

FORM GUIDE OUT THE WINDOW FOR SECOND ROUND OF THE SA ENDURANCE CHAMPIONSHIPS BROUGHT TO YOU BY SILVERLAKES FARM HOTEL FOR THE FOUR HOURS OF ZWARTKOPS

Preview: SAE National Championship Rd 2

Zwartkops Raceway, Pretoria, 27th April

The various scenarios and possibilities governing the outcome of the second round of the six-race SA Endurance Championships taking place at Zwartkops Raceway, Pretoria on April 27, mean the series remains wide open for the taking by a number of teams.

Outright winners in Round 1 at Redstar Raceway and current championship log leaders Hein and Henk Lategan with Verissimo Tavares are committed to a family function so their BBR Racing Porsche will be missing from the starting grid.

Paul Hill and Bradley Liebenberg in the Promigen Audi, who finished a mere 0,8 seconds behind the Porsche last time out, go into this race with an opportunity to move into the series lead if they can win or, at least, get themselves onto the podium and bag a good haul of points.

However, here is where it gets interesting – the SA Endurance Series has a rule allowing competitors to drop their worst scoring race for the season but only if they started the race.

After missing the opening round of the South African National Endurance Series, the Nova Proto NP02 of Nick Adcock and Michael Jensen is back to join the championship fight, but they will have to carry the zero points scored from that round to the end of the season and still drop one race, they will be joined by young Charl Visser for this round – as will Marius Jackson and an as yet unknown co-driver, in the fully refurbished and rebranded MJR Motorsport Audi R8 GT3.

An on-board fire in the closing stages of the opening round saw the end of a mega challenge by Mike McLoughlin/Steve Clark in the mighty Chev V8 Slingshot Backdraft. The car has been repaired and if all goes well, they will certainly be at the sharp end of the field – with the advantage that, having started the race at Redstar, they can safely drop that event from the final scoring.

Wayne Riddell, CEO of the Southern African Endurance Series, says: “I am expecting a monumental tussle at Zwartkops because every single point counts and the situation means the championship is wide open.”

Not to be discounted is the pairing of Xolile Letlaka and Stuart White in the Into Africa Racing Lamborghini and race fans could see one of them in the Lamborghini with the other in the team’s Aston Martin also taking on the race-within-a-race in the first of the 1-hour dash.

Here, Andrew Horne in the Xena Chemicals/Ecurie Zoo Ligier has the advantage having won at Redstar but will be seriously challenged if the White/Letlaka pair go out and then there is Mike Verrier in the Shelby Can Am Nissan V6 ready to throw the proverbial spanner into the works.

Endurance racing requires planning and while the adage of winning by going as fast as possible may be true, drivers not only compete against the other cars but against the track itself and the short, technical Zwartkops circuit brings several things into play.

There are a lot more gearchanges, more braking, more acceleration and this places additional stress of both the car and the driver and needs to be factored into the race strategies if the car is to finish four punishing hours of racing. The demand placed on both driver and machine will be tested to the maximum as was the case last year that saw every single car that raced needed additional stops to make brake and tyre changes. The pure nature of the circuit with 25 cars in circulation will keep the drivers extremely busy.

Perhaps those factors mean the Class B cars move up a notch in the chase for podium places and one to watch will be the female pairing of Fabienne Lanz and Lonka Maartens in their Backdraft – after setting pole position for Class E at Redstar, this car has undergone some modifications to promote it up a class. They will be joined by rookie Lerato Sekudu for this round.

In the class they will be up against the 5,0-litre Backdraft of Kishoor Pitamber/Gavin Cronje and the twin GT4 Lamborghinis entered by Samlin Racing for Damian Hammond/ Farhaan Basha and Sam Hammond/Wayne Roach and, providing the Samlin cars have been cured of the niggles and gremlins that ruined their day at Redstar, this should be an epic class battle as Samlin Racing are no strangers to racing.

Another duel worthy of note will be the Class C joust between Kara Hill/Jurie Swart in the Kalex VW Golf and Kashen Naicker/Anthony Pretorius in the Aqua Darshan / Fast Developments Racing Alfa – consistency having paid for the Kalex car in the opening round where they finished third overall, rewarded for a totally trouble-free run. Kris Budnik, Kent Schwartz and Niko Zafiris will join in the melee with a BMW.

In Class D the battle will be between Volkswagen Golfs and the father and son pairing of Roberto and David Franco (Graphix Supply World) had a great opening round of the championship and, even though David was nursing a leg injury, they managed to take Class D honors and the lead in the championship.

Looking over their shoulder is the Korridas team of Bruno Campos/Marcos Rodrigues and Joao Martins and a clean run to rack up some points is certainly high on their agenda.

Class E, which is now the standalone Backdraft Roadster National Championship is packed full of potential race winners.

“This one is going to be too close to call,” says Riddell. “Certainly, whatever happens, race fans can be assured of some really exciting and close racing from these identical and spectacular machines.”

The Pple Group/Adapt Signage car of Philip Meyer/Dean Wolson/Mark Harvey took the chequers in the opening round and currently lead the championship but they will have huge pressure from the Team Qhubani Backdraft piloted by Fikile Holomisa and Baphumze Rubuluza, a force that has proved they have race-winning potential.

The KwaZulu Natal pairing of Trevor Graham and Dan Hirsch finished up second on the Index of Performance log at Round 1 and they are more than capable of pedalling their bright yellow Backdraft to a race victory.

The mix gets even stronger with the Pesty Racing pairing of Harm and Barend Pretorius – having won the class in a previous season.

“Across all the classes the mix is simply mouthwatering and is going to be a great day’s racing,” said Riddell.

The Liqui Moly Super Vee SA series who will provide the support races Round 2 of the National SAES championship at Zwartkops Raceway join the tour for the first time. They have expressed interest in becoming a more permanent addition to the tour, traveling to all the away events as well.

Gates open at 6am and cars take to the circuit at 7am. Braai’s, cooler boxes, deck Charis and gazebos are welcome, with children under the age of 12 enjoying free entry to the venue.

The feature race will also be broadcast live on SuperSport from 11am.

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