

MY WEEKEND IN THE ATLAS COPCO GOLD 400

DEON COETZEE

I've played a Currie Cup final against the likes of the Prince of Wings, Carel du Plessis; I've been on stage with Franz Marx, Sandra Prinsloo and Wilna Snyman and I jumped 110 meters with a bungee cord wrapped around my ankles.

None of this comes even remotely close to the anxiety, nerves and excitement I experienced last weekend alongside Derick du Toit in the seven-litre V8 BAT in the last round of the 2013 Donaldson Cross Country Championship. I loved every single minute of it!

My gratitude firstly goes to Atlas Copco who welcomed me into their team with open arms. A huge thank you also to all the drivers, technicians, pit crew, caterers and everyone else in the Atlas Copco team – it was an unforgettable experience. It was simply amazing to experience the professionalism and capability in the team.

A special word of thanks also to everyone – even opposing teams – for their kind words of advice, their friendliness and their willingness to encourage me as novice. It was a great experience!

The pace of everything was something out of this world – not only the speed of the powerful race cars, but also the way the guys in the pits, who in some cases worked all night, do their part to keep the cars going. Their professionalism was a real eye opener.

Congratulations and thanks also to the organisers of the event who did a great job. You welcomed me and made me feel like royalty, even though I was merely a “babe in arms” in your wonderful world of off-road racing.

As far as I was concerned the expertise of each and every driver in the different classes was absolutely fantastic. Their skill left me breathless.

It was a huge privilege to see them in action, as was the honour to enjoy a few “foamy milk shakes” at Saturday night's prize giving with Barry “The Cousin” Hilton, who had us crawling with laughter.

My sincere gratitude to my driver and mate Derick du Toit, who afforded me the opportunity to become part of your fantastic sport. Although I let Derick down in Friday's prologue when my brain froze as I panicked and was totally overwhelmed, he still allowed me back in the car on Saturday. We clicked better this time around and made up quite a few positions until the gearbox let us down.

Thank you my friend!

I am looking forward to compete next year and race for the full season – hopefully managing a few podium positions in the process.

Thank you everyone yet again – your sport rocks!

Kind regards,

Deon Coetzee