**COX STEALS SA CROSS COUNTRY CHAMPIONSHIP**

*Bradley pips hapless Cocker, Pentecost to second national title*

The 2023 Trademore South African National Cross Country Championship came to a dramatic head at a brilliant Bloemfontein finale on Saturday. In an epic outcome, Bradley Cox followed overall winner and OR1 rival Michael Pentecost home to not only clinch that open title, but he also stole the overall championship from a devastated OR2 champion Davin Cocker.

Husqvarna rider Cocker had dominated the race from the outset and looked set to clinch the title with a deserved win, but the fickle finger of fate had other plans. First, a radiator hose disconnected, forcing Davin to stop and make a repair. And then if that was not enough, he ran out of fuel and wasted more precious minutes sorting that dilemma. He then chased flat out, but ultimately ended up three positions shy of where he needed to be.

That meant that Michael Pentecost took an emphatic eight minute overall Bloemfontein race victory for Honda over 450cc OR1 KTM rivals, one could say a fortuitous Bradley Cox and Scott Heygate. OR3 KTM top two, new champion Matthew Wilson and Peter Karam followed ahead of Ian Rall’s OR1 Gas Gas, while Seniors winner Louwrens Mahoney came home seventh on another Honda. OR1 duo, Honda rider John Botha and Kawasaki man Jaycee Nienaber were next up ahead of his OR3 teammate Wian Wentzel and Erik Merry’s Honda. Still the OR2 winner, Davin Cocker came home twelfth.

Pentecost only just failed to topple second man home Cox to the OR1 title, but he still had a great day in the saddle as he ultimately rode his Franchise Co Tork Craft Honda to an emphatic overall victory. Bradley Cox rode a calculated race to second to not only clinch that class title for Brother Leader tread KTM, but also to steal that overall championship. Teammate Scott Heygate ended third in the open class from Ian Rall’s Gas Gas, OR3 graduate John Botha’s Honda and Jaycee Nienaber on a Kawasaki. Francois de Greef’s Yamaha meanwhile took the Interprovincial OR1 win.

Husqvarna factory rider Davin Cocker’s OR2 win to wrap up his class championship year did little to console him losing the overall title in the end. He however still took the OR2 winner’s trophy and red plate from KTM trio Kyle Eggar, lady Cross Country heroine Leah Heygate, Juan Niebuhr Terri Hodge riding a Sherco and Barend Pretorius on another KTM. Zander King took OR2 IPC honours on a Yamaha.

Matthew Wilson took another 250cc OR3 victory for Brother Leader tread KTM, which was just enough to take the title from consistent Honda rider Peter Karam, who followed Wilson home in second. Wian Wentzel returned to action in Bloemfontein to take third for Pepson Plastics Kawasaki, ahead of Erik Merry on a Honda, Derek Karam’s Yamaha and Honda rider Tyron Beverley.

Louwrens Mahoney was in dominant Seniors form aboard his Franchise Co Tork Craft Honda, but it was never going to be enough to beat second man Kerim Fitz-Gerald’s Brother Leader Tread KTM to the title. That championship was already wrapped up at the previous round. Wynand Delport’s Honda ended third from Marco Cocci’s Yamaha and KTM men Fraser Couper and Ryan Smit. Husqvarna duo, Marcell Swart and Arnu Welgemoed took the Senior Club and Leisure wins.

Kobus Jonck rode his Franchise Co Tork Craft Honda to Masters victory over Pepson Plastics Kawasaki rider Pieter Holl, who had likewise already wrapped up that championship in the previous round. Wayne Farmer ended third on his Husqvarna from Anthonie van der Walt on a Sherco and KTM Man mielies Le Roux.

KTM did enough through all that to hold Honda off and clinch the 2023 South African Senior Cross Country Motorcycle Manufacturer’s championship over Honda.

In Junior action, Blake Young led Luke Walker and Nathan Westerdale home to a KTM High School 125cc 1-2-3 over Daniel Peckham’s Sherco and Rory Donaldson and Alecz Grobbelaar on another two KTMs. Jayden Boyce took the IPC win on his Kawasaki. Walker’s second place crowned him as 2023 South African Cross Country High School Champion.

Murray Smith made it a 100% season by winning every 85cc junior race of the year en route to a dominant title on his Franchise Co Tork Craft Husqvarna. He beat KTM duo Bruno Niebuhr and Franco Fourie, Nicol Smit’s Husqvarna, Jake Pretorius on a Kawasaki Drikus van der Merwe’s KTM to the Bloemfontein win.

GJ Coetzee Husqvarna similarly never lost a 65cc race en route to a clean sweep in the baby class title. He beat Ruald Potgieter’s Kawasaki Wilco Du Plooy on a Yamaha, KTM duo Cambeul du Preez and Joshua Fotheringham, and Travis Levey Yamaha over the weekend.

Husqvarna took the Junior Manufacturer’s title, while junior Interprovincial action saw Lekhela Mpharoane take 85cc honours on his KTM and Louwrens Alberts’ Yamaha taking the IPC 65cc win. That concludes the 2023 Trademore South African National Cross Country Championship.