

The 2023 national Vodacom Journalist of the Year Awards winners

News24's Jeff Wicks, *GroundUp's* Daniel Steyn and Marecia Damons have been named joint 2023 Vodacom Journalist of the Year, who share the title and the R100,000 prize.



Image supplied. The national winners of the 2023 Vodacom Journalist of the Year Awards

The national 2023 Vodacom Journalist of the Year Awards (VJOY) were announced at a ceremony in Johannesburg.

Wicks won for his body of work in pursuit of justice for Babita Deokaran, the civil-servant whistle-blower brutally murdered. Steyn and Damons won for their investigation into criminals Thabo Bester and Nandipha Magudumana.

Young Journalist of the Year Award

The title of the 2023 Young Journalist of the Year Award was given to *Daily Maverick's* Tamsin Metelerkamp.

This award emphasises the VJOY's commitment to furthering the career of a dynamic young rising star journalist in South Africa, who has worked for three years or less. Metelerkamp wins an all-expenses paid trip to the UK to compete a course at the prestigious Thomson Foundation.

VJOY Lifetime Achiever Award for 2023

The VJOY Lifetime Achiever Award for 2023 was given posthumously to *Carte Blanche* news anchor Derek Watts.

The award was accepted on his behalf by his daughter Kirsty Watts.



***Carte Blanche* presenter Derek Watts has died**

Karabo Ledwaba 22 Aug 2023



Category winners

The remaining national category winners, who each won R10 000, are:

- **Opinion:** *Eyewitness News* Zongile Nhlapo for *Motherhood isn't defined by my non-verbal son calling me mom.*

The judges comment: "Nhlapo's deep love for her four-year-old son with autism came alive in this beautiful and heartfelt column. In a sensitive and loving manner, she takes the reader into her private space as she writes of the strong bond between them as they developed the special communication they share."

- **Features:** *Khwezi FM's* Saziso Dlamini for an unemployment special.

The judges comment: "We were especially impressed by how Dlamini's hour-long special eloquently treated the issue of unemployment and made the story resonate with listeners."

- **Lifestyle:** *Newzroom Afrika's* Zukiswa Cetywayo and team for Tembisa Drug Rehabilitation Movement.

Judges comment: "Our national winning entry is a lifestyle story that has a positive impact on society, telling the story of a rehabilitated drug addict who assists others with their recovery."

- **Sport:** *AmaBhungane's* Njabulo Ngidi for an investigate piece on the Fifa 2010 Soccer World Cup.

The judges comment: "There is no doubt South Africa was a deserving host of Africa's first FIFA World Cup, but the governance of the tournament and whether we bribed our way to become host, were two questions which Ngidi brought us closer to the truth with, in this piece of stunning investigate sports reporting."

- **Financial and Economics:** *OFM's* Olebogeng Motse for *The construction mafia: is it transformation or criminality?*

The judges comment: "Stories involving criminality, in which the perpetrators were willing to go to any lengths to achieve their ends, require courage and enterprise from journalists. Among the most dangerous stories to cover were those involving construction mafias across the country, and Motse ventured into this perilous terrain."

- **Politics:** *Carte Blanche's* Harri Vithi for an exposé of Joburg councillors' betrayal of the city's residents.

Judges comment: "We had to deliberate deeply to decide the winner from among the category's many cutting-edge political offerings with their potential for dire consequences for the country. Vithi's piece, which at a cursory glance could be mistaken for frivolous, carried significant weight and was skilfully presented, with a fresh approach."

- **Sustainability:** *The Outlier's* Media Hack team of Laura Grant and team for *A Perfect Storm.*

The judges comment: "Grant's entry emphasised South Africa's need to be better prepared to withstand environmental challenges and skilfully harnessed in-depth research with data-journalism techniques to enhance an eloquent

interrogation of the aftermath of Durban's catastrophic April 2022 floods."

- **Live reporting/ breaking news:** *eNCA's* Ronald Masinda and Nceba Ntlanganiso for *Dutywa hostage drama*.

The judges comment: "The national winning entry had all the elements that judges look for in this category, which rewards journalists who are first and correct with breaking news. The national winners found themselves unexpectedly caught up in a hostage situation but reacted with professional commitment, bravely staying to report the drama to its end."

- **Photography:** *Rapport's* Elizabeth Sejake for *Malema: We will end load shedding*.

The judges comment: "Sejake's entry, an image of EFF leader Julius Malema addressing supporters at a political rally, stood out from the other submissions for its captivating moment, correct composition and great context that formed an iconic image."

- **Innovation in journalism:** Joint winners *Eyewitness News* Kgomotso Modise for the Meyiwa trial, and MyBroadband's Johannes Steyn for mobile network coverage feature.

The judges comment: "Entries were assessed both as showcases of innovative techniques and on the basis of great reportage and storytelling. This resulted in joint winners representing different aspects of innovation, with Modise making skilful use of cross-platform coverage of one of the big stories of the year, and Steyn using innovative investigative techniques to cover a largely underreported story."



All the Vodacom Journalist of the Year competition regional finalists

17 Nov 2023



A showcase of talent

"We congratulate our three Vodacom Journalist of the Year title winners, together with all the national category winners, for their tenacity, energy and commitment to their craft," says judging panel convenor, Mapi Mahlangu.

"The Vodacom Journalist of the Year awards once again showcased the incredible talent and dedication of South African journalists, highlighting their ability to inform, engage and entertain. In several categories, the judges had a tough time deciding on winners," adds Mahlangu.

The 2023 VJOY judging panel of Jermaine Craig, Ryland Fisher, Arthur Goldstuck, Patricia McCracken, Professor Gilbert Motsaathebe, Neo Ntsoma, Collin Nxumalo, Jovial Rantao, Elna Rossouw, Advocate Robin Sewlal and Obed Zilwa, had more than 1,300 entries across 12 categories to contend with.

The theme for the 2023 Awards was Authentic Information and Hybrid Content.

Takalani Netshitenzhe, director of external affairs for Vodacom South Africa, says a sense of on-the-job excellence is needed now more than ever.

"The well-being of any democracy depends on uncompromising quality being maintained in journalism. Many of the winning entries reflected stories about the voiceless, with the producer or writer unthinking of the consequences for themselves. This is what Vodacom seeks to reward - accurate, honest, ethical and timely reporting and writing to help our citizens make well-informed decisions."

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