

## FORMER CHAMPIONS WIN AS TOUGH MPUMALANGA 400 TOOK ITS TOLL ON THE SPECIAL VEHICLES

The 2019 Special Vehicle Champions, Lance Trethewey and Adriaan Roets, romped to a fine victory in their L T Earthmovers BAT Venom when they won the Mpumalanga 400, the opening round of the South African National Cross Country Series (SACCS) that took place at Dullstroom this weekend. It was a case of the survivors taking it all as a dusty, muddy and slippery route took its toll on the open wheel special vehicles.

A new race structure was also introduced at the Mpumalanga 400 with this event being a Super Event consisting of a short 10km Pirelli Qualifying Race on Friday followed by a 100km Loop on the same day. Teams then had to tackle two more loops on Saturday for a total race distance of almost 400 kilometres. To top that, is the reputation of this event as being challenging and tough with wet conditions not making it any easier for the two-wheel drive vehicles.

Trethewey/Roets were fastest in the Special Vehicle category on Friday and did not relinquish their lead to also clinch Class A in a time of 7:54:50. The former champions were joined on the overall podium by two Class G Side-by-Side (SxS) teams with Dean Bradbury/Timmy Botes (Can-Am Maverick), who also won this class at the 2020 Mpumalanga 400, doing so again to score their first class victory of the season.

The brothers, Werner and Leon Mostert (Schalk Burger Motorsport Can-Am Maverick) had to settle for the runner-up position in Class G after finishing Friday as the leading SxS team, but a broken back suspension two kilometres before the finish on Saturday, saw them having to settle for second place in the class.

The Larney brothers, Cecil and Elardus, also competing with the Can-Am Maverick SxS, made their debut at the Dullstroom event and have a third place in Class G as well as a fourth place overall in the Special Vehicle Category to show for it. They were followed by two more SxS teams, Coenie Bezuidenhout who teamed up with Rikus Hattingh in the Moto-Netix KEC Racing Can-Am and the defending champion, Nico du Rand and navigator JG Claassen (Can-Am Maverick SxS). These two teams were separated by a minute and 20 seconds after racing for a total of about nine hours.

Simon Murray/Achim Bergmann (Can-Am Maverick SxS) did not have a good day on Friday and started way down the field, but pure grit and determination resulted in a sterling performance before disaster struck and they were forced to retire from the event within sight of the finish line due to mechanical failure.

The defending overall and Class A drivers' champion, Tim Howes, who raced with Don Thomson as navigator (Time Drew Property Development BAT Spec 4) did not have the best of events and could not finish the first loop on Saturday. They decided to take the 10 hour penalty and got back to the pits where they fixed their vehicle and tackled and finished the final lap. Their efforts saw them earning well-deserved silverware for finishing second in Class A while they were seventh overall.

The Mpumalanga 400 will again be remembered for the field of devastation it left behind in the Special Vehicle Category. The winner of this event last year, Clint Gibson/Alaric Smith (Stryker) retired four kilometres into the

### FOLLOW US ON



saccsauto



@saccs\_auto



t.me/saccsauto



sacrosscountryracing.co.za

In Partnership with



race on Saturday due to a broken sidschaft and other mechanical maladies while gearbox problems 10 kilometres into the race on Saturday put a halt to the race for John Thomson/Maurice Zermatten (Mormond Zarco Challenger).

Trace Price Moor/Shawn Braithwaite (BAT Spec 1) had a good start to post the second fastest time on Friday only to retire with a broken gearbox after eight kilometres into the race on Saturday. Boela Botes/Jay Pretorius (Schalk Burger Motorsport Porter) started in the top 10 of the Special Vehicle Category on Saturday, but had to withdraw after five kilometres on Saturday morning as a result of electrical problems. The list of teams that also failed to see out the distance included the 18-year olds, Kent Rutherford/Kabelo Mokanyane (Enza Construction Can-Am Maverick SxS); Theo Erasmus/Edward Odendaal and Marko Himmel/Francois Schoonbee (Schalk Burger Motorsport), both competing with Can-Am Maverick SxS vehicles as well as the brothers, Michael and Jean de Beer (Moto-Netix KEC Racing Can-Am).

Vehicle reliability will again play an important role in the outcome of the Special Vehicle category and teams will now have two months to prepare for the Sugarbelt 400 that takes place on 21 and 22 May in KwaZulu-Natal.

Images: Nadia Jordaan [click to download](#)

End