

CHALLENGING DESERT RACE AWAITS SPECIAL VEHICLE TEAMS IN BOTSWANA

The Toyota Botswana 1000 Desert Race (TDR 1000), round three of the South African National Cross Country Series (SACCS) that takes place on 21, 22 and 23 June from Selebi Phikwe in Botswana, will pose a huge challenge for teams in the Special Vehicle category as almost a thousand kilometres await them. It will, however, be worth their effort as double points are on offer at the end of this epic three-day race.

This indicates the standings could get a make-over and that the second half of the season will present new challenges. Before the teams cross the border, the big question is: will Lance Trethewey/Adriaan Roets (LT Earthmovers BAT) be able to add a third victory to their scoresheet to claim a hat-trick of wins and extend their lead in the overall standings as well as the Class A championship? They did not participate in the TDR 1000 last year and would like nothing better than a desert debut victory. A new venue for all also means a level playing field.

Trethewey/Roets might fancy their chances of a TDR 1000 win, but looking at the Total Agri camp, so will the defending Special Vehicle Navigator's Champion, Sandra Labuschagne-Jonck. While still in the navigator seat, Labuschagne-Jonck took the overall Special Vehicle category as well as Class A win at the TDR 1000 last year together with father, Coetzee Labuschagne. Another win will be even more special as it would be her first behind the wheel of the Porter with husband, Jaco, reading the notes this season. The Labuschagne family are known for their absolute perseverance and if it means getting to the finish line on three wheels, that is exactly what they will do.

John Telford/Victor Ntsekhe (Calcamite BAT) and Botswana based Keith du Toit (White Star BAT) are the only other teams who managed to complete the full 2018 TDR 1000 and rounded off the overall and Class A podiums. Du Toit, with navigator still to be announced, would like nothing better than another good result on home turf.

John Thomson will again tackle this gruelling event and will make use of two navigators – Maurice Zermatten his regular navigator and Clint Mac Namara who for many years sat in the hot seat beside him before retiring due to work pressure. Thomson/Zermatten could only finish the third and final day at the TDR 1000 last year and the three will aim to better this result this time around.

Class A is brimming with teams who are familiar with being on the podium. They will also know that it is a totally different ball game to be able to tick off a podium finish at the TDR 1000 than after any other race. It will be a brand new adventure for the young Moosajee brothers, Taahir and Talha (Dunlop Stryker) who will tackle the event for the first time. They will have had some sound racing advice from their father, veteran racer, Naeem, but the youngsters will be on their own knowing that good results will mean good points and a chance to better their fourth place in the Special Vehicle Championship.

Racing in Botswana will be a new experience to the Voigts brothers, Ralph and Andre (Voigts Group BAT) who have yet to score this season, but the TDR 1000 is not new to Clint Gibson who has teamed up with Alaric Smith (Dirt Sport Stryker) for his 2019 adventure.

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Three teams will make their way to the start line in Class P including the 2019 TDR 1000 class winner, Botswana driver Julio Ferreira and fellow countryman Lepsy Mosope. Ferreira in the Aceco will be joined by Johan Basson and Stewart van Graan will accompany Mosope in the Zarco. SACCS stalwarts and reigning Class P champions Nic Goslar/Andrew Massey (SA Clinics Zarco) who could not complete the final racing section last year due to a racing incident some 200 metres from the finish will be aiming to bring their Zarco home in both heats in Selebi-Phikwe this year.

The competition in the Side x Side Class, that now has National Championship status, will be extremely tough as a total of nine teams, all competing with Can-Am Maverick SxS vehicles, have entered. Teams must complete the full race distance and that adds to the sting in the tail. The Mostert brothers, Werner and Leon, have won both events this year and will be overjoyed if they can score a hat-trick and the SxS victory at the TDR 1000.

The rest will all be dark horses in this category. Markus Labuschagne/Neil Putter will participate for the first time this season in the SACCS as will Christo Rose/Dirk Swart and Dewald van Breda/Johann du Toit. UK based but Botswana raised Michael Tilney and Ryan Peinke are no strangers to the TDR 1000, but this will be their first outing in the desert in a SxS. It will also be a first TDR 1000 experience for Wickus Haasbroek and Jurgens Smith. The young Haasbroek is a paraplegic and the son of former champion, Piet Haasbroek, who used to compete in Toyota Land Cruisers.

The TDR 1000 starts on Friday, 21 June, at 13:00 with a 60km Qualifying Race that will determine the starting order for Saturday, 22 June when a total of 440 kilometres await the teams. On Saturday the race gets underway at 08:15 when the leading vehicle leave the Sam Sono soccer stadium in Selebi-Phikwe where the Race Headquarters, the Start/Finish and the Designated Service Point (DSP) will be situated.

On Sunday, the final racing section consisting of approximately 400 kilometres again starts at 08:15. Teams who could not complete the race on Saturday, will be allowed to start on Sunday.

Points will be allocated for Heat One (Friday and Saturday) and for Heat Two (Sunday).

The TDR 1000 can be followed on the RallySafe App for Android and iOS devices. The app allows you to follow the race closely keeping you informed with standings, location of each vehicle, split times and other relevant.