

Winners of the 2011 Spirit of Africa competition finals announced

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Christiaan Otto and Marius Welgemoed (pictured right) made it two in the row when they were crowned as the 2011 Spirit of Africa champions in Bilene, Mozambique. The pair previously won the 2010 competition at the finals held in Namibia.

Christiaan and Marius mastered the challenging course – which demanded precise driving and total concentration – to amass 1495 points. This earned them the coveted title of Spirit of Africa champions, as well as R50 000 in prize money.



Finishing in second place with 1305 points were Juan Grant and Douw Roode, who received R30 000 for their efforts. Piet and Madelein Kotze finished in the third place with 1280 points and prize money of R20 000.

Nearly 500 teams participated in the 2011 competition, which consisted of two eliminations rounds held in Upington and Kosi Bay.

Local motorsport legend and Spirit of Africa organiser Sarel van der Merwe was delighted with the level of the competition and group of participants in the 2011 competition.

“Looking back at the competition from the previous years and especially this year, I realised that Spirit of Africa has certainly attracted a new group of participants. These youngsters, between the ages of 21 to 26, bring a whole new dimension to the competition. They are more adventurous and are also an influential group,” explained Sarel.

“Previously, we had a more traditional, older group of 4x4 drivers, but in 2011 the competition attracted young drivers. This is very positive for Spirit of Africa because it means that we have tapped into a whole new market. It also shows that the competition now appeals to a wider audience. It is good to know that the face of the competition is also changing and becoming more hip, although it does make me feel that I might be getting too old for the game,” he added.

The Amarok 2.0 TDI 90kW was the official vehicle for the 2011 competition.

“The highlight for me this year was using the Amarok 90 kW. It handled the difficult challenges with ease and totally dispelled the myth that smaller capacity engines like the 90 kW are not powerful enough for serious off-roading,” said Sarel.

“The Spirit of Africa competition has helped us to build and entrench the Amarok brand in the 4x4 community. The 2011 competition was another resounding success in terms of the number of participants that we hosted especially when you consider their age group. We are confident that the Amarok performance and off-road capabilities left an indelible impression in this new generation of the 4x4 enthusiasts,” said Graeme Birch, Marketing Manager for Volkswagen Commercial Vehicles.



Amarok will be back for the 2012 Spirit of Africa competition and Sarel is already looking at a different location.

“We will probably have one of the elimination rounds somewhere in the Limpopo Province. We are looking at changing the format of the competition to add some excitement and enhance its reputation,” concluded Sarel.