



DREAM DONALDSON CROSS COUNTRY CHAMPIONSHIP RETURN FOR VISSER

Vryburg, Saturday – Former South African champion Chris Visser made a dream return to the Production Vehicle category in the Donaldson Cross Country Championship, when he and Atlas Copco Ford Racing team-mate, Japie Badenhorst, won the Vryburg 450, round six of the series, here today.

Visser was making his first appearance of the season after neck surgery for an injury sustained on the Dakar Rally earlier this year, and once again linked up with regular co-driver Badenhorst. The pair gave the factory Atlas Copco Ford Racing team their second win of the season, and finished a slender 21 seconds ahead of championship leaders Anthony Taylor and Dennis Murphy, in the works Team Castrol Toyota Hilux.

It was a stunning return to action for Visser with his cousin, Malcolm Kock, and Johann Burger taking the final place on the podium in the Kock and Son Toyota Hilux. Local lads Kock and Burger were making their second appearance of the season, and revelled in home town conditions.

“There is not much I can say,” said Visser. “It was a dream result, but it got a little tight towards the finish.

“It was just great to be back in the car, and a win was a bonus.”

For Taylor and Murphy a conservative approach earned them some breathing space in both the overall and premier Class T championships. The Team Castrol Toyota Hilux pair went into the weekend with a slender three point lead over Mpumalanga brothers Johan and Werner Horn (Malalane Toyota Hilux), in the overall standings.

After a troubled qualifying race the Horns fought back well to finish eighth overall and sixth in class. It provided some damage control but, with two events left, handed the advantage to Taylor and Murphy.

“After our hiccup on the Force Fuel 450 we were not taking any chances,” said Taylor. “From a championship point of view it was a good result for us.”

An impressive display by Kock and Burger saw them finish 23 seconds clear of North West youngsters Jason Venter and Vince van Allemann (4x4 Mega World Toyota Hilux) who came up with an equally impressive drive to finish in the top five for the first time. Venter and van Allemann were well clear of Leeroy Poulter and Rob Howie, in the second factory Toyota Hilux, who also recovered well after a disappointing qualifying race.

Venter also claimed bragging rights over his father, Deon, was sixth overall and first in Class S with Jaco van Aardt in the 4x4 Mega World Toyota Hilux. Venter senior and van Aardt were well clear of veteran former SA champions Jannie Visser and Joks le Roux, in the Ruwacon Racing Toyota Hilux.

Visser and le Roux, however, tightened the screws on championship leaders and team-mates Louw de Bruin and Riaan Greyling (Ford Ranger) in the Class S standings. An ultra fast route with long straights left the diesel powered Ford at a distinct disadvantage, with the pair holding on for sixth in class.

The Horns trailed in behind Visser and le Roux, and were followed by Etienne Nienaber and Dewald Ferreira (Toyota Hilux) who were third in Class S in their first season on national competition. They were then hit with a 35 minute penalty that dropped them way down the pecking order.

That lifted the ever steady Terence Marsh and actress Hlubi Mboya, competing in the Imperial Auto Celebrity Challenge, into ninth place in the Regent Racing Nissan Navara. After a highly disappointing run of results Christiaan du Plooy and Henk Janse van Vuuren (RFS Ford Ranger), also found themselves elevated into the top 10.

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Class D saw qualifying race winners Dewald and Anton Nienaber, in a Toyota Land Cruiser, take a comfortable win ahead of Diederik Hattingh and Gary Austin in a Ford Ranger. The Nienabers were always in control, with Hattingh/Austin on the back foot after problems in the qualifying race.

A third win in a row took Gareth Woolridge, in a Polaris, to the top of the new Class G standings ahead of Brian Capper in the Regent Racing Polaris. Woolridge's co-driver, Boyd Dreyer, is also closing in on Jaco Swart, who sits alongside Capper, in the navigator standings.

The route and high temperatures took a heavy toll on the Class G brigade. Chris Wood and Peet Markram, in another Polaris, were the only other finishers, and were more than 50 minutes behind Woolridge and Dreyer.

Ends

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