



Jeet Jhabakh leads a pack of cars in the VW Ameo Class.

## DC CORRESPONDENT

Kolhapur's Dhruv Shivaji Mohite led a 1-2 grandstand finish for Volkswagen Motorsport as he scored a commanding win in the premium Indian Touring Cars class in the MRF MMSC fmsci Indian National Car Racing Championship 2019 at the Kari Motor Speedway on Saturday.

The day's schedule was cut short due to heavy showers that led to the cancellation of Formula LGB 1300 races, just after Bengaluru-based Race Concepts team made a clean sweep in the Super Stock race with Rithvik Thomas, Prateek Benya and R Rajashekar finishing in that order. Incidentally, the three podium finishers are all from Bengaluru.

Mohite, 21, who has graduated from Karting and winner of the Ameo Cup last year, marked his debut in the ITC category in the Volkswagen Vento with a comfortable start-to-finish win ahead of team-mate Karthik Tharani while veteran Arjun Balu (Race

Concepts) completed podium.

While Mohite, starting from pole position, was quick off the blocks at the start of the 15-lap race, Balu, from second position, dropped two positions as he missed a gear when the lights went out. But the Coimbatore racer gathered himself to move into third after a couple of laps, easing past Dodhiwala. Thereafter, Mohite, Tharani and Balu were content to nurse their track positions to finish in that order.

"This is my first season in the ITC and I am happy to win my debut race. I had a good start and after opening up a good lead, I held my position as I had a team-mate (Tharani) behind me rather than a competitor," said Mohite.

For Balu, who is expected to be a top contender for the championship, it was a disappointing outing. "I missed a gear at the start and in the latter half of the race, I didn't have brakes and I had to use the handbrake. With a lot to make up and a good lead over Ishaan, it was pointless to push. My car is



Dhruv Shivaji Mohite steers his Vento in ITC category.

still a work in progress and we have to work on a bit to make it more competitive," said Balu.

Earlier, Hyderabad's Jeet Jhabakh chalked up a fluent lights-to-flag victory after starting from pole position, in the Volkswagen Ameo Class race, holding off Anmol Singh Sahil (Delhi) and Saurav Bandyopadhyay (Mumbai).

The race was run in tricky conditions. A wet and slippery track following a drizzle besides strong winds, were not ideal for racing on slick tyres, but Jhabakh handled the situation with aplomb while behind him, Sahil, having started fourth on the grid, fought his way to second spot, pipping Bandyopadhyay.

Bangladesh's Aiman Sadat topped the Junior category ahead of Nashik's Viraj Jairaj Jhala and Bengaluru's Chetan Surineni.

## RESULTS

**Provisional, all 15 laps unless mentioned): Indian Touring Cars (Race 1):** 1. Dhruv Shivaji Mohite (VW Motorsport) (17mins, 20.105secs); 2. Karthik Tharani (VW Motorsport) (17:27.062); 3. Arjun Balu (Race Concepts) (17:44.280).

**Volkswagen Ameo Class (Race 1):** 1. Jeet Jhabakh (Hyderabad) (17:48.937); 2. Anmol Singh Sahil (Delhi) (17:52.579); 3. Saurav Bandyopadhyay (Mumbai) (17:55.182). Junior: 1. Aiman Sadat (Bangladesh) (18:14.077); 2. Viraj Jairaj Jhala (Nashik) (18:15.882); 3. Chetan Surineni (Bengaluru) (18:04.139, 14 laps).

**Super Stock (Race 1):** 1. Rithvik Thomas (Race Concepts) (22:21.408); 2. Prateek Benya (Race Concepts) (22:23.462); 3. R Rajashekar (Race Concepts) (22:24.390).