



LAST CHANCE SALOON FOR SOME SPECIAL VEHICLE CHAMPIONSHIP HOPEFULS Force Fuel 450 shoot-out with two teams tied at the top of Class P

For some Special Vehicle championship hopefuls it will be a last roll of the dice at the Force Fuel 450, round five of the Donaldson Cross Country Championship, at Sun City on August 8 and 9.

The event sees the start of the second half of the season with the championship evenly balanced. But some teams could see their championship hopes go up in smoke over the weekend.

After a miserable time of it for Gerhard and Hardus du Plessis (Jimco) at the Toyota 1000 Desert Race in Botswana, former champions Quintin Sullwald and father Kallie (Elegant Fuel BAT Venom) take to Sun City a tenuous 10 point lead over the North West crew. The du Plessis pair are eight points clear of KwaZulu-Natal crew Arthur Barnes and Anthony Usher (BAT), who are probably a little surprised to find themselves in third place in the title chase in their first season of national competition.

Barnes and Usher, however, have surprisingly not entered for the Force Fuel 450 outing, and behind them there is a bun fight that includes crews who are entering the Last Chance Saloon. Only seven points separate Laurence du Plessis/Gielie le Roux (Zarco), who are tied with Class P crew James Watson/John Thompson (Zarco), and Daniel Brookes and Gavan Gray (Ducatis Property BAT) in eighth place overall.

Sandwiched between du Plessis/le Roux and Watson/Thompson are former SA champions Wichard and Hermann Sullwald (Elegant Fuel Stryker), John Thomson and Maurice Zermatten (Zarco), and reigning South African champions Evan Hutchison and Danie Stassen in the Motorite BAT Viper. The Sullwalds revived their championship hopes with a good Toyota 1000 Desert Race but, along with Hutchison and Stassen, are still very much in the danger zone.

There is, however, very little to choose between the top crews and a crackerjack race is in the offing. For the likes of Wichard and Hermann Sullwald and Hutchison/Stassen banking 25 points for a win is a must, while the Class A crews ahead of them will be looking to consolidate.

There are also a couple of crews who could throw a spanner in the works. Lance Trethewey partnered by Geoff Minnitt in the Mortimer Toyota BAT Venom, is a former Sun City winner while Mark Corbett/Juan Mohr (Century Racing CR5) and the Argazzi brothers, Eduardo and Riccardo, will fancy their chances.

Picking winners in a quality field is always a risky business, but Hutchison and Stassen will probably be sentimental favourites. After a great day three Toyota 1000 Desert Race battle with Quintin and Kallie Sullwald, the Motorite car caught fire two kilometres from the finish – and robbed Hutchison/Stassen of 25 points that would have kept them squarely in the championship mix.

The double points on offer at the Toyota 1000 Desert Race have also produced a volatile situation at the top of the Class P championship. A 50 point haul enabled KwaZulu-Natal crew James Watson and John Thompson (BAT) to draw level with reigning champions John Thomson and Maurice Zermatten in a Zarco.

The two crews are 41 points clear of Sean Reitz, who will be accompanied by George Myburgh, in the Regent Racing Jimco, and will be playing for high stakes at Sun City. But none of the top three crews can match last year's overall winners Colin Matthews and Rodney Burke (Century Racing CR3) for pace, and reliability becomes a factor."

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Burke went into the record books with last year's win his first ever cross country race. The Century Racing crew, however, have been plagued with reliability problems this season, but could play a major role in the championship battle going on ahead of them.

A quality Class P field also includes the likes of Keith and Andrew Makenete (CRC Zarco), Coetzee and Sandra Labuscagne (Chemsystems Zarco), Nic Goslar/Andrew Massey (SA Clinics Zarco) and Jeremy Wood and Ashley Thorn in the K9 Racing Aceco. That ensures some close and interesting racing.

The Force Fuel 450 will be run in conjunction with a round of the Northern Regions championship with race headquarters, the start/finish and the designated service park all located at the Sun City complex. Public entry to these areas and spectator points along the route is free of charge.

The qualifying race to determine grid positions will start at 11:30 on Friday, August 8, and the race at 08:00 on Saturday, August 9.

Ends

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