

XOLILE LETLAKA AND STUART WHITE WIN TENSE SA ENDURANCE RACE IN GQUBERHA

SA ENDURANCE NATIONAL CHAMPIONSHIP RD 3

SA GT NATIONAL CHAMPIONSHIP RD 5 AND 6

ALDO SCRIBANTE RACEWAY, 5 AUGUST

The third round of the SA Endurance Championship delivered a thrilling contest between race winners Xolile Letlaka and Stuart White in their Into Africa Lamborghini Huracan Evo GT3 and the Championship leader Charl Arangies and Arnold Neveling's Stradale Racing Mercedes-AMG GT3. The cat-and-mouse chase saw the lead change several times as race strategies and pitstops came into play.

The final lead change happened with 50 minutes remaining and tensions ran high as both crews tried to outlast the other on fuel strategy.

With two rounds remaining and potential dropped scores coming into play, the championship is tied between the Into Africa and Stradale teams with BBR Racing snapping at their heels five points adrift.

James Sweetnam, Nick Adcock and Dawie Joubert brought their Adjust4Sleep/Rico Barlow Racing Nova Proto home in third on the car's debut while Karah Hill/Jurie Swart fought their way to their maiden Class D victory.

CJ Blackman/Jean-Paul Briner won class E and the Index of Performance, further strengthening their grip on the Index leaderboard.

Qualifying:

The two-part qualifying saw Andrew Rackstraw set a spectacularly fast 55.289 second lap around the 2.4km circuit with an average speed of 159.52km/h to take pole position in his Ginetta G57-Chev which he shared with Craig Jarvis.

Stuart White blasted the Lambo to the front row with a time of 56.088 seconds, followed by Neveling's Mercedes-AMG a further 0.52 seconds slower. Englishman Sweetnam completed the second row of the grid in the Nova, followed by Mikael Pitamber in the Pilbeam-Nissan. Byron Mitchell put his Dolphin Racing Juno-Nissan on row three with Henk Lategan (BBR Porsche 992 GT3 Cup) and Marius Jackson's MJR Motorsport Audi R8 LMS GT3 Evo rounding out the class A field.

Graeme Nathan bagged the Class D pole for Volkswagen Motorsport followed by VW Polo Cup racer Charl Visser making his debut in a VW Polo SupaCup and Kalex pair Karah Hill/Jurie Swart.

Andrew Horne took the class E pole in his Xena Chemicals Nash-VW followed by the leading Backdraft of Gavin Rooke. They were followed by the Morgenrood trio of Ben/Benjamin/Crisjan in their Ben Morgenrood Ford and Mazda Backdraft. Mark Harvey/Dean Wolson/Phillip Meyer followed in the PPLE/Adapt Backdraft, CJ Blackman/JP Briner in their Tradecor Steel example, Team Qhubani's Bapi Rubuluza/Fikile Holomisa, the father and son Pesty Backdraft of Harm/Barend Pretorius and Trevor Graham/Tony Martin's factory Backdraft.

Race:

As the lights turned green Rackstraw took an immediate lead with White snapping at his heels as the first laps were dealt with. The first safety car came out just three laps in after Izak Spies crashed his McLaren heavily at the final corner, fortunately without harm.

It was game on when the cars were released, with White hounding the leading Ginetta while further back, Carruthers spun his Pilbeam on the inside of the Sweep but got going again. Rackstraw was pumping in lap times in the 56 second bracket, with White doing 57s, but this was subject to traffic and backmarkers.

The track was a busy place as the leaders and SAGT cars threaded the needle picking their way through the slower traffic. After 25 laps, White took the lead with Arangies closing on the ailing Ginetta.

All was not well with Rackstraw's car, as from lap two, he felt a loss of power and once he'd slipped to sixth, he pitted to try and fix the problem.

With the sun slipping over the horizon, Aldo Scribante became a blaze of lights as the one hour mark saw the end of the SAGT and 1-Hour Dash. Traffic eased somewhat as the GT cars peeled into the pits.

Shortly after, the #42 Backdraft of Trevor Graham crashed heavily after running wide on the 'marbles' and turn one, bringing out the safety car once again. Graham was unhurt, but the car suffered significant damage.

Teams used the slow race pace to pit, leaving Adcock in the lead from Letlaka, Arangies and Lategan. Nathan led Hill in Class D with Horne leading Pretorius in the Class E battle at the 62 lap mark.

White was happy with the team's performance as the lengthy safety car periods played into their hands in terms of fuel consumption and tyre wear.

The leading teams pitted, White taking over from the massively improved Letlaka following some overseas races, and Neveling taking over from Arangies. The overall results saw the Stradale Mercedes in the lead from the White Lamborghini, Sweetnam's Nova Proto and Henk Lategan in the BBR Porsche.

Jurie Swart held a one lap lead over the Rowe Polo SupaCup while Gavin Rooke led class E from Buys' Nash.

With just over an hour remaining, the Ginetta emerged from the pits, having had the engine opened up as the team battled to restore the car to full power.

Yet another safety car was called into action as Buys' Nash ground to a halt in the Sweep, the car suffering a broken hub which damaged the driveshaft. The Pretorius' Team Pesty Backdraft lost time in the pits replacing a broken driveshaft while the Rooke Backdraft pitted with steam pouring out of the engine bay.

With an hour to go, Lategan pitted and ominously, the car was wheeled into the pit box to repair a leaking brake fluid pipe caused when Hein had a high-speed spin after he was clipped by the Morgenrood Backdraft. The Porsche father and son duo dropped to fifth overall as a result of the time loss.

50 minutes remained on the clock. White was right on the glowing exhaust of the Mercedes and under braking through the last corner, dived inside the Merc and pulled into the lead going down the main straight. Over the next few laps, White's breathtaking driving style was put to full use, building a lead of 11 seconds and counting, while just behind, Henk Lategan took fourth place back.

37 minutes to go: White had 23.3 seconds in hand which quickly became one lap.

12 minutes to go: the Into Africa Lambo peeled into the pits for a splash and dash fuel stop. The lead was down to 18 seconds as he rocketed out of the pits but it was enough...

Sweetnam held on to third giving the Nova Proto a debut podium, while Henk Lategan brought his Porsche home in fourth, ahead of Byron Mitchell's Juno-Nissan.

Karah Hill reeled of the final laps to claim Class D honours ahead of the Rowe factory VW who was followed home by Pitamber in the Pilbeam, and rookies CJ Blackman/Jean Paul Briner in their Wright Motorsport Backdraft, claiming the class honours.

Harvey followed in second ahead of Rooke, Holomisa, Pretorius and Morgenrood.

The fourth round of the SA Endurance National Championship takes place on 21 October at Zwartkops Raceway

SAGT

Qualifying:

Michael Stephen picked up where he left off last time out, setting a benchmark 56.74 second pole lap on his first flyer in qualifying. The Ultimate Outlaws Audi R8 LMS GT3 was a full 1:347 ahead of Silvio Scribante's Cemza Cement Lamborghini Huracan GT3 to complete the front row.

Aldo Scribante (Scribante Concrete Lamborghini Huracan GT3) completed a Gqeberha lockout at the front of the grid with a time of 59.57 seconds. Andrew Culbert (Bigfoot Express Mercedes-AMG GT3) was delighted to get under the one-minute barrier to take fourth.

Paul Hill (Kalex Aston Martin Vantage GT3) lined up in fifth ahead of the first of the Ultimate Outlaws McLaren MP4-12Cs driven by Roelf du Plessis. Du Plessis was later penalized for missing parc ferme after qualifying and was sent to the back of the grid for both SAGT Races.

Izak Spies took seventh on the grid in the sister Ultimate Outlaws McLaren with Sun Moodley's Bigfoot Express taking eighth.

Marius Jackson (MJR Motorsport Audi R8 LMS Evo2 GT3 and Henk Lategan (BBR Motorsport Porsche 911 Cup) filled out the last row.

Round 5:

As the cars peeled out of the pits, Aldo Scribante peeled off the track and parked his Lamborghini on the grass verge as a result of a stuck jack. The team sent a technician and a hammer to fix the problem and he duly made his grid slot just in time before the flag fell.

As the lights turned to green, Stephen bolted away into the distance while further back, Hill powered past Culbert as did Spies. Lategan was glued to the tail of the second McLaren while up front, Stephen had opened up a 2.2 second lead over the yellow Lambo, the leading pair putting chunks of daylight over the rest of the field.

It all got a bit frantic when Stephen caught Lategan, Du Plessis and Spies. Going into the hairpin, Du Plessis passed Spies under braking, boxing in the leading Audi. Scribante lost a little ground picking his way through the tail of the field, opening a bigger gap to Silvio Scribante.

There was a tense moment in the pits when Aldo Scribante made his pitstop but the jacks worked perfectly and no time was lost.

Izak Spies retired his McLaren on lap 43 joining Marius Jackson and Henk Lategan already in the pits.

With 15 minutes remaining, Culbert made a monster dive on Du Plessis at the final corner and out-dragged the McLaren down the main straight. Under braking for turn one, the McLaren just edged back ahead of the Mercedes.

With minutes remaining on the clock, Silvio was 2.2 seconds behind Stephen when he dropped a wheel on the dirt and spun in the very fast Sweep, keeping it out of the wall, but his challenge was over.

Paul Hill took ProAm honours ahead of Roelf du Plessis with Sun Moodley taking the Am win.

Round 6:

The second SAGT race of the day took place as the first hour of the SAE Endurance race, a new and popular concept trailed at the previous round.

Michael Stephen lined his Audi up in fourth on the grid followed by Silvio and Aldo Scribante in sixth and ninth respectively. Culbert was tenth on the packed grid, followed by Hill in 12th, Spies in 14th and Du Plessis at the back again, following his penalty.

Stephen slotted in behind the leading endurance runners, leaving his rivals to pick their way to the front. Izak Spies had a massive accident in the final corner on lap three burying the Ultimate Outlaws McLaren in the tyre wall. Spies was shaken, but unhurt.

A number of teams used the safety car period to make their compulsory pitstops. Paul Hill briefly held the lead with Stephen still ahead of Silvio Scribante while brother Aldo was closing down Andrew Culbert.

Marius Jackson and Aldo Scribante came together at the Hairpin, the Audi retiring with damaged right rear suspension after the Audi broke traction. Aldo was left with nowhere to go and jinked left, just clipping the Audi's corner, the impact bending the Lamborghini's oil cooler "like a banana". Luckily the cooler temperatures played into Aldo's hands and he completed the race without further incident.

After the first hour of the SA Endurance race, the SAGT and 1-Hour Dash competitors pulled into the pits.

Michael Stephen retains his stranglehold on the SAGT Championship with another win, followed by Silvio and Aldo Scribante, Roelf du Plessis and the two Bigfoot Mercedes of Culbert and Moodley.

Stephen has a 25 point lead in the championship standings over Aldo Scribante, Andrew Culbert and Roelf du Plessis.

The 1-Hour dash saw Stephen take line hours ahead of Roelf du Plessis and Sun Moodley. Charl Visser, the current VW Polo Cup championship leader came home fourth followed by Oliver Hintenaus' BMW.

The next round of the SAGT Championship takes place on 20 and 21 October at Zwartkops Raceway.



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