



DREAM START FOR SCHRODER AND BADENHORST

Mooi River, Friday – The Atlas Copco Ford Racing pair of Manfred Schroder and Japie Badenhorst got their weekend off to the perfect start when they took pole position in the Production Vehicle category for the Toyota Dealer 450, round two of the Donaldson Cross Country championship, here this afternoon.

Schroder and Badenhorst came home a minute and 38 seconds ahead of reigning South African champions Anthony Taylor and Dennis Murphy (Team Castrol Toyota Hilux), to win the qualifying race to determine grid positions. For the second event in a row Schroder, a former Class D and Class E national champion, is standing in for former South African champion Chris Visser who is still recovering from neck surgery.

“It was a tough route but we had a clean run,” said Badenhorst. “The race is going to be hard work, but for us it was the perfect start.”

Schroder, a Ford stalwart, and Badenhorst produced a workmanlike performance to finish third on the season opening RFS 450 in Harrismith. Prior to the Harrismith outing Schroder had never driven one of the premier Class T vehicles in anger, and again proved there is no substitute for experience.

“We again made a few mistakes,” said Taylor, “but the car was good. Hopefully we can keep the momentum from the first race going.”

It was not a happy afternoon, however, for Leeroy Poulter and Rob Howie in the second of the factory Castrol Toyota Hilux entries. A broken ball joint saw them classified as non finishers, and they will start tomorrow’s race from the back of the grid.

The final podium place and first in Class S went to Rustenburg crew Willem Vos and Werner Weiss, in the Vossie BMW X3, in their first outing of the season. To describe it as a shock, however, would be a disservice to the crew who rounded off last year with a win on the Atlas Copco Gold 400.

Vos and Weiss were comfortably ahead of young crew Jason Venter and Vince van Allemann (4x4 Mega World Toyota Hilux) and a podium finish in Class T again underlined their great potential. Venter and van Allemann, however, were under pressure from former circuit racer Hennie de Klerk and Johann Smalberger (RFS BMW X3) with only eight seconds separating the two crews.

The second factory Atlas Copco Ford Ranger of Gary Bertholdt and Siegfried Rousseau were a disappointing sixth ahead of Mpumalanga brothers Johan and Werner Horn in the Malalane Toyota Hilux. The Horns, like Venter/van Allemann, are newcomers to Class T.

The Horns had just over a minute in hand over Jurgen Schroder and Michael Abramson (Regent Racing Nissan Navara), who in turn had a one minute and 23 second cushion over Luke Botha and the highly experienced Andre Vermeulen in the Ford Fuel Toyota Hilux. It was a result that saw Botha and Vermeulen into second place in Class S.

Kobus van Tonder and son-in-law Freddie Kriel, who were the RFS 450 surprise package in the Uni Freight Ford Ranger, completed the top 10. Only 14 seconds separated Botha/Vermeulen and the Uni Freight pair.

Archie Rutherford and Gerhard Schutte (Regent Racing Nissan Navara) were third in Class S ahead of Louw de Bruin and Riaan Greyling in the Ruwacon Racing Ford Ranger. Class S is for vehicles of up to four litres with solid axle rear suspension, with Class T for cars above four litres with independent or solid axle rear suspension.

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It was a good day for the Vos family with Dana, son of Willem, and Koos Visser (Vossie Toyota Hilux) winning Class D. Douglas Fear and Kurt de Villiers (Brytons Removals Toyota Hilux) took the honours in Class E.

Race headquarters, the start/finish and the designated service point (DSP) are all located at the Weston Agricultural College on the outskirts of Mooi River. Public access to these areas and spectator points along the route is free of charge.

The race, which starts at 8:30, will be run over two loops with a compulsory 15 minute halt at the DSP after the first lap.

Ends

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