

## **CAPE HELL DRIVERS RACE REPORT: 17 December 2011**

The fourth round of the Cape Hell Drivers club championships took place in lovely, warm conditions. The committee placed a Christmas tree on the in-field to mark the coming festive period, but the drivers provided festivities of their own to the delight of a capacity crowd!

### **McCarthy Toyota N1 2.1 Modified Class**

Etienne du Plessis (A98, Mazda) immediately made an impression by shooting into the lead at the start of Race 1 from the outside of the front row of the grid. He eked out a lead over Clint Fouché (A9, Fiesta), who was pulling out all the stops to keep rivals Francois Muller (A55, Clio) and father-to-be Russel Ormerod (A118, Corsa) behind him (Michelle, Russel's better half, has since given birth to Isabella – both mother and baby are well and we congratulate them on their new bundle of joy)! Du Plessis cantered to victory ahead of Muller, who slipped past Fouché in the dying stages of the race. Ormerod finished fourth ahead of Guido Serrotti (A40, Fiesta), while guest driver Johan Coetzer (from Welkom - A101, Datsun) rounded off the top six finishers.

Eugene Griessen (A5, Audi TT), who didn't start Race 1, came out all guns blazing in Race 2 and took the lead at the start. While he had pulled out a lead in the early stages, it was short-lived: both Muller and du Plessis began hunting him down. While Griessen is known to be a fine defensive driver, he could not hold off Muller and du Plessis and he remained consistent in third position. The race was red-flagged early due to a bit of paint trading, resulting in Serrotti making heavy contact with the wall at the start/finish straight. Muller was declared the victor ahead of du Plessis and Griessen, with Fouché and Ormerod making up the minor places.

Griessen, again, stormed into the lead when the flag dropped to begin Race 3 with only Muller to contend with, as they had pulled out a decent lead over the chasing pack consisting of du Plessis, Fouché, Frans Nagel (A8, Clio), Benito Oosthuizen (A72, Golf), Ormerod and Coetzer. Sadly for Griessen, his machine let go while he held the lead, gifting victory to Muller. He finished well clear of du Plessis, Fouché, Ormerod and Nagel.

Welkom's Johan Coetzer (driving Petrus van der Heever's car for the evening) took the lead briefly as the Final began, but was soon involved in a four-way tussle as he, Fouché, Muller and du Plessis ran four abreast in places while jostling for position! Eventually, Coetzer conceded defeat and fell away into the clutches of Ormerod, while du Plessis scorched to victory ahead of Fouché (who led for much of the way) and Muller. Ormerod eventually got the better of Coetzer for fourth position and Griessen struggled miserably to finish sixth.

### **Andre Groenewald Mini Class**

Gavin Fleming (A24) got a good start to his evening by blasting into the lead in Race 1 from the front row of the grid. While he ran at the front, severe pressure was applied by William Wheeler (A15) and Ewan Simon (A100). It got too much for Fleming and he ran a little wide at Engen corner. Wheeler did not need a second invitation to pounce and he slipped past. Simon, in the meantime, was working up some speed around the outside and managed to gain enough momentum to take over the lead! He won comfortably from Wheeler, while James Bain (A4) made a late charge into third position ahead of Shane Muller (A22) and the fading Fleming.

Muller got the holeshot in Race 2, ahead of Izelle Opperman (A33), Simon, Bain, Wheeler and Fleming. Opperman faded quickly, while Simon sliced into the lead, leaving Muller and Bain to squabble over second place – after Bain tagged Wheeler at the exit of Engen corner to take over third position. Muller ran wide at Engen with a mechanical glitch, leaving him to grind to a halt, but almost taking Bain, who was running on his outside, off with him in the process! Simon won comfortably from Bain, while Wheeler finished third, ahead of Fleming and Opperman.

Denrych van Tonder (A44) made his presence felt on the evening by taking the lead at the start of Race 3 and managing to hold off Simon for a while, but nobody could stop the young reigning class champion and he surged into the lead and began to pull away from the chasing pack. Muller's driving style produced a more robust quality in Race 3 and his impatience saw him tag van Tonder into a spin. Young Divan Bowles (A12) had nowhere to go and he ploughed into young van Tonder's Mini, which brought out the red flag. While Muller was decreed to be at fault and penalised with an exclusion, it transpired that van Tonder defended his position and Muller had nowhere to go. Simon was declared the winner, with Wheeler classified as finishing second. Bain finished third (following Muller's exclusion), while Fleming and Opperman again finished fourth and fifth, respectively.

Ewan Simon showed his dominance of the class for the evening when he blasted around the outside of Wheeler and Opperman to seize the lead by the end of lap 1, a lead he would not relinquish. Wheeler chased gamely to finish second ahead of Opperman, while James Bain finished fourth ahead of Fleming.

Young Bain's exploits on the track won him the "Driver of the Day" award.

### **Rite Auto Electric 1660 Class**

Twelve cars competed on the night, with plenty of drama unfolding as the evening progressed. Arnold Swart (A105, Fiesta) – junior and senior – were sitting dejected in the pits just before racing began for the evening. The Fiesta's propshaft had been damaged and it was feared that much time

would be lost in the attempt to obtain and replace it. Miraculously, the team managed to get the car ready for Race 1! Swart Jr repaid his team by blasting into the lead in Race 1 ahead of archrival and championship leader Hannie Hanekom (A70, Fiesta), David Koegelenberg (A331, Golf), Essie de Vries (Golf) and Kevin van Zyl (Golf). A full course caution was shown soon afterwards when guest driver Willie Richter (T99, Golf) spun Kevin van Zyl off the circuit and Richter was sent packing to the pits for his misdemeanour. Swart led his rivals from the restart to the chequered flag, ahead of Hanekom, de Vries, Koegelenberg and Kyle van Dyk (A31, Golf). Richard Maunder (A20, Alfa) was on for a sixth place finish when his motor developed an extra hole on the final lap, dropping oil all over the circuit (for which he received a hefty fine). Realising the problem, he pulled off the circuit and drove to the pits on the grass.

Young Kyle van Dyk began to make his presence felt on the evening by taking the lead at the start of Race 2 ahead of Marcelle van Heerden (A145, Golf), Richter, Farrell and Koegelenberg. Van Heerden picked up a mechanical glitch at the exit of Engen corner, being swamped by his rivals. De Vries, in the middle of the pack, saw the slowing van Heerden very late and had to spin off the circuit to avoid him! Van Zyl spent the latter stages of the race bumping Koegelenberg at any given opportunity, but lost a position to Swart in the process when he ran wide after another attempt at Koegelenberg. Van Dyk won comfortably ahead of Richter and Farrell, with Hanekom leading the chasing pack of Koegelenberg, Swart and van Zyl to claim fourth position.

There was a fair amount of jostling for position at the start of Race 3, with van Dyk inadvertently tagging Swart in the process. With the race settling down, it was Swart who led from van Dyk, with Farrell, van Zyl and Koegelenberg slotting in behind them. There was some very close nose-to-tail racing between Richter, de Vries and Hanekom in the battle for the minor places and this resulted in de Vries spinning and forcing out a full-course caution. Swart, again, led at the restart, but it was to end in tears for the team when steam billowed from his machine as the head gasket blew. Further action occurred on the back straight when de Vries and Farrell tangled, resulting in an accident with some nasty damage to both vehicles. Thankfully, both drivers emerged from the incident unscathed. The drama came to a head when Kyle van Dyk ran wide while leading, allowing David Koegelenberg to slip through and take the chequered flag first! Richter finished third ahead of Hanekom and Johan Sadie (A99, Golf).

The Final was a sedate affair after all the action in the previous three races, with Willie Richter leading Kyle van Dyk, Kevin van Zyl, Hannie Hanekom, David Koegelenberg and Johan Sadie in a train from the start to the chequered flag.

### **Most Wanted Dyno Tuning Clubmans Class**

The Clubmans class produced ten entries to provide some entertaining racing. While Donovan Allan (A52, Nissan Skyline) took the lead at the start of Race 1, it was oval track "rookie" Nigel Thorpe who looked menacing all evening and started snapping at Allan's heels – ahead of Renier Louw (A7, VW Golf), championship leader Sandra Erasmus (A81, VW Golf), Monique Pool (A50, Datsun, racing in her swansong event for the season) and dad Johan Pool (A5, Nissan Skyline). Allan showed early signs of handling issues when he ran off the circuit briefly at Engen corner. Thorpe used the opportunity to outbrake Allan around the outside at Pit Turn, but Allan struggled to control a slide and tagged Thorpe such that he bounced across the grass on the infield! He rejoined the race and set off after the race leader, now Erasmus. Erasmus pulled out a sizeable gap over her rivals, leaving Allan, Thorpe and Francois Muller (A55, Mazda) to trade paint for second position. Erasmus took the chequered flag, with Thorpe winning the battle for second. Muller had to settle for third position ahead of Allan, Louw and Dewald Burger (A6, VW Golf). It was later decreed that Thorpe be excluded from the results as a result of his rejoining the circuit unsafely...

Muller sprinted into the lead at the start of Race 2, leaving Erasmus, Dewald Rautenbach (A42, VW Golf), Monique Pool, Thorpe and Burger to give chase. Pool slowed with a damaged distributor and Quintin Saayman helped the lass to finish by pushing her over the line when the chequered flag fell. Muller took victory ahead of Erasmus, with Thorpe finishing third ahead of Rautenbach and Burger.

Erasmus, again, got the jump on her rivals to start Race 3, keeping ahead of Saayman, Thorpe, Burger, Allan, Muller and Rautenbach. Thorpe was in the wrong place at the wrong time when Saayman lost the rear end of his machine, forcing Thorpe off the circuit at the exit of Engen. The Young Modz founder rejoined and gamely continued. He was rewarded with a third place finish, behind Erasmus and Saayman. Dewald Burger, Donovan Allan and Renier Louw rounded off the top six finishers.

Monique Pool returned for the Final, after having to sit out Race 3, to compete in her final race for the season. She began her race well by taking the lead at the start and managing to hold off the rivals snapping at her heels. Francois Muller, though, did not entertain any sentimental thoughts of Pool winning her final race and carved his way to the front (from fourth position at the start) in the closing stages of the race to take the chequered flag. Pool did well to finish second after staving off intentions from Louw, Burger and Allan. Thorpe, unusually, finished well adrift in sixth position.

### **Tygerberg Engine Rebuilders V8 Class**

There were five entrants in the class for the evening and all five were classified as finishers in each race! Carl Blake (A7, Chev Montecarlo) took the lead from pole position to begin proceedings in Race 1, with Richard Stassen (A15, Chev Astra), Johan Spies (A900, Ford Thunderbird), Ernst

Heydenrych (A6, Sentra) and Fanie Mostert (A42, Chev Calibra). Stassen lost the rear end of his machine at the exit of Pit Turn and he spun wildly, leaving Heydenrych with nowhere to go! This allowed Spies to thread his way into second position ahead of Mostert, while Stassen rejoined ahead of Heydenrych. The race finished without further incident, with the drivers in that order.

It was Heydenrych's turn to lead from the pole at the start of Race 2, with Stassen, Blake, Spies and Mostert in hot pursuit. Blake used the superior machinery at hand to force Stassen into running wide at Engen corner: a move that allowed both Blake and Spies past the Namibian. Heydenrych claimed victory ahead of Blake, with Spies, Stassen and Mostert chasing him to the chequered flag.

Race 3 saw action aplenty, as Stassen took the lead ahead of Heydenrych, Blake, Spies and Mostert at the start. Heydenrych quickly took the lead and Blake was eager to give chase, pushing Stassen into a spin at Pit Turn on the first lap. He lost the second place he had gained to Spies in the process and Spies proceeded to pressurise Heydenrych for the lead, "rubbing" him at various stages. It came unstuck for Spies, though, as he ran very wide coming out of Pit Turn when "rubbing" again. It became a habit for the remainder of the race, indicating that something had gone awry with Spies's machine. Blake ran off the circuit at Engen corner in the dying stages of the race and rejoining without losing a place. Heydenrych posted his second win of the evening, with Mostert finishing a fine second ahead of Blake, while Spies limped home to fourth position. Stassen finished the race a disgruntled fifth.

The Final was red-flagged after Heydenrych spun on the first lap and was in harm's way. He took the lead at the restart ahead of Stassen, Mostert, Spies and Blake. Spies sliced past Mostert under acceleration at the exit of Pit Turn and followed that by accelerating past Stassen on the following lap. A full course caution was held soon afterwards when Mostert and Blake tangled out on track. The race was restarted and it finished with Heydenrych taking three victories for the evening. Spies chased him home in second position, while Stassen, Mostert and Blake rounded off the finishers.

### **Kitching Aluminium/Wellbuild Midget Class**

There was much excitement in the knowledge that eight midgets would be taking part on the evening. It ended in disaster for the class as half the field was eliminated in their first race!

Shaun Zurich (A98) blasted into the lead when the flag dropped to start Race 1, marginally ahead of Chris "Budgie" Crafford (A66), Louis Zurich (A96), Dirk Binneman (A97), Robert Kitching (A6) and Ruhann Horn (A21). The drama began at the end of lap 1 when Shaun Zurich pulled off the circuit from the lead at the end of lap 1! Crafford took over the lead, only for his midget to belch smoke from its exhaust a few laps later, forcing him into retirement! This left Louis Zurich ahead of Binneman, Kitching and Ruhann Horn. The race was ended prematurely when Horn's midget turned

into a fiery inferno! The youngster quickly pulled off the circuit and attempted to extricate himself from his burning mount. The fire was so intense that it burned his seatbelt off such that he could get out while the marshals attended to the affair. Thankfully, the young charger emerged relatively unscathed...but he won't be tanning on his summer holiday for a few weeks to come.

Race 2 saw three drivers take part, in Shaun Zurich, Kitching and Binneman. They finished in the order that they started.

Eerick Horn (A20) has been struggling with the reliability and handling of his midget this season thus far. He managed to return to the grid for Race 3 to gain some valuable track time with his mount. Kitching took the lead at the start, ahead of Binneman, Shaun Zurich and Eerick Horn. Zurich made spectacular short work of his rivals by swooping around the outside of Binneman and Kitching to blast into a lead he would not relinquish. Kitching had to settle for second position, ahead of Binneman and Horn – Horn's first finish in 11 races.

Eerick Horn finally found the form he'd had at the end of the previous season in the Final race for the evening. Starting from pole position, the youngster blasted away into the lead. What made the performance admirable was that he managed to maintain his lead over two of the fastest tar midget racers in recent memory, in Robert Kitching and Shaun Zurich. Horn took a fine victory, clear of Kitching who, in turn, managed to stave off intentions from Shaun Zurich. Dirk Binneman finished adrift in fourth place...

...and so the first half of the season has come to an end. On behalf of the CHD committee and officials, have a merry Christmas and prosperous 2012. The fifth round of the Cape Hell Drivers club championship takes place on 21 January 2012. Don't miss it!

Nick van der Meulen