



Media Information

THE BATTLES FOR THE 2024 SA RALLY-RAID CHAMPIONSHIP TITLES HAVE STARTED AS DUST FLIES AT THE #TEAMHILUXRALLY-RAID NKOMAZI

After a wait of five long months, the 2024 SA Rally-Raid Championship is underway with the first round, the #TeamHiluxRally-Raid Nkomazi that got the ball rolling at Malalane on Friday, 19 April where the 11 kilometre Castrol Qualifying Race followed by the 50 kilometre Stage One got the adrenaline pumping while the first set of results are on the scoreboard.

The spirits were high with competitors enjoying the well-marked route that produced something of everything and tested the vehicles as well as the drivers and navigators while a few new pairings had time to settle in before the next two stages of the event on Saturday, 20 April.

The teams, now all competing for the overall laurels and not according to the former Production and Special Vehicle Categories, started the short Castrol Qualifying Race according to the National seeding system with the top 10 teams drawing for their starting positions for Stage One. Youngster Jayden Els, now with Henry Köhne as navigator in the King Price Xtreme SVR, posted the fastest qualifying time and were followed by Toyota Gazoo Racing's Henk Lategan/Brett Cummings and their Toyota Hilux IMT EVO team-mates, Saood Variawa/Francois Cazalet with a mere four seconds separating the three FIA Ultimate T1+ teams.

Eben Basson/Leander Pienaar (#TeamHiluxRally-Raid) were fourth and the fastest FIA Adventurer T1 team with Lance Woolridge/Kenny Gilbert (Neil Woolridge Motorsport Ford Ranger T1+) sandwiched between them and their team-mates, Johan and Werner Horn (#TeamHiluxRally-Raid DKR Hilux T1+) while the defending champions, Gareth Woolridge/Boyd Dreyer (Neil Woolridge Motorsport Ford Ranger T1+) were seventh. Chris Visser/Albertus Venter (Red-Lined Motorsport REVO T1+ GTR) finished a second slower in eighth place with the two TGR Hilux IMT EVO teams, Guy Botterill/Dennis Murphy and Giniel de Villiers/Elvéne Vonk rounding out the top 10.

The first 27 teams all finished the 11 kilometre qualifying race within two minutes of each other.

After a quick break and some tweaking done here and there, the teams took on the shortened 50 kilometre Stage One from the Nkomazi Fuel & Gas Depot where the Start/Finish and the Designated Service Point (DSP) are situated. And when the dust settled, two teams – Lategan/Cummings and the Horn brothers – were fastest with the same time of 00:31:51 resulting in the 2023 winners (Lategan/Cummings) taking the lead after the first day on combined times.

The Horns are third overall (00:39:11), only a second behind Variawa/Cazalet making it a Toyota 1-2-3 at the front.

Els/Köhne finished fourth for the day (00:39:26) followed by the two Neil Woolridge Motorsport teams with Gareth/Boyd fifth (00:39:32), two seconds ahead of Lance/Gilbert. Basson/Pienaar kept their class lead and were seventh overall, 24 seconds behind Lance/Gilbert and 18 seconds ahead of De Villiers/Vonk with another #TeamHiluxRally-Raid T1+ team, Fouché and Bertus Blignaut ninth (00:40:28). Daniel Schröder/Ryan Bland (Nissan Navara VK50) finished second in the Adventurer T1 Class and rounded off the top 10. The pressure was surely on Visser/Venter who were first out of the blocks in their new vehicle to open the new route and the team finished 11th overall, three minutes 30 seconds behind the leaders.

Botterill/Murphy lost time replacing a puncture and will have their work cut out for them as they will start outside the top 10 in 12th place; Jurgen Schröder/Stuart Gregory were third in the Adventurer T1 Class and 13th overall followed by Brian Baragwanath/Leonard Cremer (Century Racing CR7) had their share of bad luck experiencing

water pump issues just before the Castrol Qualifying. They were 14th overall with the Heinlein father and son team, Gerhard and Rudi (Red-Lined VK56) who are fourth in the class and 15th overall.

Also among the first 20 teams were Schalk Burger/Armand du Toit (King Price Xtreme) in their all-new VW Amarok and two more Red-Lined Motorsport teams. Philip Botha/Roelof Janse van Vuren (VK56) got the bit between their teeth and opened their 2024 scorecard with a fifth place in the Adventurer T1 Class while their combined times put them 17th overall and the Dutch couple, Dave Klaassen/Tessa Rooth brought their brand-new REVO T1+ GTR home in 20th place overall.

Mark Corbett and his son, Luke qualified 18th overall in their CR6 Turbo with the ever consistent Geoff Minnitt/Rodney Burke finishing 19th overall.

Another CR6 in the hands of Eugene Bierman/Marius Lombard are not too far behind in 21st with their Farmers Meat team-mates, Lood du Preez/Juandre Kruger 28th overall.

Minnitt/Burke got their season off on a high note putting the Hydro Power Equipment Can-Am Maverick first in the SSV Class. They are, however, just less than a minute ahead of the young international lady driver from Cape Town, Puck Klaassen (Moto-Netix Racing Can-Am Maverick) who has Ian Mostert reading her the notes.

Outside of the top 20, there were some problems for a few teams who will have to brave the dust when they start the first of the two remaining stages on Saturday further down the field. Simon Murray, standing in for Gary Bertholdt next to navigator Danie Stassen in the Toyota DKR T1+, took a tumble during Stage One, but luckily landed on the wheels and were unscathed. They completed the stage in 27th place.

Hennie de Klerk/Juan Möhr (Toyota Hilux) experienced mechanical problems resulting in the team not being able to complete the first stage while SARR newcomer, Darron Gudmanz and Quintin Lessing (Can-Am Maverick) also limped home on three wheels and not posting a time for Stage One. The Van Staden family, Johan and his son, Sean (Renault Duster) were 19th fastest after the qualifying race, but lost time playing it safe after suspecting a possible mechanical issue resulting in the team finishing 25th overall.

Twenty eight vehicles will be on the start line of the #TeamHiluxRally-Raid Nkomazi on Saturday when the teams will battle it out during two stages of 168 kilometres each. Serious action can be expected from the front of the field, right through to those teams having to make up for lost time if they wish to put the first points for the 2024 SARRC season on the scoreboard.

Images: Dave Ledbitter – [click to download](#)

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