

# Press Release



## Lauder takes Suzuki round win at Timaru

Two races wins and the demise of his main rivals has elevated 17-year-old AJ Lauder to a healthy 195 point lead after the weekend's fourth round of the Suzuki Swift Sport Cup held near Timaru (20-22 January).

The final South Island race for the 2011/2012 season, Lauder headed off Karaka's Andrew Vincent and Hamilton's Shaun Lawrence, who finished second and third respectively for the round.

"I've had a good run in the South Island and leave with a better lead than I could have hoped for," said Lauder.

"It all played our way as a few people went off, even in the final race where I was happy to sit in second, but managed to get the advantage around the big sweeper."

Winning the Saturday afternoon race Lauder tip-toed around Timaru's 2.4km circuit during this morning's reverse-grid ten-lapper when heavy rain made for skating rink like conditions. Finishing sixth, behind winner Shaun Lawrence (Hamilton), it was the loss of Rangiora's Chris Cox that reinforced Lauder's championship position.

Hitting the wall on the front straight in the opening lap, the damage to Cox's car was too serious to effect repairs before the afternoon's final 12-lap race. The points' deficit drops the 19-year-old from second in the standings to third.

That left Taupo's Mark Gibson in a prime spot to challenge Lauder for the round win, helped by starting from pole position for the afternoon race. Contrasted by clear skies and warmer conditions the side-by-side run from the start line went against Gibson when he ran wide on the outside of the third turn to have to tuck-in behind Lauder.

However that all ended shortly after as Gibson left the track and hit the embankment side-on. With the remainder of the 10-car field restarting behind the safety car, Lauder slowly increased his lead with each lap, finishing over two seconds ahead of second placed Andrew

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Vincent.

"Gibson got a tap which put him offline," explained series co-ordinator Paul Burborough. "He'd gathered it up but ran out of track, touched the grass, which shot him toward the wall.

"Jamie Gaskin was later penalised for the incident and excluded from the race results. Which was a real shame as Mark didn't feel it was that serious a matter.

"But they are the risks when you're exposed to when everyone is trying to win and further illustrates the class shown by AJ Lauder. He survived the atrocious wet this morning in the reverse-grid race that saw the greatest damage to the field.

"While it wasn't the weekend we might have expected from Chris Cox it was great to see Hamilton's Shaun Lawrence take another win and to see him second on the points' table."

Suzuki New Zealand's motorsport manager Darren Stevens said the back-to-back race weekends has created a lot of work for the teams' ahead of the penultimate round at Manfeild mid-February: "The South Island rounds certainly took their toll on the class. Obviously with the loss of a few competitors, Timaru provided a level of challenge where both extremes of weather made the drivers' work that much harder.

"Overall I think it's shown the talent of the drivers' having to deal with the rain wind and sun - they did a good job.

"The championship has taken a real twist with Cox and Gibson dropping behind Shaun Lawrence and now there are three very close for that spot.

"However it's far from over for all of them and it's the style of the class that the title does go down to the last race at the last round."

With two rounds remaining to decide the 2011/2012 Suzuki Swift Sport Cup champion the next round will be contested at Manfeild in the Manawatu township of Feilding 11-12 February 2012.

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