

INTERESTING LINE-UP AT NEW TOTAL AGRI 400 PREDICTS AN EXHILARATING CROSS COUNTRY RACE AT BOTHAVILLE IN THE FREE STATE

The line-up for the main race of the brand new TOTAL AGRI 400, the third round of the 2020 South African National Cross Country Series (SACCS) after the Pirelli Qualifying Race that took place today, Friday, 18 September at NAMPO Park outside Bothaville, predicts a nail-biting main race will continue on Saturday, 19 September in the Free State.

The 40km Pirelli Qualifying Race determines the starting order for the main race that will also start and finish at NAMPO Park.

After a windy, hot and dusty outing, it was again Henk Lategan/Brett Cummings (Toyota Gazoo Racing Hilux) who posted the fastest overall time (00:23:14) although a sizeable 43 seconds separated them not only from their team-mates, Giniel de Villiers/Juan Möhr, but also from Chris Visser/Danie Stassen (Total Excellium Hilux). These three teams were the fastest in the Production Vehicle Category as well as in the FIA Class and fireworks can be expected as soon as the wheels start to roll in the morning.

Gary Bertholdt/Geoff Minnitt (Total Excellium Hilux) were on a mission and posted the fastest time in Class T (00:24:00) and will be fourth on the grid. Only eight seconds separated them from Lance Woolridge/Elvéne Vonk (Ford Castrol Cross Country Ranger) who rounded off the top five and will be the fourth vehicle in the FIA Class to start the race. The Ford Ranger team were only nine seconds faster than team-mates, Gareth Woolridge/Boyd Dreyer (00:24:17) who were again only one second faster than Shameer Variawa/Dennis Murphy (Toyota Gazoo Racing Hilux).

Variawa/Murphy (FIA Class) will be sandwiched between Ford Rangers with Malcolm/Frans Kock (Neil Woolridge Motorsport) only one second slower and second in Class T. The overall and Production Vehicle Category top 10 were rounded off by Mark Corbett/Rodney Burke (Century Racing CR 6) who were ninth, only five seconds behind the Kock pair and 11 seconds faster than the second Neil Woolridge Motorsport Ford Ranger in the hands of Wors Prinsloo/André Vermeulen who will be the third Class T team to take on the main race.

A blanket of one minute 21 seconds covered the top 10 with mere seconds splitting the teams indicating an extremely close main race. Just outside the top 10, Johan and Sean van Staden (Elf Renault Duster) were 11th (00:25:08), 32 seconds ahead of Marius and Jolinda Fourie (Ford Ranger). The Fourie's will be under pressure from Brian Baragwanath/Taye Perry (Century Racing CR 6) who posted the second fastest time, but were hit with a five minute penalty for deviating from the route as were five other teams. This dropped the two bikers to 13th in the Production Vehicle Category and 10th in the FIA Class (00:28:42) and an uphill battle awaits them in the Free State.

Clint Weston/Gerhard Snyman (Schalk Burger Motorsport King Price Xtreme Mercedes-Benz) had a great first outing in their new Mercedes-Benz, but also picked up the penalty (00:29:05) which saw them drop to 14th place (11th in the FIA Class), just ahead of Ernest Roberts/Henry Köhne (Red-Lined Motorsport Nissan Navara)

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(00:29:20) who were also unlucky. The two Class T teams of Terence Marsh/Letshego Zulu (Red-Lined Motorsport Nissan Navara) and the Horn brothers, Johan and Werner (Malalane Toyota Hilux) will have their work cut out for them and will bring up the rear in the Production Vehicle Category after they also received the penalty.

A battle can also be expected in the Special Vehicle Category where the current overall and Class A leaders, Tim Howes/Gary Campbell (Zarco) were fastest (00:25:20), but only nine seconds separated them from the Jonck couple, Sandra and Jaco (Total Agri Porter) with Clint Gibson/Alaric Smith (Stryker), who missed the previous event and lost their overall lead, a mere 22 seconds further back (00:25:51) in third place. André Fourie/Hendrikus Pienaar (BAT) are somewhat further behind (00:30:03) and will start fourth in Class A.

The Class G Side-by-Side (SxS) winners of the opening round, Dean Bradbury/Timmy Botes (Canon Rotex) showed they are back for more serious business as they were the fastest SxS on the day (00:25:59). They were fourth overall in the Special Vehicle Category and will start just ahead of the defending champions, Werner/Leon Mostert (Elf Renault Can-Am Maverick) hot on their heels (00:27:15). They will be followed by Simon Murray/Achim Bergmann – Total Excellium Can-Am (00:27:19); Christo Rose/Arno Olivier (00:27:33); Theo Erasmus/Edward Odendaal (00:27:39); Peter Walter/Shawn de Villiers (00:28:56) and Nico du Rand/Rikus Hattingh (00:29:02), who all compete with the Can-Am Maverick.

Hanno Bierman/Pieter de Beer also received the penalty and will start behind Du Rand/Hattingh and just ahead of Kent Rutherford/Gerhard Schutte. Both teams also make use of the Can-Am Maverick.

Only one team could not finish the Pirelli Qualifying Race – Guy Henley/Leonard Cremer (Century Racing CR2) started in Class P, but rolled their vehicle.

The route was described as 'enjoyable high-speed with technical sections' and competitors are expecting even more of challenging terrain during the main race. On Saturday morning, the first team will take on the TOTAL AGRI 400 at 08:00 from NAMPO Park. After completing the 190km loop, teams will stop at the Designated Service Area (DSP) for a compulsory de-control and service before the race commences again at 11:30.

Enthusiasts and supporters can follow the event on the RallySafe App that can be downloaded at no charge from the App Store and the Google Play Store.