

VARIOUS SPECIAL VEHICLE TEAMS TO AIM FOR FIRST SACCS POINTS AT SUGARBELT 400

The Sugarbelt 400, the second round of the 2021 South African National Cross Country Series (SACCS) that takes place in the Eston / Mid Illovo area on the outskirts of Pietermaritzburg in KwaZulu-Natal on 21 and 22 May, is a second opportunity for various teams in the Special Vehicle Category to score their first points in the overall as well as the Class A, Class P and Class G Side-by-Side Championships. It will also be a second chance for only a handful of teams to add more points towards their title onslaught.

The opening round of the SACCS at Dullstroom in Mpumalanga took its toll on the Special Vehicle teams resulting in only two teams in Class A scoring points and while they will focus on bagging additional silverware and points, they will be chased by those who will know that they cannot allow the gaps in the championships to get too big. To add to the excitement, is the fact that the Sugarbelt 400 has not been run for six years and a visit to this area will be a first experience for quite a few teams.

The 2019 overall and Class A Drivers' Champion, Lance Trethewey, is a local businessman from Wartburg and is no stranger to the Sugarbelt 400. Trethewey currently leads the way with navigator, Adriaan Roets in the Schalk Burger Motorsport BAT after drawing first blood at Dullstroom.

Tim Howes (Tim Drew Property Developers BAT), currently second overall and second in Class A, is from Pietermaritzburg and will hope for better luck and to please his home-crowd with his Durban-based navigator, Don Thomson while Clint Gibson (Dirt Sport Stryker), also from Pietermaritzburg and his Estcourt-based navigator, Alaric Smith, would like to score their first points of the season on home-turf.

The rest of the field will have to stand their man against so many local heroes in the field and getting to the finish and scoring points will be of the utmost importance.

Sandra Labuschagne-Jonck with husband and navigator, Jaco Jonck (Moto-Netix KEC Racing Porter) where hampered at the season opener when they had to withdraw just before the start of the event due to engine problems. They will be eager to walk away with points as will Boela Botes/Jay Pretorius (Schalk Burger Motorsport Porter) and John Thomson/Maurice Zermatten (Zarco). It will also be a first outing for Lood du Preez/Tiaan Swart (Farmers Meat Stryker).

Stalwart Gary Campbell, is also no stranger to the Sugarbelt event and has entered with his daughter, Jess, who will be navigating in the Class P BAT.

As has become custom the past few racing seasons, the Class G Side-by-Side (SxS) Championship has again received a healthy number of entries, all competing with the popular Can-Am Maverick SxS. Missing from the line-up, are the current leaders and class winners of the Mpumalanga 400, Dean Bradbury/Timmy Botes. This opens up an opportunity for former champions, Werner and Leon Mostert (Schalk Burger Motorsport) who are second in the standings, to take the lead if they can have a trouble-free race.

It will be the first time the SACCS SxS vehicles will visit the Sugarbelt 400 and while racing in the area will be a new experience for many, a few competitors have competed in other vehicles here before. It will, however, be only the second national event for the Larney brothers, Cecil and Elardus, but after finishing third at the season opener, they will fancy their chances for another good result. Reigning Class G champions Nico du Rand/JG Claassen will also be hoping for better results in KZN, while the rest of the teams will hope to leave the Sugarbelt 400 with their first points.

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These teams include experienced Geoff Minnitt and new navigator, Gerrie Prinsloo; the 18-year old duo, Kent Rutherford/Kabelo Mokanyane (Enza Construction), Theo Erasmus/Edward Odendaal and Marko Himmel/Francois Schoonbee (Schalk Burger Motorsport) while Bazil Bezuidenhout with reigning Class G Navigators' champion Rikus Hattingh (Moto-Netix KEC Racing) will compete in his first national event.

The Sugarbelt 400 is notorious for being challenging, and bringing the vehicles home in one piece, will be the ultimate goal.

In accordance with COVID-19 protocols, the event will be closed to spectators, but enthusiasts can follow the action on the RallySafe App, sponsored by Toyota, and can be downloaded free of charge for Android and iOS devices.

The racing action starts on Friday, 21 May at 13:00 with the 50km Pirelli Qualifying Race to determine the starting order for the main race on Saturday, 22 May. The leaders will take on the first of two 160km loops at 08:00. There will be a compulsory 30-minute service break after the first loop with all the action happening from the Beaumont Eston Farmers' Club where the Race Headquarters as well as the Start/Finish and Designated Service Point will be situated.

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