**ADVANTAGE WOLK IN KYALAMI SATC**

*Wolk takes the day but van der Watt, Variawa win races*

He may have ended second in both heats at Kyalami’s blockbuster Extreme Festival South African Touring Cars races, but Robert Wolk emerged the winner of the day as he also consolidated his already handy championship lead. Julian van der Watt took a poignant opening feature race win, while Saood Variawa took reverse grid race 2 honours. Calvin Dias emerged a provisional surprise double winner in the dramatic and crunching SATC SupaCup races.

Robert Wolk’s BMW 128TC led a Chemical Logistics WCT Engineering 1-2-3 rout in qualifying from teammates, Julian van der Watt’s Investchem Volkswagen Golf GTI TC. Wildcard former multiple champion Michael Stephen started third deputising for Andy Schofield in the FlySafair Chemical Logistics BMW 128TC. Nathi Msimanga was the best of the Gazoo Toyota Corolla TCs in fourth on Friday afternoon, ahead of impressive rookie Anthony Pretorius’ privateer OMP LTR Toyota Corolla TC, and Michael van Rooyen and Saood Variawa’s Gazoo versions.

Reigning champion Bradley Liebenberg made up for Toyota’s top class woes when he threw a spanner in the SATC SupaCup works by out qualifying the rest of the Volkswagen SupaPolo grid to put his lone, one-race-old Gazoo Racing SupaStarlet on pole position. Factory Astron Energy Volkswagen Motorsport SupaPolo pair Jonathan Mogotsi and Charl Visser were all of a tenth of a second adrift between them, delivering the prospect of some exceptional racing on Saturday.

Comeback kid Dominic Dias’ Chemi car emerged best of the rest from Keegan Campos’ Campos Transport machine brother Calvin Dias’ second Chemi car Cape lad David Franco Graphix Supply World SupaPolo and Tate Bishop’s Angri LTR entry. Returning duo Jason Campos’ Turn 1 Insurance car and Tato Carello’s Carello Auto version lined up next on the SupaCup grid, ahead of David Franco’s Graphix Supply World SupaPolo and Nicolas Vosatnis in tenth.

Debutant Dawie van der Merwe followed in Nathan Hammond’s Trinity Mokopane SupaPolo, but he was later demoted to the back on a technicality. That promoted Kalex lass Karah Hill, Dean Venter VDN Auto M-Town entry, and Masters duo, Andre Bezuidenhout Bertha Wines SupaPolo and Jean-Pierre van der Walt’s Platinum Wheels car a position each.

There was drama from the get-go of the full points opening feature race as rookie Anthony Pretorius made a brilliant start to dive between Julian van der Watt and Michael Stephen behind Robert Wolk. The youngster opted for discretion over valour and emerged behind them as Wolk led Stephen, van der Watt, Pretorius and the three Gazoo cars with Variawa ahead of van Rooyen and Msimanga.

Van der Watt was however all over the back of ,and soon past Stephen and onto Wolk’s case, whom he took half a lap to pass. Their jostling also brought Pretorius into play, with the four of them nose to tail into the final lap, There was however little Wolk could do to prevent van der Watt from taking victory on his return to the scene of the frightful accident that landed him in hospital last year. The Volkswagen man’s WCT BMW teammates Wolk and stand-in Stephen followed from impressive Corolla privateer and the similar works cars of van Rooyen ahead of Variawa and Msimanga.

The SATC SupaCup action was even more fraught through the first few turns. A slow starting Liebenberg’s Toyota became engulfed in a sea of Volkswagens. The upshot of which was contact with David Franco and eliminating both of them. That confusion left Keegan Campos leading Dominic Dias, Jason Campos, Charl Visser, Tate Bishop and Jonathan Mogotsi. Visser found a way around Jason, while Mogotsi passed both Bishop and the elder Campos, to see younger brother Keegan lead Dias, Visser, Mogotsi and Jason Campos home after Bishop found trouble.

So Keegan Campos consolidated his tight championship lead with a win over Dominic Dias, title rivals Visser and Mogotsi, Jason Campos, and Calvin Dias in sixth. Tato Carello followed from Jean-Pierre van der Walt, Karah Hill, Dean Venter, Dawie van der Merwe, Nicolas Vostanis and Andre Bezuidenhout.

Reverse grid race 2 saw Variawa on pole from van Rooyen, Pretorius, Stephen, Wolk and van der Watt. The SupaCup race however started on best race laps in heat 1, with Dominic Dias on a maiden pole position from Keegan Campos, Calvin Dias, Mogotsi, Visser and Jason Campos, and race 1 pole man Liebenberg at the back in the Toyota.

Variawa is establishing himself as something of a reverse race specialist, and Saturday was no exception. He grabbed the advantage from pole position and made off up front. Behind him, Anthony Pretorius made another blinding start to fight Michael van Rooyen for second, before Robert Wolk made short work of both of them and Michael Stephen to move into second and start his chase of Variawa. The action was fraught behind as van der Watt, Stephen, Pretorius and Msimanga fought over fourth.

Wolk closed down on Variawa, but could just not find a way past, while Msimanga and van der Watt’s races ended in tears, That left Stephen, and then Pretorius to catch and pass van Rooyen. Variawa duly held Wolk at bay in spite of the BMW man’s best efforts with stand-in Stephen third from super-impressive Pretorius and van Rooyen. Wolk did enough to both take the day and consolidate his championship lead with Stephen second overall from Variawa, Pretorius and van Rooyen.

The second SATC SupaCup race was mute in comparison to the opening war. Dominic Dias romped to a lights to flag maiden win despite Keegan Campos’ best efforts. Brother Jason made it a Campos 2-3 from VW duo Jonathan Mogotsi and Charl Visser, who overcame Calvin Dias and Tate Bishop for fifth. Bishop took sixth from Calvin in the end with Tato Carello next up from JP van der Walt, Nicolas Vostanis, Dean Venter, Karah Hill, David Franco, Dawie van der Merwe, and Masters man Andre Bezuidenhout after Liebenberg’s Toyota suffered a smoky demise.

Keegan Campos was initially scored as the SATC SupaCup winner for the day. But there was post-race drama when Campos was deemed to have drifted wide to cause the first race incident that eliminated Liebenberg. He was placed behind the non-finishing Toyota and out of the points. Which made Dominic Dias the double winner for the day as he took overall honours from VW duo Visser and Mogotsi and promote them into the championship lead. With further hearings and protests delayed into the coming week, all results remain provisional.

Hopefully that will all be sorted by the time the next round of South African Touring Cars goes down at one of its most exciting fixtures of the year at Zwartkops Raceway’s National Extreme Festival on Saturday 18 May. The tight and twisty Pretoria racetrack is guaranteed to deliver edge of the seat thrills. If Kyalami’s action was anything to go by, better you diarise that one now!