

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Dramatic Last-Lap Finish at Dezzi Raceway

Port Shepstone, South Africa — 7th March 2026

The inaugural race of the Backdraft Racing Series at Dezzi Raceway once again proved that, in endurance racing, the sting is often in the tail. Gavin Rooke and Philip Meyer claimed victory in the 3-hour endurance race, overtaking the duo of Mario da Silva and Mike McLoughlin in the final set of corners on the last lap. Two hours earlier, Paul Hill had taken victory from pole position in the opening 1-hour sprint race.

Before the start of the headline event, extremely windy conditions took centre stage, presenting a challenging day for fans, competitors and their crews alike.

Paul Hill set a blistering pace from the start in his Audi R8 GT3, quickly pulling away from the field of 19 cars. In the closing stages of the one-hour sprint race, the Dezzi crowd was stunned by a heavy crash at Turn 9 involving Richard van Heerde's Backdraft. The car came to rest upside down, balanced on its roll cage. With the assistance of fellow competitors and marshals, Van Heerde was safely extracted from the car and fortunately escaped without serious injury, another testament to the safety of the Backdraft Racing Cobras.

After the clean-up of the circuit, just eight minutes remained on the clock for Hill to complete the race and secure victory with Jordan Edwards finishing in second place, having already claimed three sprint race wins earlier in the day, while Sun Moodley completed the podium in third position in his Porsche GT3.

The final hour of the endurance race delivered plenty of excitement. With compulsory pit stops and driver changes taking place, the complexion of the race changed dramatically. Steve Clark and Fikile Holomisa were the first to fall victim to mechanical issues, followed by the reigning national champion, the father-and-son pairing of the Pretorius family.

Meanwhile, Gavin Rooke and Philip Meyer had fought their way up from last place on the grid to second position with just 15 minutes remaining. Rooke pushed hard and rapidly closed the gap to race leader Mario da Silva, who had taken over driving duties from Mike McLoughlin.

With only minutes remaining, rain began to fall over Dezzi Raceway. Da Silva opted for a cautious approach to secure the finish, unaware of the rapidly approaching Rooke behind him. With just three corners remaining, Rooke made his decisive move, overtaking Da Silva for the lead.

When the chequered flag fell, Rooke and Meyer had secured a remarkable victory by just 1.4 seconds. The duo also claimed the prestigious Index of Performance award. Father and son Pitamber completed the podium in third place.

Backdraft founder Tony Martin was visibly moved by the strong turnout of competitors in the newly launched Backdraft Racing Series.

“It’s fantastic to see so many happy faces and such competitive yet clean racing across the board,” Martin said. “It’s incredibly rewarding to see decades of hard work culminate in a successful independent racing series.”

Series Manager Brian Martin was equally enthusiastic about the concept.

“I think we may have cracked the code with this format,” he said. “The camaraderie before, during and after the race has been fantastic. The support and interest from partners such as Dunlop South Africa, ATS Motorsport Supplies and Red Bull create a lot of positive momentum going forward.”

“We know many competitors were watching closely to see how the series would unfold, and I’m confident that our grid will continue to grow race by race.”

The next race meeting, Round 2 of the Backdraft Racing Series, will take place on **Saturday, 25 April at the East London Grand Prix Circuit.**

About Backdraft Racing Series

The Backdraft Racing Series creates an opportunity for racers of all levels to compete, with a clear focus on lowering barriers to entry in motorsport. Built around the proven Backdraft Race Car platform and supported by the local Backdraft factory, the series offers a competitive yet accessible environment for drivers and teams.

In 2026, the series began operating as an independent championship. While Backdraft Race Cars remain central to the grid, the series is open to owners of any race car, creating a diverse and competitive field.

The championship consists of seven race events throughout the year, each featuring multiple sprint races and a headline endurance race. For drivers without their own cars, Backdraft Racing also offers a fully factory-supported **Arrive & Drive** programme, making participation simple and accessible.

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