

## FORD ON POLE AFTER SANDY TGRSA 1000 DESERT RACE QUALIFYING IN UPINGTON

Friday, 18 June 2021 – The first dust of the Toyota Gazoo Racing SA (TGRSA) 1000 Desert Race, the third round of the South African National Cross Country Series (SACCS) that is taking place over three days, 18, 19 and 20 June, filled the air in the Upington area of the Northern Cape today as teams tackled the Pirelli Qualifying Race at 12:00.

And after 105 sandy kilometres, that also included rocky sections, the battle for the lead in the Production Vehicle Category was won by the Team Ford Castrol Cross Country Ford Ranger with Gareth Woolridge/Boyd Dreyer posting a time of 01:05:17 after a trouble-free outing. The first six teams in the Production Vehicle Category all finished within the same minute with vehicles in the FIA Class filling the first five slots.

Giniel de Villiers/Dennis Murphy (TGRSA Hilux) lost time with a flat tyre 12 kilometres before the finish and were nine seconds slower than the Ford team. De Villiers/Murphy will be sandwiched between the two Ford Ranger team-mates as Lance Woolridge/Elvéne Vonk were two seconds further behind.

The top five were rounded off by the Toyota Hilux team-mates, the defending Toyota Desert Race 1000 champion, Chris Visser and navigator, Albertus Venter (Toyota Hilux) who had a good run to trail Woolridge/Vonk by 28 seconds and Gary Bertholdt/Siegfried Rousseau who were a further nine seconds back.


Johan Horn and stand-in navigator, Leander Pienaar (Malalane Toyota) posted the fastest time in Class T (01:06:13) after an uneventful qualifying race to finish sixth in the category. The second Class T team, Malcolm Kock and his son, Frans (Neil Woolridge Motorsport Ford Ranger) finished 12<sup>th</sup> overall, but were less than a minute slower than the Class T leaders. The Kock's team-mates, Bernard Johnson/Jan Harm Hugo rounded off the Class T podium and are 12<sup>th</sup> overall.

The rest of the top 10 were made up by Shameer Variawa/Danie Stassen (TGRSA Hilux) in seventh place; Jason Venter/Jaco van Aardt (4x4 Mega World ARB Toyota Hilux) in eighth place; Conrad Rautenbach/Riaan Greyling (Red-Lined Motorsport VK56) in ninth after a good qualifier and Brian Baragwanath/Leonard Cremer (Century Racing CR6) who trailed the overall leaders by a minute and 55 seconds after they too lost time with a flat tyre just past the halfway mark.

Five minutes covered the first 16 teams in the Production Vehicle Category with Ernest Roberts/Henry Köhne (Red-Lined Motorsport VK56) 11<sup>th</sup> and the remaining two TGRSA Hilux teams, Guy Botterill/Simon Vacy-Lyle and Henk Lategan/Brett Cummings in 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> places respectively. Botterill/Vacy-Lyle suffered a flat tyre while Lategan/Cummings, who are putting the brand new V6 petrol turbo Toyota Hilux through its paces, opened the road and lost time with two flat tyres.

Schalk Burger/Henk Janse van Vuuren (Schalk Burger Motorsport King Price Xtreme) were 15<sup>th</sup>.

### FOLLOW US ON

 facebook

saccsauto



@saccs\_auto



t.me/saccsauto



sacrosscountryracing.co.za

In Partnership with



Jannie Visser and his son, Chris (Toyota Hilux) lead Class S and finished 17<sup>th</sup> overall with local father and son team, Piet and Benjamin Kotze, also in a Toyota Hilux second in the class after they experienced overheating problems.

Only one of the 25 teams in the Production Vehicle category, Wors Prinsloo/André Vermeulen (Neil Woolridge Motorsport Ford Ranger) could not complete the Pirelli Qualifying race.

In the Special Vehicle Category, it was the 2019 champions and desert race winners, Lance Trethewey/Adriaan Roets (Schalk Burger Motorsport BAT) who scored a hat-trick to be on pole for the third consecutive race this season. Their time (01:06:43) was just over four minutes faster than their team-mates, Boela Botes/Jay Pretorius (Porter) with Clint Gibson/Alaric Smith rounding off the Class A and overall podium with the Stryker, a mere 50 seconds further back after a clean run.

The local Upington businessman, Willem du Toit and Victor Fincham, made their home crowd proud by finishing as the leading Class P team with their CR-T. They were fourth overall after only their first national outing in a few season.

The thick sand proved to be quite a challenge for the Class G Side-by-Side (SxS) vehicles as the drive-belts of the Can-Am Mavericks take a lot of strain in these tough conditions. In the end it was the young siblings, Kent and Justin Rutherford (Enza Construction Can-Am), who posted the best time in Class G. They finished fifth overall. Theo Erasmus/Edward Odendaal decided not to take any risks and finished second in Class G while they will start as the eighth team in the Special Vehicle Category with the Larney brothers, Cecil and Elardus rounding off Class G and finishing 10<sup>th</sup> overall.

The rest of the overall top 10 consisted of Tim Howes/Gary Campbell (Tim Drew Property Developers BAT) who were sixth overall and fourth in Class A while Sandra Labuschagne-Jonck and husband, Jaco Jonck (Moto-Netix KEC Racing Porter) got back in their rhythm by posting the fifth fastest time in Class A, only a minute and a half behind Howes/Campbell. They are seventh in the category with another Class A team, Kobus Fourie and Dion Booyens (BAT) ninth overall.

Broken drive-belts resulted in Dean Bradbury/Timmy Botes (SxS) to eventually finish 11<sup>th</sup> overall and fourth in Class G while the Mostert brothers, Werner and Leon (Schalk Burger Motorsport Can-Am SxS) lost even more time with a flat tyre, a broken drive-belt and suspension issues. With only one wheel pulling the SxS through the thick sand to the finish, they were 15<sup>th</sup> overall and sixth in Class G. Sixteen teams made it to the finish with only one team, John Thomson/Maurice Zermatten (Zarco) not being able to complete the Pirelli Qualifying Race in the Special Vehicle Category.

Ten teams have entered the Road to Dakar Challenge with a free entry for the Dakar Rally and a cash prize of 8 000 euros up for grabs. Three teams from the Production Vehicle Category, all competing in the FIA Class, are currently on the podium with Roberts/Köhne in the lead followed by Burger/Janse van Vuuren and Dewald van Breda/Johann du Toit (Century Racing CR5).

The TGRSA Desert Race 1000 will continue on Saturday when the leading team will tackle a 215km route from the Upington Expo Showgrounds at 08:00. They will complete this route twice before finishing at the show grounds again. On Sunday, the final day of this marathon event will see the teams taking on a different loops consisting of about 215 kilometres that will also start and finish at the showgrounds.

The race can be followed on the Rally Safe App as well as on YouTube and on the SACCS Facebook page.

End