

TOO CLOSE FOR COMFORT IN THE SPECIAL VEHICLE CHAMPIONSHIP

After three days of racing and a thousand gruelling kilometres of the recent Toyota Kalahari Botswana 1000 Desert Race, there were some changes in the Special Vehicle Championship of the South African Cross Country Series (SACCS).

One thing, however, that has not changed, is the fact that after a record 105 starts in the championship and a first victory this season, Coetzee Labuscagne (4x4 Mega World ARB Porter) and daughter, Sandra Labuscagne-Jonck have strengthened their overall lead as well as their lead in Class A.

Going into the TDR 1000 with a slender one point lead, Labuscagne has opened a little gap of nine points in the drivers' standings with John Telford (Calcamite BAT) second after three solid days in the desert. Nic Goslar (Zarco) could not score points on the last day in Botswana and is third overall, 19 points behind Telford and still leading Class P. He is only nine points ahead of Werner Kennedy (Live Lesotho Porter) who had an up and down event in the desert but managed to score points in both heats.

Early championship leader, Stefan van Pletzen (Live Lesotho Chenoweth) would have preferred a better result in Botswana but engine failure on day three put paid to that. He is fifth overall, six points ahead of Botswana driver Keith du Toit (Scania White Star Racing BAT), who made a rare appearance in the championship, with three steady days behind the wheel at the TDR 1000.

In the overall navigators' standings, Labuschagne-Jonck leads Victor Ntsekhe (Calcamite BAT), who reads the notes for Telford, by nine points with Kennedy's co-driver, CJ van Pletzen in third, 28 points behind Ntsekhe. Jaco Pieterse, who sits next to Stefan Van Pletzen, is fourth in the standings with Carolyn Swan (Scania White Star Racing BAT) rounding off the top five after a good outing in Botswana.

With the season now at the halfway mark and the compact state of affairs at the top of the leader board, consistency will be the name of the game, but with three events remaining, anything can still happen before the end of the series.

In the Class P standings, current leaders Nic Goslar and Andrew Massey (SA Clinics Zarco) could be far from safe should the Botswana crew of Julio Ferreira and Onkebetse Seemise (Sandmaster), who were the only crew to finish all three days in the desert and walk away with a rich haul of points, decide to enter the remaining SACCS events this season.

Ferreira currently trails Goslar by a mere four points in the drivers' stakes with Seemise six points clear of navigator Massey who missed the Battlefields 400 in May due to business commitments.

Regular Class P Northern Regions competitors Tony Gouveia and Tinus Le Roux (Gearbox Services CRT), in their first TDR 1000, failed to see out the distance on Saturday but the only other crew to finish on Sunday are third. Keith Makenete and Nataote Bereng are yet to open their score cards.

Competitors will visit Bronkhorstspruit on the outskirts of Gauteng on the 3rd and 4th of August for the fourth round of the series.

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