

On meeting Graham Donker at Springs-based Intercity Paint and Panel to check out his racing Polo, one encounters an unassuming sort of a chap who doesn't have the appearance of a man who spends his days toiling over an engine in preparation for 'the next big race'.

Not surprising ... while he has been an employee of Mini-Maxi Panelbeaters for over 12 years, Graham's working hours are not spent in the shop. From 8 to 5, he is behind his desk working in the body shop's admin department. It's mostly after hours and over weekends that he has the opportunity to get his hands dirty – and he loves every minute of it!

An avid motor racing fan since childhood (Ayrton Senna is his all-time favourite), Graham has been an active participant in motor sport since 1985. Aged 13, he started out in Formula M behind the wheel of a scaled-down Formula 1 car powered by a motor bike engine.

Twenty two years down the track, Graham now participates in the Engen VW Cup, a 10-round national championship running from March to November each year. Each of the 30-odd vehicles participating in this category is custom-built at VW's Uitenhage plant and is identical.

The first race of the 2007 season took place at Kyalami in early March and Graham was pleased to qualify second on the grid - and, after scooping third and fourth positions in the two races of the day, he is in third position. The next race on Graham's agenda is at Killarney in Cape Town and he has already been preparing his six-speed, 20-valve, two-litre engine VW racing Polo for this event

The last of the original participants in the Engen VW Cup since its inception 10 years ago, the exterior of Graham's Polo clearly shows that he has a number of sponsors behind him. Mini/Maxi Panelbeaters has been his main sponsor since he joined the company, hence the honey bee look-alike black and yellow livery!

Owner Eliso Miranda is a long-time customer of Intercity Paint and Panel, which, according to Intercity director, Patrick Gillespie, has also co-sponsored Graham for about seven years. "Graham



Standing from left is Graham Donker with Patrick Gillespie, director of Intercity Paint and Panel in Springs. Justin Bussac, who has recently been appointed Sales and Technical Manager at Intercity Paint and Panel, is in front.

takes great pride in his vehicle inside and out and it's always in peak performance mode. This, backed by his enthusiastic and consistent performance on the track, makes it all worth while," says Patrick. Intercity Paint and Panel is a leading and longstanding distributor of top quality Spies Hecker automotive coating products and systems.

Unfortunately, the 2007 Engen VW Cup Championship will be Graham's last. "In 2008, an age limit of 27 years is being introduced and I will no longer be eligible," he says. "It's now my 11th year in this category and I've had a great run with Engen and VW whose vehicles I've been racing since 1993. I would like to use this opportunity to thank all of my sponsors for their unbelievable support over the years."

While Graham will be bowing out in this race category, there are two other motor sport categories in which he can still race - Wesbank V8 series and Production Cars. "A custom-built car to race in Wesbank series starts at around R400 000 and so far I've made no decisions past the end of this season."

He rates his motor sport career

highlight as his win of the South African Champion Formula GTI Class B title in 1995. "Right now, first prize for me would be to take the title in the 2007 Engen VW Cup Championship."

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"We'd love to highlight your news."

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