



Media Information

THE CHASE IS ON WITH THE FIRST POINTS ON THE SCOREBOARD IN SA RALLY-RAID CHAMPIONSHIP

With the dust of the Nkomazi 400, the opening round of the 2023 South African Rally-Raid Championship that took place in the Malelane area, now settled and the first points towards the overall and class championships in both the Production and Special Vehicle Categories secured, the foundation for the remaining six rounds has been laid, and it predicts a super exciting season.

The chase is on, and the pressure will be on the frontrunners and those who did not score points or who had their hopes on a better start to the season, will no doubt return from the drawing board with a strategy to make up for lost points.

In the Production Vehicle Category, the Nkomazi 400 victory resulted in Henk Lategan/Brett Cummings (Toyota Gazoo Racing SA DKR Hilux T1+) taking the early lead in the overall standings by earning 30 points. They lead Gareth Woolridge/Boyd Dreyer (NWM Ford Castrol T1+ Ranger) by seven points, and are 12 points ahead of their team-mates Giniel de Villiers/Dennis Murphy (18 points).

The third Toyota Gazoo Racing SA team, Guy Botterill/Simon Vacy-Lyle, trail De Villiers/Murphy by three points while the third vehicle manufacturer in the top five, Red-Lined Motorsport, rounds off the overall top five as Chris Visser/Albertus Venter made a solid start to the season to earn 12 points after a trouble-free debut for the new Red-Lined REVO T1+.

Only four points cover the next five teams in the top 10. Lance Trethewey/Adriaan Roets (King Price Xtreme CR6) are sixth (10 points) and are followed by two Red-Lined Motorsport teams who are also the leading two teams in the FIA T1 Championship. Johan de Bruyn/Gerhard Schutte (REVO) are seventh (9 points) and Nic Pienaar/Carl Swanepoel (REVO) eighth (8 points) with the defending T1 champions, Eben Basson/Leander Pienaar (#TeamHilux Rally-Raid Toyota) ninth (7 points) and the T1 newcomers, Johan and Sean van Staden (KEC Racing Renault Duster) 10th (6 points) and off to a solid start.

In the various class championships, competitors are awarded five points for starting a race. Looking at FIA T1+, the order of the top five remains the same with seven points the difference between the leaders, Lategan/Cumming (35 points) and second-place Woolridge/Dreyer (28 points). De Villiers/Murphy are five points further adrift (23 points) in third place with Botterill/Vacy-Lyle (20 points) fourth and Visser/Venter fifth (17 points).

Only four points separate the five teams making up the top 10. Trethewey/Roets (15 points) are sixth followed by Dewald van Breda/Stompie Mynhardt (CR6) who clawed their way into the FIA T1+ top 10 and into seventh place (14 points). Gary Bertholdt/Henry Köhne (Renergen Toyota Hilux) are eighth (13 points) after fighting their way to the finish from the back of the field due to not being able to complete the Pirelli Qualifying Race at the Nkomazi 400.

Wors Prinsloo/André Vermeulen (Ford Ranger) jumped from Class T to T1+ and did so by finishing ninth in the class and scoring 12 points while the Namibian driver, Loic Bathfield survived his maiden SARRC event and scored 11 points to round off the FIA T1+ top 10 together with navigator Rodney Burke (Century Racing CR6).

Teams who will have their work cut out for them after disappointment at the Nkomazi 400, includes Lance Woolridge/Kenny Gilbert (NWM Ford Castrol T1+ Ranger) and Brian Baragwanath/Leonard Cremer (Century Racing CR6) while Johan and Werner Horn (#TeamHilux Rally-Raid Toyota Hilux), who sadly withdrew for their home event, will also be chasing their first results.

The order in FIA T1 also remains the same although the points differ. De Bruyn/Schutte (35 points) will be chased by Pienaar/Swanepoel (28 points) with some work for third-placed Basson/Pienaar (23 points) who aim to defend their title successfully. The Van Staden's are fourth (20 points) followed by the German driver, Daniel Schröder and KZN navigator, Ryan Bland (Nissan Navara) fifth (17 points).

Three more T1 teams received the chequered flag at the Nkomazi 400 and earned their first points. Regular visitors, the Dutch couple, Dave Klaassen/Tessa Rooth (Red-Lined Motorsport VK50) are sixth (15 points); the Blignaut brothers, Fouche and Bertus (#TeamHilux Rally-Raid Toyota) worked hard for their 14 points and seventh place in FIA T1 after also starting the main race from the back of the field, and the ever consistent Phillip Botha (Red-Lined Motorsport VK56) added another race finish to his growing list, this time accompanied by his brother, Nicolaas in the hot seat.

Only one team, Hendrik and Heinrich du Plessis (Ford Ranger) completed the race in Class T and lead the standings (17 points) while the brothers, Nico and Juandre Nienaber (Renault Duster) can build on their five points received for starting the race.

At the Nkomazi 400, Red-Lined Motorsport was the most represented vehicle manufacturer with 27% of the race cars from their stable. It is, however, Toyota who lead the Manufacturers Standings with 73 points. Ford is second (33 points) followed by Nissan (27 points); Century (14 points) and Renault (6 points).

In the Special Vehicle Category, an overall win for the defending champions, Tim Howes/Gary Campbell (Timdrew Property Developments BAT Spec 4) put them firmly at the front of the standings (30 points) from where they lead three Class G teams competing with Can-Am Mavericks. Ian and Werner Mostert (Moto-Netix Racing) are second overall and the leading Class G team (23 points) while their team-mates, Glen Theron/Craig Galvin are third overall (18 points). Ewald van Rensburg/Johan Scheepers (15 points) fill the fourth spot with Lood du Preez/Rikus Hattingh (Farmers Meat Stryker) fifth (12 points) and the second Class A team behind Howes/Campbell.

With five more points being added in the various class championships, Howes/Campbell (20 points) lead Class A with Du Preez/Hattingh (17 points) trailing them by three points. Eugene Bierman/Pieter Visser (BAT Spec 2) could not finish the Nkomazi 400 and have five points.

The defending Class G champions, Ian and Werner Mostert, made a perfect start towards defending their title albeit with the roles in the cabin now reversed and Werner reading the notes for his son, Ian. The pair have 23 points and lead their team-mates (Theron/Galvin) by a mere three points while Van Rensburg/Scheepers (17 points) round off the podium, a further three points back.

The second round of the 2023 SA Rally-Raid Championship, the Sugarbelt 400, takes place on 12 and 13 May in the Eston / Mid-Illovo area in KwaZulu-Natal.

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