



Media Information

SCORES TO BE SETTLED; POINTS TO BE PROVEN AND MORE VICTORIES TO BE CHASED AS RALLY-RAID TEAMS RETURN TO BOTSWANA FOR A THOUSAND KILOMETRES OF DESERT RACING

Returning to Botswana with the aim to conquer the Kalahari desert, remains a highlight on the calendar of many teams competing in the SA Rally-Raid Championship, and after not competing in the neighbouring country for three consecutive years, it is at last time for the 2023 Toyota Gazoo Racing 1000 Kalahari Botswana Desert Race, the third round of the SARRC that will take place on 23, 24 and 25 June from Jwaneng in the southern part of the country.

The Kalahari Desert in the Upington area was the playground for teams in 2021 and 2022 and the record books were kept updated with the latest results, scores and hours of desert racing experiences after the traditional desert race could not take place in 2020. And after the long wait, it is back to Botswana for scores to be settled and points to be proven while adding more victories for some, will also be on the to-do list.

Giniel de Villiers/Dennis Murphy (TGRSA DKR Hilux T1+) will line up as the team with the most desert race victories including winning at Jwaneng in 2017 and 2018 while they added another victory to their list when they won at Upington last year. Another victory is not only possible but will also look good on their racing résumés while the points will go a long way towards their championship goal.

They will no doubt be chased by Chris Visser who last won in Botswana in 2019. Visser, together with navigator, Albertus Venter, will give the new Red-Lined REVO T1+ its first taste of the desert and after a successful start to the season, a victory combined with a healthy number of points will suit them perfectly.

Two more TGRSA DKR Hilux T1+ teams will also join in the chase for victory. Henk Lategan/Brett Cummings have not had any luck at this event while Guy Botterill/Simon Vacy-Lyle finished a close second last year. The TGRSA team will be rounded off by scholar driver, Saood Variawa (17) and experienced navigator, Danie Stassen. Variawa, son of Shameer Variawa who himself is a former desert race winner, is also a track racer and recently competed – and won – his maiden regional rally-raid event.

FIA T1+ brims with teams who can all bag good results and even walk away with some silverware.

Lance Woolridge/Ward Huxtable (NWM Ford Castrol T1+ Ranger) finished on the podium in Botswana in 2019. Lance now partnered by former motorcycle champion, Kenny Gilbert will be looking for a similar if not better result in their first desert outing together, a good show will be just what the team are looking for. Their team-mates, Gareth Woolridge and Boyd Dreyer will be buoyant after their good result at the recent Sugarbelt 400 and making good use of their desert racing experience. Finishing the race combined with earning valuable points will bode well for their 2023 season. Wors Prinsloo/André Vermeulen who missed the Sugarbelt 400, will also be in action in a Ford Ranger T1+.

Gary Bertholdt has competed in the desert race for two decades and together with navigator Henry Köhne, the team will take on the desert with their Renegen Toyota Hilux T1+ and will give it their all aiming for top honours as will the Horn brothers, Johan and Werner (#TeamHilux Rally-Raid DKR T1+).

Two 2x4 teams will also be in action in FIA T1+. Ernest Roberts/Jaco van Aardt and Dewald van Breda/Stompie Mynhardt will put their CR6 vehicles to the test in this challenging event which offers them the ideal opportunity to score handsomely in the absence of Trethewey/Roets and Baragwanath/Cremer.

In FIA T1 anything can happen and it most probably will if the first two events are anything to go by as two different teams have already claimed victories so far. It will, however, be the defending champions Eben Basson/Leander Pienaar (#TeamHilux Rally-Raid) who hope for a better outcome to their desert racing experience, and a first class win this year will boost their confidence for the rest of the season. They will be backed up by team-mates, Fouché and Bertus Bignaut in their first Botswana experience.

Johan de Bruyn/Gerhard Schutte (Red-Lined REVO) would like nothing better than a repeat of their FIA T1 victory at the beginning of the season as will their team-mates, Nic Pienaar/Carl Swanepoel who were victorious at the Sugarbelt 400. Pienaar and Swanepoel both previously competed in Botswana on motorcycles.

Other Teams with racing experience in desert type conditions, include the German driver, Daniel Schröder and Ryan Bland (Nissan Navara) who also competed in the 2023 Dakar Rally as well as Johan van Staden who has his son, Sean, in the navigator seat of the Renault Duster.

It will be the second desert race only – and the first in Botswana – for youngster Jayden Els (18) who has experienced lady navigator, Elvéne Vonk (King Price Xtreme SVR) reading him the notes, while it will be a first outing to the neighbouring country for Gerhard and Rudi Heinlein (Red-Lined VK56).

Dutch teenager, Pim Klassen (19), will join the field of youngsters while it will also be his first taste of the SARRC. Wade Harris will read him the notes in the Red-Lined VK50 at TGR 1000 Kalahari Botswana Desert Race.

Three teams have entered in Class T of which two have already won a round of the SARRC this season. Finishing and winning the class again will be the goal for both Hendrik and Heinrich du Plessis (Ford Ranger) and Schalk Burger/Henk Janse van Vuuren (King Price Xtreme VW Amarok) while it will be the first outing this season for the Johnstone couple, Bernard and Minette (Neil Woolridge Motorsport Ford Ranger).

The TGR 1000 will start with a 61 kilometre Pirelli Qualifying Race at 12:30 on Friday, 23 June that will determine the starting order for the first loop of the race on Saturday, 24 June. On Saturday, teams will have to complete two loops of 220 kilometres that will take them towards the east of Jwaneng with the results determining the starting grid for Sunday when two loops of 214 kilometres await them. For the third and final day, teams will veer towards the west of the town and will return to the Designated Service Point (DSP) at the Jwaneng Sports Complex on both days after the first of the two loops. The Race Headquarters as well as the Start/Finish will be situated at the Jwaneng Sports Complex.

All the action can be viewed from various vantage points along the route. The TGR 1000 can also be followed on the RallySafe App, available as a free download from the Google PlayStore and the iStore while updated information will be available on Facebook: [saccsauto](#); Instagram: [saccs_auto](#) and Twitter: [@SACCS.Auto](#)

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