

**DEMANDING HARRISMITH 400 TURNS SACCS CHAMPIONSHIP ON ITS HEAD**

- First victory for Chris Visser/Philip Herselman (Atlas Copco Toyota Hilux)
- Defending champions under pressure by team-mates for the title

The Production Vehicle championship was turned on its head here today. The Harrismith 400, the fifth and penultimate round of the South African Cross Country Series (SACCS) that took place in the Harrismith area caused havoc with new race winners emerging while a few top contenders will have to return to the drawing board for the final round of the season.

Dry, dusty and windy conditions as well as a slippery route contributed to the challenges the teams faced and it was eventually Chris Visser/Philip Herselman (Atlas Copco Toyota Hilux) who claimed their first victory of the season after a total of almost 400 kilometres of tough cross country racing. Visser/Herselman started the race from fourth place and took the lead during the first of the two 174 kilometre loops to take the overall as well as the FIA Class victory.

Pole sitters, Henk Lategan/Barry White (Toyota Gazoo Racing SA Hilux) encountered a closed gate early on the route and lost some time possibly contributing to them having to settle for second place, 1min 34s behind the winners. They were second in the FIA Class. Their team-mates, Giniel de Villiers/Dennis Murphy, who were the second last Production Vehicle to start the race after not finishing the qualifying race due to a mechanical problem, did not finish the race either. They overshot and hit a concrete pipe that caused too much damage. This result will see the front of the FIA Class championship looking somewhat different when the teams tackle the final race of the 2018 season.

It was a good day for Jason Venter/Jaco van Aardt (4x4 Mega World ARB Toyota Hilux) who started 10<sup>th</sup> in the category to walk away with third place overall as well as in the FIA Class. This is their best result so far this season.

There was happiness in the NWM Ford camp with a first Class T victory for Gareth Woolridge/Boyd Dreyer despite having to stop on the first loop to look for a worrying noise and changing a shock at the halfway mark. Their team-mates, Lance Woolridge/Ward Huxtable, started eighth, but lost time when they got stuck in a mud hole. They were fourth in Class T and will continue the title battle with rivals, Johan/Werner Horn (Malalane Toyota Hilux) who were sixth in Class T after experiencing problems with a slipping fan belt.

Richard Leeke/Danie Stassen (Speedglas BMX X3) have something to celebrate as they claimed their first Class T podium and their best result this season by finishing second. There will also be celebrations in Harrismith as local heroes, Jacques van Tonder/Sammy Redelinghuys (Ford Ranger) stepped onto the third step of the Class T podium after starting the race from second place.

It was a nail-biting battle for the best results in Class T as a blanket of almost four minutes covered Leeke/Stassen, Van Tonder/Redelinghuys, Lance Woolridge/Huxtable and Gary Bertholdt/Geoff Minnitt (Atlas Copco Toyota Hilux). Bertholdt/Minnitt started the race from last after experiencing problems during the qualifying race. They then fought their way through the field to score valuable points finishing fifth in Class T. Dylan Venter/Donavan Lubbe (4x4 Mega World ARB Toyota Hilux) bagged their first points of the season with a seventh place in class.

Mark Corbett/Juan Möhr (Century Racing CR 6) lost time when they got stuck in the same mud hole as Woolridge/Huxtable. They finished just off the FIA Class podium in fourth place. Brian Baragwanath/Joey

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Evans in the Century Racing CR 5 had their share of problems after being the fifth Production Vehicle off the line. They experienced hydraulic jack and inter related power steering problems on the first loop and tried unsuccessfully to fix it resulting in the pair having to face the last 42 kilometres without power-steering. They were eventually fifth in the FIA Class followed by the Red-Lined Motorsport Nissan Navara team from Abu-Dhabi, Thomas Bell/Patrick McMurren, who used the Harrismith 400 to do testing prior to their participation in the 2019 Dakar Rally, in sixth place.

In Class S, the class leaders, David Huddy/Gerhard Schutte (Nissan Navara) extended their lead in the standings when they walked away with the silverware and valuable points. Veteran competitor, Jannie Visser and his son, Chris (Toyota Hilux) had to call it a day when they broke a front right hub in the second loop while Archie Rutherford/Kent Rutherford (Atlas Copco Toyota Hilux) suffered suspension issues in loops one and could also not finish the race.

There was disappointment for Johan van Staden/Mike Lawrenson (Elf Renault Duster) who experienced suspension problems while a broken front right suspension resulted in Terence Marsh/Lyndon Poskitt (Red-Line Motorsport Nissan Navara) also not receiving the chequered flag.

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