

After a non finish in the opening event of the season in the Western Cape, the Tollefsen/Evans combination have been models of consistency. They have come up with solid finishes in the other three events run so far this season, and will fancy their chances on the African Heritage Cross Country.

"I think a little local knowledge might come in useful," said Tollefsen. "Quin and I are familiar with South African conditions and how your events are run, and that might give us a slight advantage.

"From what we have heard through the grapevine the route is going to be stunning, and we are looking forward to the experience."

Corbett and Balzar finished second on the recent Toyota 1000 Desert Race in Botswana and will be a threat to the overseas teams. The Zermatten's also bounced back to form when they won Class D in Botswana in a return to form for a team renowned for their consistency.

Documentation and scrutineering for the African Heritage Cross Country and Amathole 500 will take place at the Garden Court in East London on July 26 and on the morning of July 27. The prologue for Absa Off Road Championship competitors and Stage 1 of the international African Heritage Cross Country will start at 12h00 in Bisho and will finish at the Fish River Sun.

Round five of the Absa Off Road Championship and Stage 2 of the World Cup event will be run over a 500 kilometre circular route in the Amatola Mountains on July 28. Both races will start and finish at the Fish River Sun.

Stage 3 of the African Heritage Cross Country, with the start and finish at the Fish River Sun, will be run on July 29 with the Stage 2 route run in reverse. Stage 4 of the World Cup will start at the Fish River Sun on July 30 and will finish in Bisho.

South African competitors whose vehicle are not homologated for the FIA event, will be eligible to compete in the African Heritage Cross Country but will run at the back of the field. No championship points will be at stake for SA entries, but trophies will be awarded.

ISSUED BY AFRICAN HERITAGE CROSS COUNTRY AND THE MSA OFF ROAD CAR RACING COMMISSION. PLEASE CONTACT CHARMAINE FORTUNE ON 011 462 6243 FOR FURTHER INFORMATION.

HIGH RESOLUTION PHOTOGRAPHS ARE AVAILABLE ON [WWW.MOTORPICS.CO.ZA](http://WWW.MOTORPICS.CO.ZA)

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