

Press Release



Suzuki Swift Sport Cup title battle moves to Timaru

Having passed the half-way mark in the six-round summer race championship, the chase for the Suzuki Swift Sport Cup resumes this weekend 20-22 January at Timaru's Levels Raceway with 225 points up for grabs for the 13-car field.

Currently led by 17-year-old AJ Lauder from Thames, his healthy 58 point advantage over Rangiora's Chris Cox will be the continuation of a duelling battle that emerged last weekend at Invercargill's Teretonga circuit.

The pair were hammer and tongs at it around the 2.62km circuit – despite the inclement conditions. Winning two of the weekend races and the round, Lauder further extended his points' lead. He also set a new lap record in what is his fifth season in the small-car race category.

By contrast Cox won two races and the round last time the series visited Timaru and says there is plenty of opportunity at improving his championship chances. Having started the 2012 leg of the season third in the standings, 19-year-old Cox emerged second overall and with an unscathed car after last weekend's visit to Teretonga.

"As we're only half-way through the season, there is a long way to go and plenty more points out there," he said.

"With Timaru the next weekend after Teretonga it was important to keep the car clean – and it costs less money too. We'll keep going from here and keep looking for the results, especially race wins."

At 2.4km in length, the Timaru International Motor Raceway is the shortest of the six tracks used. However its configuration ensures there is plenty of technical expertise required to steer the quickest course to the chequered flag. The kink and esses at the end of the front straight are often a bottle-neck, requiring lightening reactions and steely nerves to hold position.

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Working on the promise of better weather being delivered for the Timaru weekend, Suzuki New Zealand motorsport manager Darren Stevens says the forecast looks promising: “The teams’ had to put up with every kind of bad weather last weekend so to contrast that with the best summer can provide would be a great way to finish the South Island leg of the championship.

“Timaru was a venue where fortunes changed for many last season. We saw the emergence of Chris Cox as a race winner and there is every chance he will do it again. Plus last weekend we saw the likes of Glen Collinson, Kent Yarrall and Jamie Gaskin get to the front, so there is sure to be some changes in the point’s table order.”

Series co-ordinator Paul Burborough says Timaru will be a wake-up call for some that the championship is far from decided: “There is still so much at stake. With nine races left in the season and one of them worth double points that means there is still 750 points available for race wins. That leaves ample opportunity for the likes of early series leader Mark Gibson to close the gap. And as Chris Cox proved at Teretonga, consistency gets you further up the championship ladder.

“While some of the cars look a little worse for wear after last weekend, some of the teams’ have forgone the chance of a few days break in-between the rounds to straighten and tidy them up. I’m sure the Rob Gibson, Glen Collinson and Sam Barry cars will be looking near-new for this weekend’s three races.”

Allowed two test sessions on the Friday to establish an optimum setup for the circuit and conditions, teams’ then take guests for hot-lap rides late in the afternoon.

Qualifying takes place Saturday morning, deciding the start order for the afternoon 10-lap race. Sunday morning’s 10-lap race is a full reverse grid based on Saturday’s finishing order with the 12-lap afternoon race decided on points earned for the weekend.

Local driver Joseph Paton from Oamaru will sit out his home event after the Frosty Boy Suzuki Swift suffered significant frontal damage the weekend prior.

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