



## **SURPRISE WIN PUT AN END TO FACTORY DOMINATION**

A surprise win for Rustenburg crew Willem Vos and Werner Weiss on the recent Atlas Copco Gold 400, the final round of the Donaldson Cross Country Championship in Westonaria, put an end to Production Vehicle category domination by the Team Castrol Toyota and Ford Racing factory teams.

Going into the final event the Toyota and Ford teams had won seven of the eight championship races, and it was almost taken for granted that the two teams would fight it out for the final win. There were high stakes for both squads with Ford Racing pair Chris Visser and Japie Badenhorst looking for an eighth successive podium finish, and squabbling with Castrol Toyota team Duncan Vos and Rob Howie for second place in the overall and premier SP Class championship.

It was a case of shock/horror when Vos and Weiss, in the Vossies BMW X3, overcame a five minute qualifying race penalty to post a maiden national championship win. The pair were well clear of newly crowned South African champions Anthony Taylor and Dennis Murphy, in the second Team Castrol Toyota Hilux, with Gary Berthold and Siegfried Rousseau scoring their second podium of the season in the Atlas Copco Nissan Navara.

For outgoing champions Vos and Howie there was disappointment on two counts. Vos, in what was probably his last race for the Toyota team, and Howie were leading until late in the race when two punctures saw them drop down to fourth.

A rearguard action by Visser and Badenhorst saw them finish sixth behind Deon Venter/Ian Palmer (Trysome Toyota Hilux) to edge out Vos/Howie in the title stakes. A tough weekend for the Ford Racing pair also saw them lose out on what would have completed a remarkable sequence of podium finishes.

Third place in their own race saw the Atlas Copco pair of Bertholdt and Rousseau secure privateer team bragging rights ahead of team-mates Johan van Staden and Mike Lawrenson in a Toyota Hilux. Competition among the privateers was pretty fierce with van Staden/Lawrenson finishing just 3.5 points ahead of Mike Whitehouse and Mathew Carlson, who were by far the pick of the Regent Racing Nissan Navara squad.

By winning the Class D championship young North West crew Jason Venter and Vincent van Alleman (Trysome Toyota Hilux) confirmed the promise they showed when they first burst on the scene. They could afford the luxury of missing the final event of the season to finally finish two points clear of Mpumalanga brothers Johan and Werner Horn in the Malalane Toyota Land Cruiser.

The Horns ended with four straight wins with their championship hopes hit by a dodgy start to the season. Former champions Jack and Sarel Oosthuizen (LMC Land Rover Defender) lacked their usual impeccable reliability record, but still did enough to finish third in the title race.

Class E was again dominated by Ford Ranger crew Dirk Putter and Koos Claasens. They also could afford to miss the last couple of events to finish well clear of Douglas Fear and Kurt de Villiers (Brytons Removal Toyota Hilux) who had a good season with three wins.

A maiden win for Johan Pretorius and Gesina Dauth (Toyota Hilux) on the final event saw them into third place in the championship.

On the manufacturer front Toyota completed their umpteenth championship success by a wide margin. Toyota finished with 577 points, Ford was second with 284 and Nissan third with 165.

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