

Press Release



Lauder wins opening Timaru Suzuki race

Extending his title lead for the 2011/2012 Suzuki Swift Sport Cup, Turua's AJ Lauder added another race win to his resume after this afternoon's 10-lap race around Timaru's International Motor Raceway, today, Saturday 21 January.

The fourth of six rounds for the small race car title, the 17-year-old took a clean, yet continually challenged lights-to-flag victory around the 2.4km circuit. Second by a mere 0.398sec was Taupo's Mark Gibson, with Upper Hutt's Jamie Gaskin a further eight seconds behind in third.

Following searing weather earlier in the week, this morning's cooler weather didn't affect the competitor times with the top 11 of the 12 car field all within a solitary second of each other in the qualifying session. Headed by Lauder when he popped to the top in the dying seconds, he pipped Taupo's Mark Gibson by a fractional 0.052 second.

Starting from pole in the afternoon ten lap race, Lauder took his qualifying advantage to an early lead that he maintained to the chequered flag.

"It was a bit tight in qualifying, but we got it right on the last lap. And then it was even tighter in the race, Mark (Gibson) was on my tail the whole time," said Lauder.

"Our plan was to have a good setup for the first half of the race and hope we were far enough ahead for the second half. So we got that great start and held it."

Along with the three bonus points for fastest time in qualifying, Lauder added another 78 points to his championship total. Still in second, Rangiora's Chris Cox is now 68 behind Lauder after starting the race 58 points in arrears.

"It was a hot start to the weekend with a clean yet challenging race. Mark Gibson wasn't going to give up and settle for second; AJ kept his head and to the winner go the spoils. It's that sort of performance that wins championships and you'd have to say he's in pretty good shape for the title in his fifth season," said Suzuki New Zealand's motorsport manager.

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The second in back-to-back weekend's of racing, the three-race programme at Timaru continues with two more left to run on the Sunday. Starting in the morning with a full reverse grid ten-lap race, the weekend finale in the afternoon covers 12 laps.

"It was great to have everyone finish the race after a few mechanical gremlins popped out earlier in the weekend," said series co-ordinator Paul Burborough.

"The pressure to finish is increasing as we get closer to the finish – there is just so much more at stake. You can see more tactical moves being made, less risks and fewer mistakes. It really illustrates the maturity of our young drivers, looking for every opportunity to get an advantage without sticking their nose where they know it is likely to get out of shape."

Local driver Craig McRae (Geraldine) finished 12th after having to replace the engine in his car after the qualifying session.

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