

AIMING FOR BEST RESULTS WITH THE FOCUS ON TITLES

- **Battle between Toyota and Ford for the titles to continue**

Competitors will feel the added pressure to claim the best results at the Harrismith 400, the fifth and penultimate round of the 2018 South African Cross Country Series (SACCS) that takes place on Friday and Saturday, 14 and 15 September in the eastern Free State, as only two opportunities remain for them to score points towards the titles. This could be a make or break event for the teams in the Production Vehicle category where no titles have confirmed owners yet and putting a wheel wrong or not giving Lady Luck a ride, can be disastrous.

The overall leaders of the Production Vehicle category as well as the FIA Class championship, Giniel de Villiers/Dennis Murphy (Toyota Gazoo Racing SA Hilux), who won here last year, will feel the pressure after not finishing the Atlas Copco 400 in Bronkhorstspuit. They will again take up the battle with their team-mates, Henk Lategan/Barry White who would like nothing more than scoring a second consecutive overall win. After not finishing twice this season, Chris Visser/Philip Herselman (Atlas Copco Toyota Hilux) will not take any risks in an effort to keep their third place in the FIA Class championship standings.

It will be interesting to see how well the tough UK motorcycle rider, world traveller and multiple finisher of the Dakar Rally Lyndon Poskitt, does with reading the notes as the celebrity navigator for Terence Marsh (Red-Lined Motorsport Nissan Navara). Winning and results are not top priority for the Red-Lined Motorsport Team, but Marsh is looking forward to another great adventure and a good result would be the cherry on top.

Their team-mates from Abu Dhabi, Thomas Bell/Patrick McMurren will be using this event to fine-tune their T1 Nissan Navara in preparation for the 2019 Dakar Rally and although they do not score points towards the SACCS championship, they could walk away with a good result.

Johan van Staden/Mike Lawrenson (Elf Renault Duster) will be looking to make up lost ground and add more successful kilometres to their season so far as will Jason Venter/Jaco van Aardt (4x4 Mega World ARB Toyota Hilux) who have also had an up and down season.

In a turn-up for the books, former SA Quad Champion Brian Baragwanath (Century Racing CR 5) will team up with Dakar legend Joey Evans who had his first taste of 4x4 cross country racing as celebrity navigator for Terence Marsh at the recent Atlas Copco 400. "I am hoping Joey's biker instincts will help navigate us to a podium finish" said Baragwanath. Team-mates Mark Corbett/Juan Möhr (Century Racing CR6) who have missed three events this season will also be on the start line and have proven that they can upset the applecart although they are not in the running for any championship titles this year.

Fireworks can be expected in Class T where the battle at the front will continue between Lance Woolridge/Ward Huxtable (NWM Ford Ranger) and the Horn brothers, Johan and Werner (Malalane Toyota Hilux). Woolridge/Huxtable who will compete for the first time in their NWM Ford Ranger now fitted with a 5.0L Mustang V8 engine, have already won twice this season with the Horn brothers only being victorious once and with only four points separating them, means the scales are evenly balanced.

The Woolridge brothers, with Gareth/Boyd Dreyer in the second NWM Ford Ranger, dominated this event last year with a 1-2 finish and a repeat of this result, will suit the team perfectly. It will also compliment Gareth's result of winning the T1-Brazil Class on his international racing debut when he competed in the Rally dos Sertões over eight days and 3 600 kilometres in Brazil recently.

The Atlas Copco Toyota Hilux team of Gary Bertholdt/Geoff Minnitt will be hoping for a repeat performance and would like nothing better than adding another victory to their first and recent win on the Atlas Copco 400. Another win will also edge them closer to the two teams ahead of them.

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With so much at stake, the pressure will be on the title chasers. Teams who are not in the fight for titles, will be on their own mission of scoring points and building on experience. Jacques van Tonder/Sammy Redelinghuys (Ford Ranger) can strengthen their fifth place in the standings while Richard Leeke/Danie Stassen (Speedglas BMW X3) and Dylan Venter/Donavan Lubbe (4x4 Mega World ARB Toyota Hilux) will hope for better luck and more points towards their tallies.

Class S competitors will have their own battles with the experienced Jannie Visser and son, Chris (Toyota Hilux) in the middle from where they will be chasing the Class leaders, David Huddy/Gerhard Schutte (Nissan Navara) while keeping third-placed Heinie Strumpher/Henri Hugo (Toyota Hilux) at bay. The trio can expect interference from Archie Rutherford who will be sharing his Atlas Copco Toyota Hilux with two navigators. Pieter van Wyk will be doing duty on Friday for the qualifying race with son Kent, the youngest navigator in the series, next to him on Saturday.

Competitors will tackle a 40 kilometre qualifying race for grid positions starting at 13:00 on Friday, 14 September. The race the following day starts at 08:00 and will be run over a compact 170 kilometre route to be completed twice, with a compulsory 30 minute service halt and re-bunch after the first lap.

All the action will take place from the Eeram Farmers Complex where race headquarters as well as the designated service park will be located. Access to these areas as well as the vantage points along the route are open to the public.

Cross country enthusiasts can also follow the Harrismith 400 action by downloading the RallySafe App free of charge for iOS and Android devices.

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