



THE ESSENCE

WHERE on the African continent can you find the only event that takes place just once a year, grabs the attention of millions across every community, has a history stretching beyond 100 years and draws tens of thousands to its venue to swim in the heady atmosphere of sensual stimulation?

The place is Durban's Greyville Racecourse in KwaZulu-Natal, Africa's Racing Capital, the date is July 5 and the event is Africa's Greatest Horseracing Event, the R3-million Vodacom Durban July.

It is the continent's most spectacular sporting and social occasion, unsurpassed in its combination of tension, excitement and sheer indulgent splendour, a mix of titillating fashion, culinary feasting and adrenaline-boosting action that draws the faithful back each year.

Throughout the country in years gone by, the talk for months before was only of the contenders who had made their mark in other centres but had not yet been seen in Durban. The anticipation of their arrival was excitingly tangible as snippets of their fortunes appeared in daily newspapers and on radio news broadcasts.

Before the advent of television, those who could not be among the thousands who thronged the course straining for a glimpse of their fancy, it was the radio that carried the progress and fortunes of the magnificent beasts over every metre of the testing Greyville track as they battled for supremacy.

Everyone, but everyone, had a once-a-year flutter on "the July" – it was something you just had to do.

Today that tradition continues and, while television has taken the general public close up to the action and has given them greater insight to the glory of the event, the addiction of the masses to the annual July fever is as strong as ever and, once again, an expected 50 000 people will squeeze their way into the Greyville Racecourse confines to be a part of that unforgettable experience.