

Kwazulu Royals crowned 2022 Gth series champions

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THE KWAZULU Royals defeated the Cape Stingers by 40 points in the showdown of the 2022 Global Team Horse Racing series (GTH) last Friday evening, September 2, 2022. The gripping new series has been underway at Hollywoodbets Greyville racecourse in Durban since August...

As the champions, the KwaZulu Royals ride away with the 2022 GTH series title and a share of R3.5mn in prize money.

Led by Summerveld trainer **Wendy Whitehead** and team captain **Muzi Yeni**, the Royals were the favourites to win with 92% of the vote in an online poll by GTH before the final race meeting.

Yeni, who has numerous Grade 1 races under his belt, rode alongside teammates Kabelo Matsunyane; Raymond Danielson; Jeffrey Syster; Ashton Arries; Thabiso Gumede; Athandiwe Mgudlwa; Jabu Jacobs; and Nicholas Patel during the series. Reserve jockey Keagan de Melo substituted for Jacobs on Friday night.

Kabelo Matsunyane riding for the KwaZulu Royals was awarded the 2022 series' Night Rider trophy, hand carved by Josaphat Phiri, a Durban artist, as well as R30 000 in award money for accumulating the most points during the series. Runner-up Athandiwe Mgudlwa earned a bonus R15 000 and third-place jockey, Rachel Venniker, received an extra R10 000.



GTH is an exciting new style of team-based thoroughbred horse racing. Similar to T20 cricket competitions, teams score points throughout the series and the team with the most points at the end of the series are declared the winner.

This year, three teams – the Cape Stingers, KwaZulu Royals and Gauteng Gijimaz – took part.

GTH Marketing Director, **Angus Campbell**, said, condensed into 2.5 hours each week, the series' programme was fast-paced and exhilarating. "It has attracted many new and hardened horse racing fans. We hope to be able to build on this year's progress at future events in and outside of South Africa," he said.

On the final night, Athandiwe Mgudlwa riding Teichman scored a crucial 46 points in race 8 to secure the team's win. KwaZulu Royals' team captain, **Muzi Yeni**, said: "GTH gave a chance to young riders to ride in quality races which exposed us to nice up-and-coming talent which is has put a spark in our racing."

Following a successful 2021 trial event, which generated over R5mn for racing in South Africa, the 2022 GTH series has injected another vital R10mn into the sport. The four race meetings were also added to KwaZulu-Natal's official Gold Circle racing calendar.

Gold Circle contributed R500 000 in stakes for this year's runners. **Stephen Marshall**, Gold Circle Event and Marketing Executive, was convinced the series could be scaled up in the future. "The idea of GTH is based on sponsorship racing and teams, much like Formula 1. It is fast-paced, with races every 10 to 20 minutes. We have made it work and allowing more jockeys an opportunity to ride, which is broadening the pool."

And like Formula 1, he said GTH was also bringing jockeys into the public eye by bringing them on stage and interviewing them. Marshall said: "For KwaZulu-Natal and Gold Circle, we would definitely look at doing another series, but that would be up to the GTH crew, and we will have those discussions going forward."

Gold Circle Racing Manager, **Raf Sheik**, believes there is also potential to bring GTH to other provinces. "We can build on it," he said.

Sheik hoped there would be continuity and more support from the racing community going forward. He felt that the timing of future events would determine the involvement of more top horses and jockeys but urged racing's other stakeholders: "We need new ideas. What we are doing day in and day out as an industry is not working; we need to support these events."

Campbell concluded: "First, we will assess the success of the event and determine what appetite there is from racing SA to see future GTH team events hosted locally. We would like to say a big thank you to Gold Circle and the connections, trainers, owners, jockeys, team managers, and each of the incredible horses for their enthusiasm and phenomenal performances this year.

For more information about GTH, visit www.gthracing.co.za.

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