

## **BACKDRAFT BUNFIGHT FOR INDEX OF PERFORMANCE CHAMPIONSHIP TITLE**

The SA Endurance Championship finale is set to be a title-deciding thriller fought out over nine hours at the Killarney International Raceway in Cape Town as part of the Southern African Endurance Series Cape Motorsport Festival on 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> December.

Ten teams racing the open-topped rumbling Lexus V8-powered Backdraft Roadsters are riding high in the fight for the coveted Index of Performance Championship while the overall points table features seven Backdraft teams in the top 10. Adding to the pressure to deliver strong results is the Class E title which will also be resolved at the Cape Motorsport Festival.

Against the backdrop of South Africa's largest motorsport music festival, Team Pesty Racing's Harm/Barend Pretorius will be out to defend their slender six point lead by repeating their Index victory last time out at Aldo Scribante while also fighting off their rivals for the Class E crown which they also lead by nine points.

Hot on Team Pesty's heels is Benjamin Morgenrood (Ben Morgenrood Ford and Mazda) who will be helped by his brother Crisjan, who missed the Scribante double header due to exams and plummeted to 11<sup>th</sup> in the standings. Father Ben, a doyen of SA Motorsport missed the opening round and lies 9<sup>th</sup> on the points table. The Morgenrood trio will do everything in their power to help Benjamin take one or both of the titles up for grabs.

Colin Ellison is third in the Index standings – seven points adrift of Morgenrood - having raced his black and gold Titan Historic F1 Racing Backdraft to an Index victory in East London. Ellison is alone in his fight having raced with multiple co-drivers during the season. He has, however, elected to sit out the 9-Hour.

Team Qhubani's Baphumze Rubuluza/Fikile Holomisa has been a model of consistency until round six which saw their first non-finish in over a year. Their third place on Index in round five has been their best result so far, and they will be joined by Xolela Njumbunxa for this occasion. They are 37 points off the lead but with 100 available, anything can still happen.

Rejoining the fray is the PPLE and Adapt entry of Philip Meyer, Mark Harvey and Dean Wolson with their fully re-furbished Backdraft. The trio won the Index of performance in round two and could be a dark horse this time around in their Panda-liveried machine.

An interesting entry is the #33 car to be driven by Italians Gianmaria Gabbiani, Alberto Huober and Mags Govender. Gabbiani has raced go-karts, single-seaters, touring cars and stock cars and won a Class One World Powerboat Championship and scored two Endurance Powerboat World Championships. Huober is a classic car restorer and dealer and has also raced powerboats.

Other key players in the Class E and Index of performance title chase include the trio of Trevor Graham, a veteran rally and endurance racer teamed with Mark Owen and Richard van Heerde.

Four drivers make up the #8 Backdraft entry headed by former Off-Road Class D Champion Manfred Schroeder, Meredith Wills, Michael Gaines and KZN regional racer Reg Sutton who should be chased by Joburg newcomers Malcolm and Mpostine Bhengu.

The Index of Performance has been won four times by Backdraft Roadster teams in the preceding six rounds. It is not a foregone conclusion that a Backdraft entry will win the Index of Performance Championship but the fight for the title will be breath-taking to watch.

Tickets for the SAES Cape Motorsport Festival are available at  
<https://www.webtickets.co.za/v2/Event.aspx?itemid=1521171144>

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