



SPECIAL VEHICLE LOTTERY AT VRYBURG 450 Sullwalds defending a precious lead

The Special Vehicle championship has turned into something of a lottery and someone needs to pull a winning ticket out of the hat at the Vryburg 450, round six of the Donaldson Cross Country Championship, in North West province on September 12 and 13.

Current championship leaders Quintin and Kallie Sullwald, in the Elegant Fuel BAT Venom, take to the race a precious 29 point lead over Gerhard du Plessis and his teenage son Hardus in a Jimco of advancing vintage. Behind the du Plessis pairing only 14 points separate the next four drivers in the overall and premier Class A championship standings.

However, the championship is in a state of flux and it is a measure of the delicate state of affairs that for some drivers in the top six it is a case of championship survival or come back and try again next year. Reigning champions Evan Hutchison and Danie Stassen, currently fifth in the standings, are a perfect example.

Hutchison and Stassen have retired from three of the five events so far, and have not scored a win this season. A win in Vryburg and a little help from other results would, however, give them a glimmer of hope of back to back championships.

Just nine points separate Gerhard and Hardus du Plessis from Arthur Barnes/Anthony Usher (BAT), who missed the Force Fuel 450 and will also be sitting out this event, and Laurence du Plessis and Gielie le Roux in a Zarco. A good haul of points will certainly be on the agenda for the Force Fuel 450 winners and the Vryburg outing, with cross country racing returning to its roots, could set up a tremendous climax to the season over the two remaining events.

For the Sullwalds, however, the name of the game is consolidation. A win for the pair would be a bonus, but they are far too experienced to flirt with danger.

The Sullwalds will also be aware that they have two non finishes to their name and a third one – with crews having to drop an event at the end of the season, could be costly. They and the other top runners will also have to contend with a number of crews who could be described as dangerous floaters.

Chief among them will be Colin Matthews and Rodney Burke in the Century Racing CR3. A puncture hit their hopes of a second successive Sun City win, but the pair have the pace to put a few Class A noses out of joint.

Among those that could cause surprises are Brett Parker and VZ van Zyl (Sizanani Plastics Jimco), on a high after a podium on the Force Fuel 450, the Republic of Congo brothers Eduardo and Riccardo Argazzi, in a BAT, and Lance Trethewey and Geoff Minnitt in the Mortimer Toyota BAT.

If they see out the full race distance Matthews and Burke are likely to run away with the Class P honours. The pair are in third place in the championship but 39 points behind Class P crew James Watson and John Thompson in a BAT, and have some leeway to make up.

A disappointing Force Fuel 450 outing saw Watson and Thompson fall nine points behind reigning champions John Thomson and Maurice Zermatten, in a Zarco, and their battle could also have a telling affect on the final championship outcome. There is also plenty other opposition in the form of Sean Reitz/Michael Abramson (Regent Racing Jimco), Nic Goslar/Andrew Massey (SA Clinics Zarco), Keith Makenete and Moalosi Borotho in

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the CRC Zarco, Rob Wark/Ashley Thorn (K9 Raceco) and the evergreen Coetzee Labuscagne and daughter Sandra in the Chemsystems Zarco.

Race headquarters, the start/finish and the designated service park will all be located at the Vryburg Motor Club. Entrance is free.

The qualifying event to determine grid positions will start at 11:30 on Friday, September 12 with the race starting at 8:00 on Saturday.

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