Sasol Limited



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**Thrills, spills and new winners mark fifth round of the Sasol GTC Championship**

*Port Elizabeth –* The fifth round of the Sasol GTC Championship was marked by three new winners, incidents galore and superb racing at the Aldo Scribante race track on Saturday. A large appreciative Eastern Cape crowd watched the battles unfold over two heats, with body-panels rubbing and competitors spinning off the 2.4km track, including the two championship leaders who tangled in race two.

Michael Stephen, the defending champion, powered his Engen Audi GTC to the race one win, while Robert Wolk took his Sasol BMW GTC to his maiden GTC victory in the second race. In the GTC2 class, newcomer Bryn High caused a major upset win on debut while Chris Shorter survived a race-long duel in his Champion MINI JCW to take line honours in the second race.

The weekend got off to an exciting start, as behind pole-sitter Stephen, the next five places were covered by 0.3 seconds. Gennaro Bonafede, the championship leader led the charge against the home-town hero, followed by Simon Moss (Engen Audi GTC), Michael van Rooyen (RCS BMW GTC), Johan Fourie (EPS BMW GTC) and Wolk.

GTC2 qualifying was a scorching session: Shorter beat newcomer Bryn High (S&K Diesels Chevrolet Cruze) to pole by one thousandth of a second. Keagan Masters (VW Golf GTi) beat Charl Smalberger (iCorp VW Golf GTi) to third by three tenths of a second leaving Brad Liebenberg (Ferodo Mini JCW) down in fifth place, ahead of Trevor Bland (VW Golf GTi), Mandla madakane (VW Golf GTi) and Iain Steveson (Comsol Golf GTi).

The Sasol GTC Championship featured another popular 20-minute grid walk ahead of the opening race, giving race fans the opportunity to interact with the drivers.

**Race One:**

Stephen made a great start and took an immediate lead but came under pressure from his team-mate Moss and Bonafede’s Sasol BMW GTC. The three ran nose to tail throughout the ten lap race, a fine show of complete trust in each other from the top professional drivers in the country. Behind the high-speed train at the front of the field, Van Rooyen made a bad start and lost ground to Fourie. Hodges tried to go around the outside, a move which did not end well for the VW driver. Fourie edged his fellow BMW driver, followed by Mathew Hodges and Daniel Rowe in the factory Volkswagen Jetta GTCs.

In the GTC2 race, Shorter was bumped by High and fell to the back of the field. High took the lead and opened a commanding lead, while Bland and Smalberger duked it out for the other steps of the podium. Smalberger squeaked past Bland and held off his fellow GTi rival for three laps before Bland re-took second place with Liebenberg heading the rest of the field across the line.

**Race two:**

With the reverse grid in play, Wolk lined up next to Hodges, followed by Rowe, Van Rooyen, Fourie, Bonafede and the two Audis of Moss and Stephen. As the safety car peeled into the pits, Wolk took off and banked a sequence of very fast laps to build a lead which he was never to relinquish. Hodges tried to drive around the outside of Wolk, a move that saw him passed by van Rooyen.

Van Rooyen soon had the race one train looming large in his mirrors, headed by Bonafede who made great progress through the pack. Further back, Rowe led Fourie and Hodges: Stephen got ahead of Moss and made a bold move to overtake Bonafede but it ended in tears when Stephen nudged Bonafede; the two cars tangled and left the track together, rejoining at the back of the field.

This let Moss through into third place and he quickly caught and passed van Rooyen. Further back, Rowe tried to pass Fourie and the pair tangled at the Esses leaving Fourie off the road and out of the race. Hodges gratefully accepted fourth place which became third as van Rooyen spun one corner from home, colliding with the luckless Rowe in the process. Hodges gratefully accepted third place ahead of the recovering Stephen and Bonafede.

In the GTC2 race, Shorter was again on pole and put his head down, opening a handy lead over Masters. As the race wore on, Shorter’s lead evaporated to a bumper length, the Champion MINI driver just hanging on to cross the line first by a scant 0.2 seconds. Smalberger emerged in third once again, followed by Stevenson, High and Liebenberg.

The Sasol Raceday at Zwartkops Raceway in Pretoria will be a real showcase for the Sasol GTC Championship as the premier touring car series returns to the popular Gauteng circuit.

Join the conversation on social media using #SasolGTC and visit [www.sasolmotorsport.co.za](http://www.sasolmotorsport.co.za) for the latest #Sasol GTC Championship news, broadcast schedules and so much more.

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