**KC TURNS FORMULA 1600 ON ITS HEAD**

*A surprise new Investchem title leader after Aldo Scribante*

Johannesburg youngster KC Ensor Smith turned the 2024 South African National Investchem Formula 1600 championship on its head with a double victory off pole position at Saturday’s midseason Aldo Extreme Festival, after the thus far dominant Jagger Robertson suffered a weekend to forget. With Robertson well ahead in the title chase, it was all for the rest to do to rein him in.

And that’s exactly what Ensor-Smith did by starting his Gqeberha attack in fine form with pole position aboard his African Heating Mygale on Saturday morning, all of six-hundredths of a second clear of championship leader Robertson’s Liqui Moly version. The biggest surprise was however, NBR rookie Mikel Bezuidenhout, who pipped the experienced Jason Coetzee’s Mint Wrapworks Mygale to third, with Karabo Malemela’s KMFT Morita car and DV Building Supplies lad Alex Vos sharing row 3.

Investchem driver Siya Mankonkwana was next up alongside Durban lad Shrien Naidoo’s Production X entry, ahead of Storm Lanfear’s Mantellis Mygale, Renzo Ribeiro’s Metal Used machine. Ewan Holtzhausen’s Bee Tee car and 15-year old newcomer Ndzalo Khoza’s Makaselaair Mygale were next. Graham Hepburn’s Qualipak JHB Van Diemen topped the Formula Ford Kent grid from Duncan Vos’ DV Building Supplies Swift and Investchem teammates, Rick Morris in a Mygale and Allen Meyer’s Van Diemen.

There was however disaster for title leader Robertson however, when neither he nor Alex Vos lined up on the grid. That left KC Ensor-Smith to fend Jason Coetzee off en route to turn 1. Ensor-Smith then edged away to leave Coetzee to deal with Malemela, with Mankonkwana, Naidoo, Lanfear, Ribeiro and Holtzhausen. Mikel Bezuidenhout slipped down the pack and then went wide to drop to ninth ahead of Khoza. Behind them Graham Hepburn led Rick Morris, Allen Meyer and Duncan in the Kent class.

Malemela’s efforts paid off as he passed Coetzee for second, with Jason then under pressure from Mankonkwana, Naidoo and Lanfear in a down to the line battle for third. None of that would interfere with KC Ensor-Smith finally delivering his much deserved maiden Investchem Formula 1600 victory from Malemela, Coetzee, Mankonkwana, Naidoo and Lanfear. Bezuidenhout fought back to sixth from Holtzhausen, Ribeiro and Khoza. And Hepburn took the Kent win from Morris, Vos and Meyer.

With the clutch issue that kept him out of race 1 repaired, Jagger Robertson duly lined up alongside KC Ensor-Smith for the second heat. KC however made a perfect getaway to lead Robertson into turn 1 before the two of them made off up front. Behind them, Jason Coetzee kept Karabo Malemela at bay with Mikel Bezuidenhout right in the thick of it this time. Alex Vos also made the second heat start and sat sixth from Mankonkwana, Naidoo, Lanfear, Ribeiro and Holtzhausen, as Hepburn led the Kents from Morris Vos and Meyer.

There was little Robertson could do though, as Ensor-Smith edged away to an impressive double victory to wrap up a glorious weekend of firsts off pole position. Coetzee held on to third from Malemela, an impressive Bezuidenhout and Mankonkwana, who stole sixth from Alex Vos. Naidoo, Lanfear, Ribeiro and Holtzhausen followed, while Hepburn did the double to take Kent day from Vos, Morris and Meyer.

Significantly however, KC Ensor Smith not only broke Jagger Robertson’s stranglehold on the 2024 Investchem Formula 1600 championship, but he has also provisionally moved into a slender title lead going into the second half of the season. Karabo Malemela and Jason Coetzee ended second and third for the day as Coetzee strengthened his title third. Naidoo ended the day fifth from a much improved Bezuidenhout.

Investchem Formula 1600 now heads to the home of South African single seater racing at the East London Grand Prix Circuit for the final time at the 27 July Extreme Festival. The series will be replaced by the new Investchem MSA4 championship from 2025, which not just makes these final three Formula 1600 race wins most significant, but doing so in what is now building up to a tight title fight too.