



## TEAM CASTROL TOYOTA LOOK FOR SECOND SUCCESSIVE WIN

The battle between the Production Vehicle factory teams will resume at the Toyota Dealer 450 in Mooi River on April 4 and 5, round two of the Donaldson Cross Country Championship, with the Team Castrol Toyota squad aiming for a second successive double success.

Reigning champions Anthony Taylor and Dennis Murphy and Leeroy Poulter and Rob Howie got the Castrol Toyota squad's 2014 campaign off to a rollicking start with a one/two triumph on the RFS 450. The two Castrol Toyota Hilux crews came in ahead of Atlas Copco Ford Racing pair Manfred Schroder and Japie Badenhorst, and will be aiming to again hang out the business as usual signs - with a win on a Toyota sponsored event an added incentive.

Mooi River is home territory for the Pietermaritzburg based Atlas Copco Ford squad. The event is, however, a new addition to the Donaldson calendar and that negates any thoughts of home ground offering any sort of tangible advantage.

For all that the Pietermaritzburg team is sorely in need of a win. The last time they headed for victory lane was at the corresponding race last season when former South African champions, Chris Visser and Japie Badenhorst, took the victory on the way to seven podium finishes and second place in the championship.

Five of the next six races were won by the Team Castrol Toyota squad, with a run of four wins in a row giving Taylor and Murphy the Production Vehicle title with a race to spare. After the RFS 450 result the Atlas Copco Ford team needs to immediately hit back.

They salvaged some opening event pride via a podium place for Schroder and Badenhorst, while a promising start from team newcomers Gary Bertholdt and Siegfried Rousseau finally fizzled into nothing. If the two crews are to end the victory drought, the Mooi River race would be a good place to start.

Schroder will again deputise for Visser who underwent pre-season neck surgery, and he and Badenhorst and Bertholdt/Rousseau will be hoping for clean runs. Even at this early stage of the season there is a great deal at stake for both factory teams, and there is more on the line than pure pride.

There is enough quantity and quality in rest of the Class T field to give the factory teams a little cause for concern. Kobus van Tonder and Freddie Kriel (Uni Freight Ford Ranger) were the RFS surprise package with a memorable fourth place, and will be looking for more of the same on the short trip down the N3 from home base Harrismith.

Johan van Staden/Mike Lawrenson (Atlas Copco Nissan Navara) were as steady as ever on the RFS 450 and Class T newcomers Jason Venter/Vincent van Alleman (4x4 Mega World Toyota Hilux) and brothers Johan and Werner Horn (Malalane Toyota Hilux) showed plenty of promise. After a solid Dakar Rally debut Thomas Rundle, partnered by newcomer Brett Cummings returns to action in the DMACK/Barden/CCR Toyota Hilux, while Sarel van Biljon and Phillip Herselman (Atlas Copco Toyota Hilux) provide back-up for van Staden and Lawrenson.

The Regent Racing challenge will be headed by Mike Whitehouse/George Myburgh and Terence Marsh and Springbok rugby giant AJ Venter in Nissan Navara entries, while Christiaan du Plooy and Henk Janse van Vuuren will be looking to kick start their season in the RFS Ford Ranger. Much the same applies to Hennie de Klerk/Johann Smalberger in the RFS BMW X3, Richard Fuller/Gary Austin (RSC Auto BMW X3) and Willem Vos/Werner Weiss Vossies BMW X3.

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Ruwacon Racing pair Pieter Ruthven and Hansie Rheeder got their Class S challenge – for cars up to four litres with solid rear axle suspension – off to a solid start at the opening event. That provides them with a confidence booster with tough opposition coming from team-mates Louw de Bruin, in the diesel powered Ruwacon Ford Ranger, newcomers Piet Kotze and Salomon Victor (Toyota Hilux) and Luke Botha who will be joined by the highly experienced Andre Vermeulen in the Force Fuel Toyota Hilux.

Archie Rutherford/Gerhard Schutte (Regent Racing Nissan Navara) and Deon Venter/Ian Palmer (4x4 Mega World Toyota Hilux) will fancy their chances, while Heine Strumpher will make his debut with brother-in-law Henri Hugo doing the co-driving. They will be out in the Toyota Hilux shared last season by Hugo de Bruyn and Hugo.

Doug Fear and Kurt de Villiers (Brytons Removals Toyota Hilux) will do battle with veterans Henri Zermatten and Johan Gerber (Ford Ranger) in Class E.

Race headquarters, the start/finish and the designated service park will all be located at the Weston Agricultural College on the outskirts of Mooi River. Public access to these areas and viewing points along the route is free of charge, with spectator guides available at race headquarters <http://www.saoffroadracing.co.za>. The qualifying race to determine race grid positions will start at 11:30 on Friday, 4 April and the race at 08:30 on Saturday, 5 April.

Ends

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