Sasol Limited



17th June 2017

**Bonafede and Stephen share the wins in thrilling Sasol GTC Zwartkops races**

*Pretoria, South Africa* – Gennaro Bonafede and Michael Stephen took the line honours at the fourth round of the Sasol GTC Championship at Zwartkops Raceway on Friday. Bonafede extended his championship lead while Stephen has taken over second place in the standings as the series nears the season mid-point.

The two races produced high performance competition, with the front-runners racing the 2.4km long circuit 2.5 seconds faster than when the Sasol GTC Championship started in August last year.

Qualifying again pointed to how closely contested the series has become with the top six covered by 0.694 seconds, headed by Bonafede (Sasol BMW GTC), a relatively comfortable 0.434 seconds ahead of Mathew Hodges (VW Jetta GTC), Robert Wolk (Sasol BMW GTC), Michael Stephen and Simon Moss (Engen Xtreme Audi GTC) and Daniel Rowe in the second factory VW Jetta GTC.

Michael van Rooyen (RSC BMW GTC) and Johan Fourie (EPS Couriers BMW GTC) rounded out the grid after a troubled qualifying session.

From the rolling start, Bonafede fended off a challenge from Hodges in turn one, while Stephen slipped inside Wolk with the rest of the pack in hot pursuit. By mid-race, Stephen edged past Hodges into second place, with Wolk in fourth, closely followed by Moss, Rowe and Fourie. Van Rooyen was forced to pit twice, but rejoined the race each time, ending five laps behind the winners in a strategic move that would see him start from pole position on the race two inverted grid.

When the lights turned green for race two, Moss made a demon start to lead the way around the first lap, followed by Rowe, Fourie, Wolk and Hodges. Van Rooyen suffered a loose turbo pipe and fell to the back of the field within half a lap. Chaos erupted in turn six when Hodges hit Wolk’s BMW, spinning the car around; with a broken wheel the car was stranded broadside across the track so the race was brought under safety car conditions and then red-flagged, but not before the GTC2 field had to take to the grass to avoid the stranded car.

On the re-start, Fourie, Moss, Rowe and Hodges led the way, followed by Stephen and Bonafede. By lap four, Stephen muscled his way past Hodges while Fourie built what looked like a decent lead. Moss ran wide a lap later, letting Stephen and Bonafede through and the chase was on!

By mid race, Stephen was right on the EPS BMW’s rear bumper and the inevitable happened; Stephen swept into the lead and proceeded to open a 1.2 second advantage by flag fall. Bonafede unboxed himself from the back of Rowe’s Jetta and took a fine third behind Fourie. Hodges and Moss trailed the GTC pack across the flag after an exciting and eventful race. Michael van Rooyen made several surgical passes on his rivals only to fall foul of mechanical issues.

GTC2:

Bradley Liebenberg (Ferodo MINI JCW) picked up where he left off in East London last month, claiming pole position ahead of his team-mate Chris Shorter (Champion MINI JCW) and championship leader Keagan Masters (VW Motorsport Golf GTi).

The opening race went to script for the Signature Motorsport MINIs, circulating in tandem at the head of the field. Masters, Charl Smalberger (icorp VW Golf GTi) and Trevor Bland (VW Golf) held station until the chequered flag. Shaun Duminy (SMD Ford Focus STI) and Mandla Mdakane (VW Motorsport Golf GTi) clashed in turn five which led to Duminy’s retirement.

Race two got off to a frenetic start; Mdakane led Masters, Smalberger, Shorter and Liebenberg. After the re-start following the race stoppage, Mdakane, Masters, Smalberger and Shorter led the way. The MINIs carved their way through the field, making it third and fourth after lap six; Masters took the lead from Mdakane and a lap later, Liebenberg did the same in a precision move in turn six.. After a race long fight that saw the MINI and Golf race side-by-side to the enjoyment of the spectators, Shorter eventually make it past Mdakane with one lap remaining before flag fall, leaving the fans in the stands cheering and breathless after a closely-fought race.

The Sasol GTC Championship heads to Port Elizabeth for round five on 15th July.

Sasol GTC Championship Standings after Round 4 *(subject to official confirmation)*

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| --- | --- | --- |
| Gennaro Bonafede | Sasol BMW GTC | 328 |
| Michael Stephen | Engen Audi GTC | 263 |
| Simon Moss | Engen Audi GTC | 235 |
| Johan Fourie | EPS BMW GTC | 180 |
| Mathew Hodges | Volkswagen Jetta GTC | 158 |
| Daniel Rowe | Volkswagen Jetta GTC | 75 |
| Robert Wolk | Sasol BMW GTC | 73 |
| Michael van Rooyen | RSC BMW GTC | 32 |

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| --- | --- | --- |
| Keagan Masters | Volkswagen Golf GTi | 326 |
| Bradley Liebenberg | Ferodo MINI | 231 |
| Trevor Bland | Volkswagen Golf GTi | 225 |
| Chris Shorter | Champion MINI | 165 |
| Mandla Mdakane | Volkswagen Golf GTi | 161 |
| Charl Smalberger | Icorp Volkswagen Golf GTi | 159 |
| Iain Stevenson | Comsol Volkswagen Golf GTi | 35 |

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**Ends**

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