

# Press Release



## 17-year-old Lauder tops Christchurch Suzuki race

Today's first of three races for the weekend's second round of the 2011/2012 Suzuki Swift Sport Cup was a runaway win for Turua's AJ Lauder, held Saturday 10 December at Christchurch's Powerbuilt Tools Raceway.

Starting from pole position in the Aegis Oils Swift, Lauder maintained perfect form by leading the 13-car field for the afternoon eight-lap race to finish 0.5 seconds ahead of Rangiora's Chris Cox and Upper Hutt's Jamie Gaskin in third.

Revered for the technical nature of the 3.33km circuit set west of Christchurch city, Lauder had a comfortable march on the field in early testing. While other teams struggled with tyre temperatures in the summer conditions, Lauder's results earned him a total of 78 championship points to move him to second in the standings.

"It is a dream start to the weekend. Qualifying first and finishing first doesn't happen very often, but hopefully there are a few more to come," said the 16-year-old.

"Tomorrow with the reverse-grid race we'll be starting from the back but we'll see if we can work through."

Overall championship point's leader Mark 'Spud' Gibson holds his advantage despite finishing fifth, behind Takapau's Sam Barry. Gibson made a great start, but slowly dropped back when the others poured on the pace.

"We're starting a bit further ahead for tomorrow's reverse grid race," said Gibson. "So it's alright; a top-five is still okay. I'm fighting a bit with understeer, but we'll sort that out, move ahead and be strong for the racing tomorrow."

Today's race was held in similar conditions to the blazing sun of Friday afternoon, where the temperature of the mixed-surface asphalt is significantly higher than its surroundings. And while Lauder dominated the time-sheets, the morning qualifying session placed seven of the field to be within 0.9sec of each other; while in the race the top-four were separated by

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0.7sec. That was a point series co-ordinator Paul Burborough said would give other teams a bit of homework as they chase Lauder's pace.

"It was a great battle and great to see the likes of Takapau's Sam Barry second fastest in qualifying and right in the middle of the leading pack. It really does show how different drivers excel at different circuits. Even when AJ got a bit of a lead in the race you could see the others were intent on chasing him down as much as they were trying to leap-frog each other. I guess the real tell-tale will be how they go in the cooler morning conditions for the reverse-grid race. I'm not about to suggest odds for a winner!"

Suzuki New Zealand's Motorsport manager Darren Stevens furthered the comment by backing his earlier statement on how the Powerbuilt circuit brings out the true character in a driver: "It certainly makes the championship interesting and how teams work in different conditions like the heat of this afternoon. It's just another factor teams and drivers need to conquer if they want to win – something AJ did today superbly. However Chris Cox and Jamie Gaskin were not far away and all it would have taken would have been a half-second lapse by AJ and the result would have been very different. But one of the great results was all 13 cars again finished."

Sunday's two races include an eight-lap full-reverse grid race in the morning with a ten-lap afternoon race to decide the top-three for the weekend's podium ceremony.

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