



BACK TO BACK TITLES FOR TAYLOR/MURPHY

Atlas Copco Ford Ranger crew Gary Bertholdt and Siegfried Rousseau did the race sponsors and the factory team proud when they won the Atlas Copco Gold 450, the final round of the Donaldson Cross Country Championship.

It was the factory Atlas Copco Ford team's third win of the season and a first for Bertholdt and Rousseau. There was, however, also cause for celebration in the Team Castrol Toyota Hilux camp with Anthony Taylor and Dennis Murphy clinching back to back Production Vehicle and Class T championships.

There was another first when young North West crew Jason Venter and Vincent van Allemann, in the 4x4 Mega World Toyota Hilux, scored their maiden podium finish with a polished second place in conditions made tricky by plenty of pre event rain. The final podium place went to Mpumalanga brothers Johan and Werner Horn in the Malalane Toyota Hilux.

Fifth place overall was enough to give Taylor/Murphy the overall and Class T titles ahead of the Horns who scored a Pyrrhic victory by finishing ahead of the factory team over the weekend. The two crews were the only teams left in the title races, and 14 and 11 point deficits going into the race proved a bridge too far for the Horns.

The race also settled the Class S title for cars up to four litres with solid rear axles. In a close contest that went all the way to the wire former South African champions Jannie Visser and Joks le Roux (Ruwacon Racing Toyota Hilux) edged out Louw de Bruin/Riaan Greyling (Ruwacon Ford Ranger) and Deon Venter (4x4 Mega World Toyota Hilux) who tied with de Bruin in the driver championship.

Venter and Jaco van Aardt won Class S by a wide margin ahead of Visser/le Roux and de Bruin/Greyling who went through the season with a 100 percent record. In unofficial scoring, however, Visser and le Roux took the title by a three point margin.

Taylor and Murphy, who scored four wins during the season, did well to come through the field after a troublesome 100 kilometre qualifying race saw them start from the back of the field. The Horns also had their problems during the qualifying race, but as long as Taylor/Murphy saw out the distance the mathematics were always going to be against them.

Bertholdt and Rousseau started the day in third place behind Atlas Copco Ford team-mates Chris Visser and Japie Badenhorst, and the impressive Venter/van Allemann combination. At the halfway mark Bertholdt and Rousseau were second behind Visser/Badenhorst and took the lead with the demise of their team-mates.

It was a significant win for Bertholdt and Rousseau. In unofficial scoring it lifted Bertholdt into third place in the driver standings and Rousseau into fourth place among the co-drivers – with a non finish for Leeroy Poulter and Rob Howie, in the second Team Castrol Toyota, dropping them behind the Atlas Copco Ford pair.

The weekend also saw Regent Racing Polaris pair Brian Capper and Jaco Swart crowned Class G - Side by Side – champions in the category's inaugural season. A non finish for Gareth Woolridge and Boyd Dreyer dropped them out of the running.

Race honours went to Capper and Michael Abramson, deputising for Swart, ahead of Chris Wood and Peter Markram in another Polaris. Third, also in a Polaris, were Werner Mostert and Henno du Plooy.

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