HISTORICS START THE SEASON ON A HIGH

Record grids and spectacular racing at Passion for Speed

The 2023 Ben Morgenrood Group Historic Racing season burst into action with the biggest field in years delivering thrilling racing action throughout, at a packed Zwartkops Passion for Speed Festival on Saturday. PE visitor Rudolf de Vos celebrated 50 years on the Little Chevy Can Am with a double Sprint race win on the day, while Wernher Hartzenberg’s Porsche and Johan Smit’s Skyline shared out the Pursuit wins.

SPRINT: RECORD GRID, STUNNING RACING

With no room on the packed grid for the Class G cars, they raced separately alongside a less populous category as de Vos initially made short work of the opening race to make off up front in the rumbling Chev. It’s 50 years since Basil van Rooyen famously dominated the Can Am’s debut Star Modified Production Car Championship back in ’73, so Roelof’s pace was quite fitting

Behind him, Class B rival Andre van der Merwe’s Porsche 911 RSR worked hard to get away from Class C duo, Rob Prece in another piece of South African race history, the spaceframe VW Golf Mk 1 built to race the late’70s Manufacturer’s Challenge, and Jannie van Rooyen Volkswagen ‘s Scirocco. Jannie’s partner in crime, Stuart König’s season got off to a hard start after his Scirocco came into contact with Herman Kluge’s Porsche, eliminating both.

The action heated up as the race wore on. De Vos encountered the combined effects of both heavy traffic and complaining rubber, allowing van der Merwe’s nimble Porsche to close right up on the rumbling Chevy. But de Vos controlled the situation to win from van der Merwe, Prece and van Rooyen.

The Class D top four, Greg Steen and Rene Jansen van Rensburg Ford Escorts, Travis Jensen’s Datsun 1200 GX and Fred König Volkswagen Scirocco followed from Richard Pott’s Class B Porsche 911 RSR, which recovered to tenth after an earlier contretemps. Class D Datsun men, Gavin Lundin’s 1200 GX and Sophos Pantazis’ 240Z followed. Terence Ladner’s Scirocco fought off Franz Jensen’s Datsun 1200 GX, Riaan Roux’s Scirocco, Ian Kilburn’s 1200 GX Coupe and Derick Smalberger and Daniel Lotter’s Escorts for Class E honours.

Johan Gouws took an easy Class F win in his Scirocco MK1. He put recovering Class D duo, Oliver Broome’s Chevy SS and Andre ten Napel VW Scirocco and Class E trio, Peder Jensen’s Datsun, Nigel Townshend’s Escort and Sean Hepburn’s Datsun between him and his class rivals. They were Youngtimer trio, Mike O'Sullivan and Rob Clark’s Honda Ballades, and Tiaan Smith’s Nissan Sentra, Willem Vorster’s Escort, John Bronner, Cor Kraamwinkel’s BMW 2002, Willem Vonk in his dad’s original Escort and Peter Lanz in his original Group N Fiat Uno.

Racing separately, Tihan van Rooyen’s Porsche 924 won Class F from Josef Kotze and Jan Jacobs Alfa GT Junior. That was not enough for George Avvakoumides and Stefan Puschavez’ Porsches, John Simpson Alfa GT Junior, and Dave Leyson and Jono König ‘s Sciroccos. They were all rendered hors de combat in the fraught action to join Stuart König and Kluge in that early queue at the showers

It was much the same in race 2 as de Vos trotted off to a double 50th birthday victory for his Little Chevy, from Andre van der Merwe and Richard Pott’s Porsches. Jannie van Rooyen’s Scirocco survived to take an easy Class C win from Class D six, Rene van Rensburg’s Escort, Oliver Broome’s Chevy, Travis Jensen’s Datsun, Greg Steen’s Escort, Sophos Pantazis’ 240Z and Stefan Puschavez’ Porsche.

Next up, Stuart König fought back to second in Class C in his Scirocco from dad Fred’s Class D example, Kluge’s C Porsche and D duo Napel’s Scirocco and Lundin’s Datsun. Terence Ladner’s Scirocco led the Class E charge from Franz Jensen’s Datsun, Riaan Roux’s Scirocco, Derick Smalberger’s Escort, Sean Hepburn’s Datsun, and Daniel Lotter and Nigel Townshend’s Escorts.

Mike O'Sullivan led a Youngtimers Class F 1-2-3 from Robert Clark’s similar Ballade and Tiaan Smith’s Sentra Fourth in Class F, Willem Vorster’s Escort MK2 put George Avvakoumides’s C Porsche 911 between him, Cor Kraamwinkel’s BMW, Willem Vonk’s Escort, Ian Kilburn’s Datsun, and Peter Lanz’ Uno. Racing separately once again, George Smalberger’s Escort put one over Class G rivals, Tihan van Rooyen’s Porsche 924 and Josef Kotze.

PURSUIT: BREAKOUT PARTY!

Wernher Hartzenberg’s Fines class Porsche 916 took the opening Ben Morgenrood HRSA Pursuit handicap race win from class rival Andre Hattingh’s Mercedes 190E. Third man, Riaan Roux’s Volkswagen Jetta took the Modified class win from Johan Gouws’ similar car, Johann Smith’s Skyline, Willem van Niekerk’s Marauder, Jensen Ewart’s Alfetta and Rob van Aarle’s Escort.

That after the first four cars home, Wynand du Plessis Sr, William Kelly, and Hedley Whitehead, as well as John Bronner Stan Stacey, Althea Pretorius, Greg White and Mike Thomson, were all excluded for breaking out of their quickest allowed lap times.

Johann Smith took race 2 from Fines rival Hattingh and Modified winner Gouws, Wynand du Plessis Sr.’s Porsche 944, Roux, Bronner and Hartzenberg. Kelly followed from Ewert and van Niekerk’s Marauder, after the first car home, Thompson, as well as Whitehead, van Aarle and Pretorius broke out.

Ben Morgenrood Group Historic Racing returns to action for the second round of its 2023 season at Red Star Raceway near Delmas on Saturday the 4th of March.