

ROCKY GOLD 400 CLAIMS ITS VICTIMS AND CROWNS ITS CHAMPS

The Gold 400, the sixth and final round of the South African Cross Country Series that played off in the gold fields on the western outskirts of Gauteng on 2 and 3 November, claimed its victims in the Special Vehicle category and those in the title fight battles, had to tread lightly on the rocks to make sure they get home safely to claim their crown.

The previous race winner, Lance Trethewey/Adriaan Roets (LTE Earthmovers BAT Venom) had no pressure and after qualifying second fastest on Friday, they stayed clear of the battles to claim their second consecutive overall victory and Class A win. They were followed by the Live Lesotho Chenoweth of Stefan van Pletzen/Jaco Pieterse who started fifth after the 49km Qualifying Race and finished on the podium by 'keeping it clean' on a rocky route that was described as tight and tough by most competitors.

A third place and a finish in front of arch-rivals, John Telford/Victor Ntsekhe (Calcamite BAT Warbird), was enough for the father and daughter, Coetzee Labuscagne/Sandra Labuscagne-Jonk (4x4 Mega World ARB Porter) to clinch the overall championship title as well as the Class A crown. They tackled the race with great caution.

"The route is very rough, and you have to drive accordingly," Labuscagne said after the first of the two 163km loops that made up Saturday's race. The father and daughter pair were the only team who started and finished all six SACCS events in the 2018 season, that included a victory at the Toyota Kalahari Botswana 1000 Desert Race, and their consistency and perseverance paid off.

Werner Kennedy/CJ van Pletzen (Live Lesotho Porter) had to fight their way open from the back of the field after they could not post a qualifying time on Friday. They were rewarded with a fourth place in Class A after a relatively smooth ride.

Telford/Ntsekhe lost time on the final lap and had to settle for fifth place in Class A while they saw their possible championship disappear. They were as consistent as the Labuscagne team and although not claiming a victory this year, they could only not finish the second round of the season.

Class P was won by Keith Makenete/Ntaote Bereng (BAT) who were slowed somewhat on the first loop due to a puncture. Andrew Makenete/Lepsy Mosope had to retire with a broken alternator on the first loop.

There was also disappointment for Talha and Taahir Moosajee (Stryker) who posted the fastest time after the 49km Qualifying Race on Friday when they had to retire with a broken propshaft 30 kilometres into the race. Clint Gibson/Clint Brook (Stryker) also had to call it a day after qualifying third on the grid as did Marius and Yolinda Fourie (BAT) who competed for the first time this season.

In the Side-by-Side Interprovincial Challenge, it was Werner Mostert/Rob Green (Can-Am Maverick) who took the victory ahead of Peter Walter/Shawn de Villiers with Leander Pienaar/Carl Swanepoel third. The Can-Am Maverick was the preferred vehicle of choice and all teams participated with this Side-by-Side. There were problems for the new champion, Nico du Rand who had Henry Köhne reading the notes as they could not finish the race. Mostert/Green confirmed their runner-up position for the season with Walter/De Villiers third in the final standings for the year.

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