

CASTROL TEAM TOYOTA'S LEEROY POULTER SEEDED #1 AND
JOHNNY GEMMELL #3 IN RALLY DRIVER RANKINGS

Castrol Team Toyota's Leeroy Poulter tops the official Motorsport South Africa seeding list for drivers competing in the national rally championship. Team-mate Johnny Gemmell is seeded third, behind championship runner-up Mark Cronje (Ford Fiesta).

The seedings, which rank drivers according to the results of the timed special stages in each of the rounds of the championship, are an indication of who are the fastest drivers based on their best stage results throughout the season.

The top 10, all of whom competed in the premier Super 2000 class, were (with final championship positions in brackets):

1. Leeroy Poulter, Toyota Auris (5th)
2. Mark Cronje, Ford Fiesta (2nd)
3. Johnny Gemmell, Toyota Auris (3rd)
4. Charl Wilken, Ford Fiesta (7th)
5. Conrad Rautenbach, Ford Fiesta (1st)
6. Hergen Fekken, VW Polo (8th)
7. Hein Lategan, Peugeot 207 (14th)
8. Jan Habig, VW Polo (12th)
9. Enzo Kuun, VW Polo (4th)
10. Giniel de Villiers, VW Polo (13th)

The national rally seeding is an indication of who are the top drivers in terms of pure speed and the formula for calculating the rankings eliminates from the equation slower than normal stages caused by problems such as punctures.

Poulter finished fifth in the drivers' championship, two places behind Gemmell. He and co-driver Elvene Coetzee, who was fourth in the co-drivers' championship, teamed up for the first time last year to win the two-wheel drive A6 title in a Toyota RunX.

In only his second year in rallying, the former circuit racing champion scored two wins, including Toyota's 100th national rally championship victory in the Sasol Rally in Mpumalanga in April, and won 11 special stages. Gemmell and Scottish co-driver Drew Sturrock, who was runner-up in his championship, won 10 stages to give the Castrol Toyota pair 25% of the season's 86 stages.

"Leeroy's and Johnny's final positions in the championship didn't truly reflect their ability," commented Toyota Motorsport team principal Glyn Hall, a former national rally champion. "This is borne out by the seedings, which accurately reflect the quickest special stage drivers. Punctures, overshoots and the odd technical problem are all reasons why a driver misses out on the all-important championship points and both of our drivers had their share of bad luck.

"Johnny is an experienced driver and has been in the top three for some time. Leeroy's achievements this year are remarkable for a driver in his first year in the professional premier category. I doubt whether this has been equalled in any national championship anywhere in the world. The standard of driving in South Africa is world class and the competition has been closer this year than ever before.

"Castrol Team Toyota is fortunate to have two drivers of the calibre of Leeroy and Johnny in our team. They are both future champions and we look forward to giving them both every opportunity to fight for the title in 2012," said Hall.

The first round of the 2012 South African Rally Championship is the Total Rally in KwaZulu-Natal on March 24.

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