**WOLK, VARIAWA SHARE OPENING SATC HONOURS**

*Robert takes feature, Saood reverse race, VW duo share SupaCup*

A new South African Touring Cars era dawned with a cracking first round at a blustery but energetic Killarney National Extreme Festival season opener in Cape Town on Saturday. Robert Wolk took the feature first race off pole position, before running out of time to catch Saood Variawa and Michael van Rooyen’s Toyotas in the reverse grid second race. Wolk still took the day, while Volkswagen Motorsport duo, rookie Charl Visser and Jonathan Mogotsi shared the SATC SupaCup races.

Having shown the way throughout practice, Robert Wolk duly put his all-new Chemical Logistics WCT BMW 128ti on pole position from another brand new race car, local hero Julian van der Watt’s Investchem WCT Volkswagen Golf. Nathi Msimanga proved the surprise of the Gazoo Racing Toyota Corollas ahead of teammates, Michael van Rooyen and teenage charger Saood Variawa. Rookies Anthony Pretorius in a Bucketlist Toyota Corolla and Andy Schofield’s FlySafair Chemical Logistics BMW 128ti followed.

There was a surprise in the SATC SupaCup ranks, where Bradley Liebenberg jumped ship to take the wheel of Gazoo Toyota’s all-new SupaStarlet on the previously all-Volkswagen SupaPolo grid. The returning Keegan Campos however converted his practice promise into pole position in his Campos Transport Polo, from Volkswagen Motorsport’s rookie Polo Cup champion Charl Visser and Cape Angri LTR compatriot Tate Bishop.

Jonathan Mogotsi lined up fourth in the second Volkswagen Motorsport SupaCup, from local lad David Franco and Liebenberg in the Toyota. Kalex lass Karah Hill followed from rookie karting and Gazoo League graduate Nicolaos Vostanis, Nathan Hammond, and Masters man Roberto Franco after VDN Auto MTown rookie, former Polo Cup charger Dean Venter endured a qualifying to forget.

Wolk got away well, but Corolla men Msimanga and van Rooyen got the jump on van der Watt off the line, leaving Wolk fending Msimanga off. Van Rooyen was under pressure from van der Watt, who was soon back through to third. Behind them, Variawa initially held Pretorius and Scofield off, before taking team boss van Rooyen on. That ended in tears when the two touched putting Michael into a spin to drop to the back and also delaying Saood.

That left Wolk edging away from Msimanga, who in turn came under pressure from van der Watt, and Pretorius and Variawa fighting back. Scofield then went off in turn 3, leaving the interest to be van der Watt closing on Msimanga for second, and Variawa on Pretorius for fourth, but that’s how it stayed. Robert Wolk duly took the opening full points South African Touring Car feature race win from Nathi Msimanga, Julian van der Watt, Anthony Pretorius, Saood Variawa, Michael van Rooyen and Andy Schofield.

Behind them, rookie Polo Cup champion Charl Visser started his prize Volkswagen Motorsport SupaCup career in fine style by taking the lead early on and holding Keegan Campos at bay for a debut victory. Jonathan Mogotsi fought back to take third from Tate Bishop, while David Franco held Brad Liebenberg’s Toyota off for fifth from Dean Venter, Karah Hill, Vostanis, Hammond and Masters man Rob Franco.

Van Rooyen sat on pole for the second, half-points reverse grid race from Variawa, Pretorius, van der Watt, Msimanga, Wolk and Scofield. Michael duly led the way from Saood with van der Watt and Msimanga quick to pounce for third and fourth. Wolk was soon past Pretorius as the top five concertinaed into a battle of wits with the stiff headwind further complicating the issue. Wolk’s pressure paid off as he passed Msimanga and quickly closed the gap to the three ahead.

Variawa then made his move on van Rooyen for the lead with three laps to go, while Wolk did the same to van der Watt a few corners later. It was too little, too late as Wolk ran out of time to catch the Toyotas with the top three within a second at the flag. So, Saood Variawa took the win from Gazoo teammate Michael van Rooyen, Robert Wolk’s BMW and Julian van der Watt in the Golf. Nathi Msimanga out braked himself into turn 1 late in the race to allow Anthony Pretorius and Andy Schofield up to fifth and sixth.

The SATC SupaCup top three ran in the reverse order of the first heat, with Mogotsi leading Campos and Visser. Liebenberg moved up to fourth in the Toyota after Bishop stopped, while Campos piled the pressure on Mogotsi up front, as they went side to side for several corners. It was not to be however, as Mogotsi led Campos, Visser and Liebenberg home. David Franco had a good day to finish fifth from Karah Hill, Nathan Hammond, Nico Vostanis, Dean Venter, and Robbie Franco.

Robert Wolk took the overall win from Julian van der Watt, Saood Variawa and Anthony Pretorius. Jonathan Mogotsi bounced back to take the SATC SupaCup day from Keegan Campos, Charl Visser and Brad Liebenberg in an encouraging Toyota Supa Starlet debut. South African Touring Cars will be back in action at the Extreme Festival’s 13 April blockbuster weekend at Kyalami Grand Prix Circuit.