

Historische Formel Vau Europa e.V.

Ben Pienaar

„Always good”

An obituary by Frank Orthey



Ben Pienaar

20.09.1961 – 13.07.2021

„Always good“

It was December 1st, 2010 at Johannesburg Airport. We have just arrived from Munich and were picked up by Ben and Kevin Jenkins. Kevin, who died one day after Ben on July 14th, 2021, has been with Formula Vee since the beginning of Formula Vee in South Africa in 1965. I planned our visit to the Formula Vee 45th Anniversary in South Africa together with him for months. And there they stood: Kevin and Ben. "How are you?" Ben: "Always good." I should hear that more often - and it was like that. Kevin brought the current edition of the South African version of "Motorsport aktuell" with him, containing a lot of coverage about the 45th anniversary and us Europeans. We are impressed, Ben took care of the luggage and the rental car. We drove to Ben's house from where we headed towards Mabula, whatever that may be. After several hours of driving, we finally reached a lodge via winding sandy paths and shortly afterwards we sat in the open SUV right in the middle of Africa. As soon as we have coped with the buffalo, kudu, giraffes, rhinos and elephants, we stood on a hill enjoying a "sundowner". We enjoy illustrated book views that surpass any Africa cliché. "A beer? A wine? Look, there are rhinos, two in the trees down there, and there, yes, there are two giraffes. One more beer?!"



The first evening on December 1st, 2010 in Africa with Kevin Jenkins and Ben Pienaar

That was our first personal encounter, as I recorded it in the travel report at that time - and since then everything has always been good: “Always good”. That was the universal answer Ben seemed to give to every question. Because it was his way of life. Ben made everything possible - and with a kind heart always happy and usually with a laugh. Everything is always good.

At that time we were able to get to know South Africa’s unique nature and animal world and many lovely people. It was the beginning of many friendships that continue until today. Ben was a focal figure, a jack of all trades, who showed us everything back in 2010, including a South African traffic accident - with personal participation, of course. But of course, everything always turned out fine. We raced with and against each other, and at the awards ceremony, for which Ben naturally had his own T-Shirts made, we planned the return visit. Ben had also lasered the trophies and of course there was a wonderful wine with the Formula Vee label.



In the centre: Ben

As agreed, we met in Hockenheim and at Nürburgring in 2011 and shared a few days of vacation in Upper Bavaria and Austria - with many encounters and discussions, also about political and social differences. These conversations should connect us further and deeper. In such conversations, Ben was a straightforward, interested and stimulating dialogue partner who was very interested in justice.



European and South African Formula Vee friends at the Nürburgring 2011. The weather is "European", Ben, first row next to Astrid, is happy: "Always good!"

We deepened our friendship and were back in South Africa in December 2011, this time not for racing, but because of our friends and because of the country. And of course, at the beginning of the trip we met Ben with his family and some of our friends in the new house. We were the first guests there, were entertained deliciously and at the end of the trip we met again at the Grobler's. We were deeply touched and even more closely connected through the overwhelming hospitality. "Beautiful", that's what Ben would have - and did - say. Because it was "always good".

In 2013 we met about motorsport again. This time with a delegation from the Historic Formula Vee Europe, which of course received an all-round-carefree-package, including a few days among wild animals and with wonderful culinary arrangements. This time I was Ben's teammate in a perfectly prepared car. Of course, it was prepared by himself, of course, like everything else around it. Ben was an excellent craftsman. He ran a welding company and gave Marietjie the best possible support in setting up her new business. Marietjie shared his look view and yes: his attention to detail. The two were also unbeatable on the grill and making burgers. We drove Formula Vee in Zwartkops and Phakisa. On the way I followed Ben's team, consisting of his pickup and an unbraked trailer, unobtrusively on the South African highways in a rental car with Astrid, Doris and Bobo. Cruising speed 130 km / h plus ... The expected happened. The police, or how Ben put it, something that looks like the police, jumped out

of the median in front of us onto the highway and forced us to brake hard. Ben and his trailer team passed undisturbed. Sure, a white rental car looks promising. What followed was a longer communicative process with the police or what looked like the police. Ben always on the phone and warned that we shouldn't pay anything. We should pay - and not an insignificant amount – according to the police or what pretended to look like it. Only when, after about an hour, Astrid asks for the patrol supervisor, we were allowed to go leave the scene immediately and unpunished. Shortly after we are reunited with Marietjie and Ben we continued at the same speed to the South African Moto GP racetrack Phakisa Freeway "in the middle of nowhere", in the province of Free State, where there are some of the world's richest gold and diamond mines. Ben originally came from this area and could tell us a lot about it after our highway adventure. But first a beer now: "Always good". Everything will be fine.

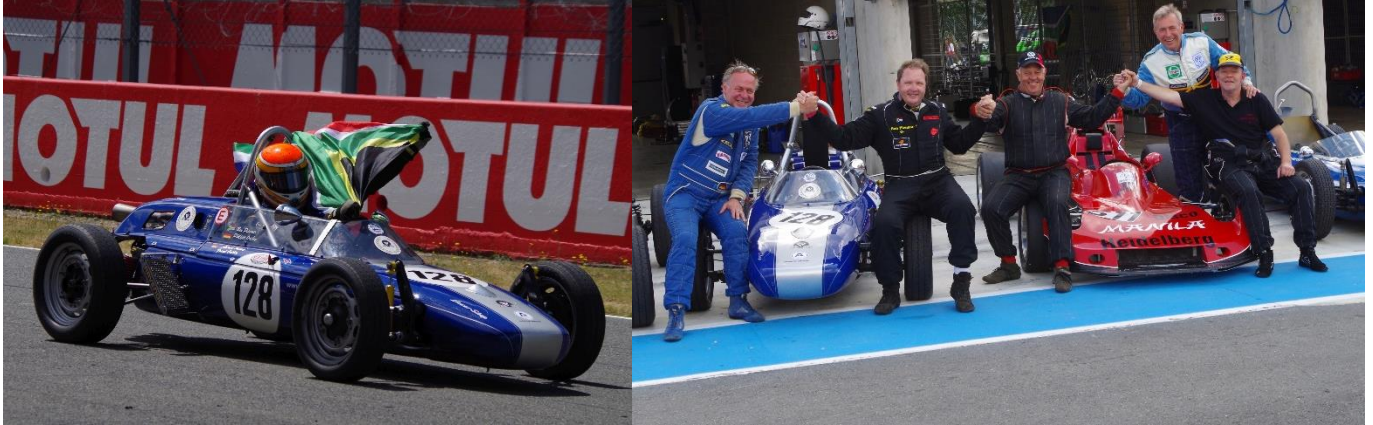


2013 in Zwartkops and Phakisa

We would never have come to South Africa without Formula Vee. And without Ben Pienaar we wouldn't have come back so often. He understood that we didn't feel like guests, but as friends right from the start. Dear friends and amicably connected to this country.

In 2016, the 50th anniversary of the Formula Vee was celebrated. The South African delegation met us at Le Mans, where we were allowed to drive for the first time. Ben drove our Autodynamics and got to know the technical roots of Formula Vau. The Autodynamics is a racing car that is challenging to drive, short wheelbase, loose rear end at the limit. Ben knew

how to move the car right from the start and drove as fast as the regular drivers. Because yes: he was also a great, in other words, a very sensitive racer who never made mistakes or had accidents.



Ben and friends in Le Mans 2016

After vacation days in France and Germany with a detour to the Schumacher Go-Kart-track in Kerpen, the race started in Zandvoort. Ben convinced with impressive lap times - and rolled out after crossing the finish line with an empty tank. Much of our sport takes place on the sidelines in the informal area. Even when visiting Europe, Ben always knew how to approach the joy of sport in a friendly and open manner and to establish contacts for interested parties. This is how many conversations arose in Zandvoort that would otherwise have failed due to supposed language barriers. Ben overcame them because he wanted real contact and he had a real interest in people. So everything was good again - but that is an understatement: it was gigantic. Our South African Vee friends flew back to their "winter" on Monday to start on Tuesday morning (!) in the current championship. Despite missing qualifying, Symm Grobler, who still had a chance of winning the championship, was able to win. Ben finished seventh. You have to figure it out first - and then: do it. But if you're so great at doing, then a lot is done too. And that is what Ben did: A lot of things always done well.

In our winter 2016, the South Africa pull picked up again. Of course, there was something to celebrate: Formula Vee 50th Anniversary. With a small delegation two races were on the programme again. They started in Cape Town - we weren't there yet for scheduling reasons. But when we finally met in Ben's house, the "South Africa newbies" were already fully

integrated. No wonder with that support. The South African Formula Vee is doing a very impressive job in view of these visits. And that doesn't primarily mean the logistics - the one-way distance between Pretoria and Cape Town is 1,500 km - but the simplicity and warmth with which it all happens. Many are involved, but there is a very familiar core around Ben - including the Groblers, the Hills, the Taylors, the Wilsons and veteran Kevin Jenkins - a core, no matters who is on the board or on the organizing committee, that made sure everyone could feel comfortable and everything could actually be "always good". At this core, Ben was on the one hand a doer and on the other hand a good-hearted and cheerful person who was the glue for this core and also those in the European-South African Formula Vee relationship. We were always in the middle of it among friends instead of just being guests, attending races in Cape Town and in Zwartkops, among wild animals in the Kruger National Park or at the annual award ceremony, where we officially presented our Formula Vee book. And, of course, in Marietjie's and Ben's house for a great meal.



2016 at the book launch and the big dinner around Ben

And, of course, we wanted to continue - and one or the other brought in that racing cars are actually no longer needed for this. Nevertheless, we also planned with Formula Vee and Formula Vau. The "Hour of Formula Vau 2020", which Ben, Symm Grobler and Greg Wilson would have attended, had to be canceled.

But the "61 * babies", as Ben, Symm Grobler, Peter Hills, Wolfgang "Bobo" Götz and I (all born in 1961) called each other, were planning a 60-Birthday holiday together in Africa in December this year. At the age of 59, Ben Pienaar died of Covid 19 disease on July 13th.

We are stunned and think of our thoughts are with Marietjie, Bianca and Alberthyn.

The South African Formula Vee writes:

"It is with great sadness that we bid farewell to a LEGEND today. Ben Pienaar, you will be missed by everyone. You always made us laugh, you always helped, you always made a race weekend special, you were a big part of this formula! "

For me, Ben remains part of his "always good"-formula, which stands for a resource-oriented and optimistic view of this world. I was happy to share this attitude with him. And that's what Ben Pienaar still stands for me.

We will never forget Ben with his kindness and joy of heart and keep him in our hearts.



Affiliated with Ben Pienaar

Photos

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