



Media Information

NEW NAMES, NEW LEADERS IN SA RALLY-RAID CHAMPIONSHIP SPECIAL VEHICLE CATEGORY AFTER TESTING SEASON OPENER

Competitors in the Special Vehicle Category of the SA Rally-Raid Championship, previously known as the SA National Cross Country Series, have always been quite remarkable, as they have to endure the racing conditions in vehicles generally not fitted with windscreens or windows and dust, mud, rain and rocks can make life in the cabin somewhat uncomfortable.

The Mpumalanga 400, the season opener that recently took place in a rainy, wet and muddy Dullstroom, tested the perseverance of these teams to the limit and those who received the chequered flag after two days and 400 kilometres of racing, earned and deserved their points in the Overall Special Vehicle Category as well as in the Class A, Class P and Class G Side-x-Side Championships.

Ernest Roberts/Henry Köhne, who finished the gruelling two-week and 8 000 kilometre Dakar Rally earlier this year, took the first overall victory in the Special Vehicle Category as well as in the Class A championship with their JCP Steel Supplies Century Racing CR6 – fitted with a front windscreen and side windows. In the overall standings, they now lead former champions, Tim Howes/Gary Campbell (Tim Drew Properties BAT Spec4), who finished second, by seven points with Trace Price Moor/Shawn Braithwaite (Tip Top Milk BAT Spec1) rounding off the podium (18 points).

The season got off to a good start for Sandra Labuscagne-Jonck and husband navigator, Jaco Jonck (Tushemy BAT Viper) who could not finish this event last year. They made up for it by claiming fourth place and bagging 15 points, three points more than Dewald van Breda/Johann du Toit (Potch Plastics Century Racing CR6) who also rounded off the top five in Class A.

Six more teams scored points at the Mpumalanga 400 with only five points separating the teams from sixth to the 11th place overall. Werner Mostert and his son, Ian (Moto-Netix Racing Can-Am Maverick) were happy to walk away with finishing their first national event together. They were sixth overall and won Class G to open their scorecard with 10 points. Lood du Preez and Chris Visser Jr (Farmers Meat Stryker) are seventh overall (nine points) followed by Keith and Andrew Makenete (BAT Makmobile) who are also the Class P leaders (eight points).

Two more Class G teams completed the tough and challenging Mpumalanga 400 and are now in the overall top 10 with Geoff Minnitt/Gerhard Snyman (Hydro Power Equipment Can-Am Maverick) ninth with seven points and Marko Himmel/Nico Swartz (King Price Xtreme Can-Am Maverick) 10th with six points behind their names.

Willem du Toit and Victor Fincham (Porter) are 11th overall and scored five points.

In the various class championships for vehicles built to the same technical specifications, competitors receive an additional five points for starting a race. The number of competing teams also make a difference to the points earned, resulting in the class championships looking a tad different to the overall standings.

Roberts/Köhne (35 points) are the early leaders of the Class A championship and are followed by Howes/Campbell, seven points further adrift. Moor/Braithwaite (23 points) also round off this podium, 12 points behind the leaders. The Jonck couple are not too far behind (20 points) in fourth place with Van Breda/Du Toit (17 points) fifth. Du Preez/Visser Jr are sixth (15 points) and lead Du Toit/Fincham by a single point with Nicolas Pienaar/Carl Swanepoel (Super Energi Race Fuels BAT Spec2), who could not finish at Dullstroom, eighth (five points) and have an uphill battle ahead of them.

The three Class G teams have opened a nice gap to the rest of the field in the SxS championship and as only eight points separate the Mostert's (28 points) in the lead from Himmel/Swartz (20 points) in third place, interesting battles can be expected to evolve during the season. Minnitt/Snyman are second (23 points). The two brother pairings of Michael and Jean de Beer as well as the defending champions, Cecil and Elardus Larney, will have the bit between their teeth to make up for lost points as they could not complete the Mpumalanga 400.

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The Makenete brothers lead Class P and earned 15 points in this class championship.

Consistent participation; not fiddling with the driver/navigator combinations as well as the reliability of race vehicles, will again play an important role in the outcome of the championships towards the end of the season.

Teams are now preparing for the popular Sugarbelt 400, proudly sponsored by #TeamHilux Rally-Raid, that takes place on 29 and 30 April in the sugar cane fields of the Eston/Mid Illovo areas in KwaZulu-Natal.

Images: Andre Schoeman – [click to download](#)

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