

Jeff Thomas wins second Wittittrin 200



ABOVE : Jeff Thomas / Peter Calvert heading for victory in the 2010 Wittittrin 200.

Jeff Thomas from Kirrawee in Sydney has become the first back to back winner of the Scotts Hydraulic Services Wittittrin 200 Off Road Race, after taking victory in a drama filled event on May 29/30.

Thomas, who won a shortened 2009 race with Louise Dorrian in the navigator seat, had Peter Calvert beside him for the 2010 victory. Calvert is responsible for much of the car preparation on the Thomas number 51.

In a repeat of his 2009 victory, Thomas maintained a tidy line around the track, and good car speed, to be in the right position when misfortune beset many of his rivals.

The old adage, "to finish first, first you have to finish", was never truer than in the 2010 Wittittrin 200 where only 14 of the original 34 starters were classified as finishers, with just 11 cars completing the entire 200 kilometre course.

The Hastings Valley team of Chris Levi / Len Levi , who were the leaders of the NSW Off Road Championship heading into Wittittrin, jumped out to a commanding lead in the first race on Saturday only to have a serious wheel failure on the back section of the course. With the Levi's sidelined the Kempsey team of Michael Spokes / Alan Hetherington, who have always been fast at Wittittrin, moved to the front with Thomas/ Calvert second and Derek Rose / Rebecca Hardman from Warialda third.

Early Saturday rain, causing greasy track conditions, resulted in plenty of incidents in Heat 1 but by Heat 2 the course had dried considerably and Glen Spizzo / Steven Brown really turned the wick up in their immaculate Pro Buggy to scream around the track to finish just

ahead of Dale Chadburn / Marnie Chadburn who were also on a charge. Michael Spokes / Alan Hetherington finished third in the Heat but maintained a slender overall lead after day one.

Sunday dawned with much better weather conditions meaning the times would begin to tumble. The top six contenders, Michael Spokes, Glenn Spizzo, Dale Chadburn, Jeff Thomas, Derek Rose, and Murray Bignell were all in contention for outright victory, separated by four minutes after one and a half hours racing.

Heat 3 on Sunday morning would turn the running order on its head as Glenn Spizzo pulled out with power steering problems, Dale Chadburn stopped out on the course, Derek Rose retired with engine failure, and Michael Spokes headed to the pits with power steering issues. Spokes would lose almost ten minutes in the pits undertaking repairs. Thomas moved through to take the lead and set about building a large gap back to Bignell. The Kempsey team of Tim Baker / Andy Baker were third fastest in the Heat, but well out of overall contention following several problems early in the event.

In the final Heat Thomas kept a cool head and set a steady pace, safe in the knowledge that if he kept his machine on track he would be rewarded with his second Wittittrin victory. He maintained the gap to second placed Bignell, and watched as Michael Spokes, with his car now back to its best, disappeared into the distance. Spokes would cross the finish line with the fastest four lap time of the weekend but his earlier problems meant third overall, and first in Prolite Class, would be his reward for the weekend. Murray Bignell got faster with each run and thoroughly deserved his second placing overall, but the glory belonged to the Thomas / Calvert combination, and Jeff Thomas is particular, for claiming his second consecutive Wittittrin 200 title.

Thomas / Calvert topped the Pro Buggy Class, Spokes / Hetherington won Prolite Buggy, Tamworths Hugh Austin / Ben Austin took Super 1650 Buggy honours, and Gary Hyde / Joshua Hyde from Tanilba Bay won the Sportsman Buggy Class and finished fourth outright.

OFFICIAL RESULTS : 2010 SCOTTS HYDRAULIC SERVICES WITTITRIN 200

OUTRIGHT

1. 51 Jeff Thomas / Peter Calvert 3:01:48.41
2. 996 Murray Bignell 3:06:14.47
3. 116 Michael Spokes / Alan Hetherington 3:08:06.51

PRO BUGGY

1. 51 Jeff Thomas / Peter Calvert 3:01:48.41
2. 996 Murray Bignell 3:06:14.47
3. 94 Kristy Hedley / Rikki Hedley 3:40:00.76

PROLITE BUGGY

1. 116 Michael Spokes / Alan Hetherington 3:08:06.51
2. 190 David Nikiforoff / Maria Raccosta 3:20:02.64
3. 136 Mick Latimore 2:24:34.26

SUPER 1650 BUGGY

1. 288 Hugh Austin / Ben Austin 3:21:52.52
2. 262 Andrew Griffin / Bradley Osborne 3:24:55.05
3. 279 Derek Rose / Rebecca Hardman 1:36:58.12

SPORTSMAN BUGGY

1. 335 Gary Hyde / Joshua Hyde 3:19:30.28
2. 358 Katherine Wellings / Elizabeth Lee 3:31:04.57
3. 308 Chris Browning / Dean Mavin 3:33:06.86



ABOVE : Murray Bignell placed second outright.



ABOVE : Michael Spokes / Alan Hetherington finished third.

Photos by Sean O'Leary