

Press Release



Endurance test for Suzuki race series

Competition for the Suzuki Swift Sport Cup championship title will take another twist this as the series heads to Invercargill for this weekend's programme that includes a 78km race on Saturday evening 14 January.

Currently leading the title standings by 43 points, Thames based teenager AJ Lauder says the double-points race will be a defining moment as the series enters the mid-way mark in the six round championship.

"That race will be a make or break, so finishing is the first goal. Hopefully it'll be in the front group – where you get the better points," said Lauder, contesting his fifth season racing the 1600cc Suzuki Swift's.

The race also includes a compulsory stop for each car to remove and replace one wheel.

"As well as being another element of competition where the team has to work together it's as much an illustration of the car's durability," says Suzuki New Zealand's motorsport manager Darren Stevens.

"That also includes the team doing everything right to make sure the tyre is on securely as quickly as possible. So there is a lot at stake."

The fierce competition has series co-ordinator Paul Burborough busy ensuring the drivers' keep the playing field level, particularly with the chance of double the 75 championship points for winning the Saturday weekend opening race.

"As much as it's a big family between races there are times the riot act comes out as a reminder of what's at stake," says Burborough.

"We say every year the competition is close and while the time sheets prove that again this year, as a series we have to stay on our toes to keep everyone in line and happy. When double points could make a significant difference to the championship some need to be reminded of the greater goals, especially when we've got to put on as good a show the

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weekend later near Timaru.”

Relinquishing his early points’ lead after December’s second round, Taupo’s Mark ‘Spud’ Gibson says it will be a tough return to competition with the Saturday evening race crucial to his title quest.

“I’m definitely focusing on the 30-lap enduro. After not finishing it last year it wrecked my championship in the end, so finishing top-three for that is the goal,” said the yachting design student.

“With such a small gap between the two rounds you have to keep the car nice and tidy for Timaru. You don’t want to have to do repair work between the rounds; it costs money and time.”

Being held at the world’s most southern race circuit, Teretonga Park, west of Invercargill, has a long front straight that leads to a sequence of uniquely challenging corners. Totalling 2.62km of mainly left turns, the chance of fickle weather will further test drivers’ ability.

Following Friday’s two test sessions, the teams’ will be treating local guests to hot-lap rides around the circuit. The switch to championship mode starts with Saturday’s 20 minute qualifying session to decide the start order for the late afternoon 30-lap double-points race. Sunday starts with a ten-lap reverse-grid race at 11am, followed by a 12-lap race at 2:45 to decide the round winner.

While it will be an influx of North Island drivers’ to the world’s most southern race circuit, Oamaru’s Joseph Paton and Rangiora’s Chris Cox will be the only two not needing to cross the Cook Strait.

Following the Invercargill weekend teams’ then have four days before the next round, at Timaru’s Levels raceway, 20-22 January.

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