

HEYGATE, WILSON FIGHT BACK IN ELIM SPECTACLE

With Davin Cocker securing an overall and class win in KZN just over a month ago, betting against him on familiar terrain seemed unlikely. However, Scott Heygate of Factory KTM had other plans. With Cocker opening the track on the 38km time trial, it was Heygate who took an early lead, establishing a 30-second advantage for the main race. Cox, who finished third, was contending with a foot injury from the outset and qualified slightly behind the leading duo. Another favorite, Pentecost, misjudged a turn in the time trial, making for a challenging day ahead for the former champion.

Supporting his teammate after finishing fourth in KZN in the OR3 class, Matthew Wilson secured the time trial with a dominant 20+ second lead over his competitors, including Blake Young and championship leader Luke Walker from Factory Husqvarna. Walker, an enduro star from KZN, recognized the need for a significant performance on unfamiliar ground to maintain his top position. Another noteworthy performance came from SA racing legend Louwrens Mahoney, who topped the seniors' category and placed third overall in the time trial on his Honda 450. In the High School class, Nathan Westerdale recorded the fastest time of the morning, setting up intense competition among the top five in the class. In the Masters and Ladies classes, Mielies Le Roux and Leah Heygate demonstrated early dominance in their respective categories.

As the main race commenced, the organizers introduced a bunted section 20km into the loop, right next to the pits, where crews and teams gathered in anticipation of the leading motorcycles. At this juncture, Heygate was still in the lead, with a rapidly advancing Cocker just nine seconds behind him—the race was truly on.

In the OR3 category, Matty Wilson continued to lead, with Luke Walker now advancing to second place and within 30 seconds of his rival. Louwrens Mahoney was comfortably leading the seniors, and Leah Heygate maintained similar dominance in the ladies' category. Mielies Le Roux set a phenomenal pace at the front in the masters. In the High School category, Westerdale had now established himself as the favorite, with Brandon Clarke moving into second place.

By the halfway mark, Heygate had widened his lead over the pursuing Cocker, who now appeared noticeably less aggressive than in the first two laps. Cox had settled into third place, some distance behind the front two. Behind him, Hayden Louw was having a very good day in the Highveld, alongside leading senior Louwrens Mahoney, both representing UB Leisure on Honda machines. Wilson gradually began to extend his lead, and it appeared

that Walker, like his teammate, was beginning to target second place and a red plate for round three.

Concluding this thrilling race at Rabe's farm in Fochville, a jubilant Heygate achieved his first-ever Overall win and closed the gap to four points in the Open championship. Cocker crossed the finish line just 2 minutes and 23 seconds behind Heygate after 350km of racing, which then led to an 8-minute wait for Cox in third place overall. Following him were seniors' winner and championship leader Mahoney, along with OR3 standout Wilson. Pentecost, having a slower day by his standards, finished fifth in Class and seventh Overall, just ahead of current OR3 Championship leader Luke Walker. Peter Karam in OR3 and Brett Swanepoel in Open class completed the top 10 overall. Leah Heygate won the ladies' category, Carel Mielies Le Roux took seniors' honors, and Nathan Westerdale claimed High School honors and in 17th overall.

The next round in Vryburg on May 25th promises to be a showdown where the action will continue to determine SA's best XC riders.