



NORTHERN REGIONS CROSS COUNTRY CHAMPIONSHIP



2018 MOLOPO 250 RACE REPORT

ROUND 1 – 17 FEBRUARY

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The 2018 *Regional Cross Country Season* kicked off with the **Molopo 250** held in the Vryburg area. A lot of hard work was put in by the Vryburg Motor Club in the off-season, not only for the event but also for a unique innovation called – *Vryburg Motor Club's - A Night With The Legends*.

This event took place on the Friday evening prior to the race and saw a number of big names from the heydays of the sport present to share stories and tales from 'back in the day'.



Famous names like Hannes Grobler, Kassie Coetzee, Buks Carolin, Richard Leeke, Richard Schilling, Robin Yates, Don Vale, Andre Kock, Mick Fourie, Bodo Bertholdt and Phillip Malan were all in attendance reliving the past and keeping the big crowd entertained well into the evening.

The event was a roaring success and was enjoyed by all and sundry. What will Vryburg Motor Club come up with next?

MOLOPO 250



Although it rained in the area in the week leading up to the event, race day dawned bright and sunny with the weather forecast in the high 30's.

36 teams and their crews descended upon Vryburg for race day, all eager to get the season underway.

An interesting route lay ahead for the day with a mix of sand, rocks, twisties and high-speed sections standing between the 36 eager competitors and the finish line. The 290 kms of

gruelling race route was split up between a 42 km Time Trial – the **4x4 Megaworld Qualifying Prologue** - run in the morning, and two loops of 124 kms each for the main race in the afternoon.



In another first (certainly in a long time), the competitors lined up after completing documentation and attending driver's briefing, for a mass ride through town.



The sight of 36 Cross Country Race Cars tackling the streets of Vryburg early on Saturday morning was a sight to behold!





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4X4 MEGAWORLD QUALIFYING PROLOGUE

SPECIAL VEHICLES

In the absence of last seasons' Championship pairing of Andrew and Zelma Beer, it was all to play for and in the



end, Keith Makenete & Victor Ntsekhe took the Class P and Overall Special Category win,



followed by Tony and Michael Gouveia in second and Marthinus & Tiaan le Roux in



third place. Bad luck befell 2018 Dakar Motorcycle finisher Willem du Toit who encountered electronic

gearbox problems on the parade through town in his CRT. Fresh from finishing the most gruelling Cross Country race on the planet, his 4-wheel campaign came to an abrupt halt before the race started.

PRODUCTION VEHICLES

2017 Overall and Class D winners Lourens van Wyk & Cois Mare as well as Class E Champions Theuns du Toit & Arnold Nortje were back, each proudly displaying #1 on their vehicles and looking to defend their respective titles.



They didn't have it all their own way as newcomers Francois van der Walt & Gerrie Prinsloo topped the time sheets in the Overall Production Vehicle and Class D standings, with two more



Class D crews namely Lourens van Wyk/Cois Mare and newcomers Jaco & Johann Wiese second and third in



Class D and the Overall Production Category.

Fourth in the Overall Standings was the first of the



Class E vehicles – Theuns du Toit/Arnold Nortje followed by two more Class D crews – Diederik & Rikus Hatting and Etienne Nienaber & Scott Jennings.

7th place went to Andre Geldenhuys & Victor Fincham in the second of the Class E vehicles, followed by two Class D crews, Reagan Austin/Trevor Robinson in eighth and Danie du Plooy/Paul Mare in ninth. The Class E crew of Okkie & Juandre Kruger rounded out the top 10.



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Just over 4 minutes separated the top ten in qualifying which meant that the action in the production vehicle classes and the battle for top honours was going to be tough.

CROSS CHALLENGE – CLASS X

The newly introduced Class X – for the 'older' vehicles which conform to Classes A, T and S at National level, has shown early promise.



The top three were separated by just over a minute, with Jannie & Chris (Jnr) Visser (Hilux) narrowly edging out LC de Jager/NM Killian in the ex-Graven Hilux. Third, in yet another Hilux, was the Piet & Benjamin Kotze pairing.

CLUB CLASS Z



Cecil Fincham/David Byleveld ran out clear victors ahead of

PM de Villiers & Noppie Jacobs in second. TJ Hodgeman/JP Strauss had a qualifying they'd rather forget coming home in third place.

NATIONAL INVITATIONAL

Many national competitors use Northern Regions races to test or 'shake down' their cars but there's always pride at stake and no-one takes it easy.



Johan van Staden/Mike Lawrenson in the Elf Renault Duster (FIA Class) and Werner Kennedy/CJ van Pletzen in the ex-Gibson Porter (Class A)



posted identical times to occupy first and second places. Coetzee and Sandra Labuscagne was only a few second adrift, with their Class A car now sporting the number, A100, in celebration of Coetzee having become a member of the '100' Club,



joining a select few competitors which have competed in more than 100 Off-Road/Cross Country races in South Africa.

Jacques van Tonder/Sammy Redelinghuys took 4th ahead of Malcolm Kock & Sean van Staden, both in Class T vehicles. Keith du Toit/Robbie Coetzee experienced some brake problems and finished in sixth position in their Class A BAT Spec 2.

SXS INVITATIONAL CLASS G



A number of SXS competitors joined the fray and setting the early pace up front was Dean Bradbury & Dean Botes ahead of Ronnie Botes/Etienne Venter in second place and Nico du Randt & JG Claasens in third.



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MAIN RACE

SPECIAL VEHICLES

Early pacesetters – Keith Makenete & Victor Ntsekhe started off well but eventually succumbed to overheating problems which caused their withdrawal from the race. Bad luck also befell the otherwise reliable CRT of the Gouveias and they kicked off the season with a non-finish, not what they were hoping for.



This paved the way for the father-and-son team of Thinus and Tiaan le Roux to take the win in Class P and the Special Vehicle Category, a well-deserved victory.

PRODUCTION VEHICLES

The action in the production vehicle category and the two classes (D & E) was fierce throughout the day with many competitors suffering from mechanical issues along the way.



In the end, Francois van der Walt/Gerrie Prinsloo (D33) controlled the pace from the front and ran out comfortable victors in both the Production Category and Class D.

They pushed hard throughout the race and had to deal with a broken rear shock towards the end of the second loop. But in the end their strategy paid off and they are now the team to beat.



Jaco & Johann Wiese (D15) put in an equally impressive performance coming home in second place in both Class D and the Production Category. This was despite a broken gearbox 60 kms from the end which left them limping home with only 3rd gear.

Defending champions Lourens van Wyk & Cois Mare (D1) took third place in Class D and in the Production Category. A



broken power steering hampered their progress and they were elated to arrive at the finish and claim valuable championship points.



Fourth in the Production Category, winning Class E in the process, was Rodney Cook & Jaco Schutte (E14) who had a relatively trouble-free run.



Etienne Nienhaber & Scott Jennings (D27) took 4th place in Class D and fifth in category



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followed by Andre Geldenhuis & Victor Fincham (E6) and Ignus du Plessis & Juan Vermaak (E18).



Rounding off the top ten in the Production Category in 8th,



9th & 10th places, were Reagan Austin & Trevor Robinson (D16), Theuns du Toit & Arnold Nortje (E1) and



Diederik & Rikus Hatting (D67).

Class E defending champions, Theuns du Toit & Arnold Nortje (E1) had a nightmarish day. A piece of wire wrapped



around their propshaft and damaged the oil seal. Then the intercooler pipe came loose and finally they lost 4th and 5th gears.

CROSS CHALLENGE – CLASS X

Early pace-setters Jannie & Chris (Jnr) Visser (X1) picked



up power steering problems and eventually ended up in second spot. The top step of



the podium belonged to LC de Jager & NM Killian (X87) who

looked good throughout and set a blistering pace.

The last step on the podium belonged to Piet & Benjamin Kotze (X8).



CLUB CLASS Z

TJ Hodgeman & JP Strauss (Z9) made it across the finish line



right on cut-off as the last finisher but they were the only survivors in the class thereby taking a much-deserved win.

NATIONAL INVITATIONAL

Johan van Staden & Mike Lawrenson (301) ended up victorious by a big margin over





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Malcom Kock & Sean van Staden (T15) with Keith du Toit & Robbie Coetzee (A18) in third.



Werner Kennedy & CJ van Pletzen (A700) came home in fourth after suffering a stack of punctures.

SXS INVITATIONAL CLASS G



Dean Bradbury & Timmy Botes (G605) walked away with the win, setting a brisk pace throughout the race.



CONCLUSION

If the action in the first round of the championship is anything to go by, we are in for an excellent season. Early indicators are that the defending champions are not going to have it all their own way with many new players in the mix all hungry for wins.

Congratulations have to go out to the Vryburg Motor Club for hosting an excellent event to kick off the 2018 season.

A big thank you goes out to everyone involved in making this event the success it was.

And lastly, to the sponsors – Mack's Petroleum, Midas Vryburg, Andre Kock en Seun, Top Breakdowns, 4x4 Megaworld Vryburg and Vryburg Motor Club.

See you all at the next event!

BARBERSPAN 500

23 & 24 MARCH 2018

