

Round 1 of the 2019 GTC and Falken Polo Cup

 By [Naresh Maharaj](#)

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It was a day of racing thrills and spills as the first leg of the 2019 Extreme Festival got underway at the Dezzi Raceway on the KZN South Coast. Naresh Maharaj was right there at trackside and tells us all about it...

The weather Gods played their part as racing started and finished under cloudy and cool conditions throughout the day, but you can never escape the KZN humidity. Even a light smatter of rain did not dampen the eagerness of the drivers to thrill the 2500 odd fans that turned out.

The Falken Polo cup series was definitely the highlight of the day. There was some criticism about the track being too narrow to allow for side-by-side racing and overtaking, but that's all in the past. The track has been revamped and broadened to allow for racing in its true sense of the word. A total of 23 drivers raced to secure points in the first round of the annual eight-stop tour. The drivers certainly did not disappoint with robust bumper-car style racing down the final straight to hair-raising two-wheel turns which saw a few casualties.



SA's motorsport season kicks-off this week

27 Feb 2019



Jeffrey Kruger (Universal Healthcare VW Polo) was the quickest qualifier, setting a time of 1min 29,913s to edge out Bradley Liebenberg (VW Motorsport Polo) by just 0,128s with Stiaan Kriel in the Motor Mart/Kales Polo third quickest.

As the cars poured into the tight left-hander after the start, the bravest emerged at the front of the pack. It was Kruger who secured a good launch and immediately opened a gap on the jostling pack behind him where places changed regularly until midway through the heat when the racing began to settle a little.



Image by Naresh Maharaj

In the thrills of side by side racing and often saw car bodies touching, the driver making a statement was Chris Shorter (AE Polo) who weaved his way up to third behind Campos while also holding off a staunch challenge from Kriel and Liebenberg with Jonathan Mogotsi (VW Motorsport Polo) and Jurie Swart (Alpine Autohaus Polo) not all that far behind.

The second race was red-flagged three laps short from the finish due to a 4 car pile up melee around the dam corner but was soon restarted after the marshals cleared the track. Shorter had the lead when the race was stopped and he exploded off the line at the restart to keep that lead, with Campos literally all over his bumper. This is what the crowds had come to see and applauded the action from the circuit. The podium went to Shorter, with Kruger in second and Liebenburg in third. Kruger finished fourth, ahead of Kriel and Clinton Bezuidenhout (Glyco Engine Polo).

The Extreme Festival included the Global Touring Cars (GTC) series, which was well received by spectators. Simon Moss, who made the running in qualifying, set the best lap of 1m 24,362s to take pole position ahead of Michael van Rooyen in the Toyota Gazoo Racing Corolla.



Image by Naresh Maharaj

Third quickest was Robert Wolk (Chemical Logistics BMW 2 Series) from Keagan Masters (VW Motorsport Jetta).

In the GTC 2 category, Bradley Liebenberg (VW Motorsport Golf GTI) was quickest ahead of Adrian Wood (VW Motorsport Golf GTI) and Charl Smallberger (Universal Healthcare Golf GTI).

Moss did not waste any time stamping his authority on proceedings and blasted into an early lead, powering the Audi to victory by 2,2 s from Masters, Daniel Rowe and Wolk with Fourie a long way back in fifth place, the BMW looking worse for wear after a mid-race coming together with Van Rooyen's Corolla.

The Toyota team mechanics did some sterling yet urgent repair work that saw the car ready again for action for the second race. Van Rooyen went out and put Moss under severe pressure for the entire 10 laps, just not quite able to close the one second between them to attempt an overtake.

Daniel Rowe finished in the heat ahead of Masters and Fourie.

The combined results for the day had Moss on the top step of the podium with Masters in second place ahead of Rowe, Fourie and Van Rooyen.

Bradley Liebenberg dominated the GTC 2 class, winning overall for the day from Adrian Wood with Smallberger in third place ahead of Bob Neill (Delmon Mining Ford).

The next round of the Extreme Festival will head to Zwartkops on 6 April 2019.

ABOUT NARESH MAHARAJ

Naresh Maharaj is a petrol head who loves cars and writing about them. He is also a Member of the SA Guild of Motoring Journalists. Naresh is also an international sports correspondent and an acclaimed corporate MC and voice-over artist. Naresh is a sports/news producer for community radio stations and also an award-winning sports journalist. Contact Naresh on nmaharaj321@gmail.com

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