

PRESS RELEASE

8 November 2009

BAMBER TAKES EARLY SWIFT CHAMPIONSHIP LEAD

- **Wanganui's Gibson wins first race of the season**
- **McMaster and Bamber follow through with a win apiece**
- **Spectacular rollover takes out Harrison**

Early honours in the Suzuki Swift Sport Cup have gone to young Wanganui racer William Bamber.

The younger brother of A1GP driver Earl, Bamber took his first step toward the Swift Championship title in racing at Pukekohe this weekend.

Another Wanganui young gun, Matt Gibson, won the first race of the 2009-2010 Suzuki Swift Sport Cup on Saturday after Bamber and Christchurch driver Cody McMaster were penalised for jumping the start. Series rookie Gibson, who is the recipient of the \$50,000 Castrol Suzuki Swift Scholarship, is now fourth in the championship.

The second ten lap race on Sunday morning saw McMaster and Bamber lead from the start with Aucklander Ben Dallas in third place. These three cleared out from the rest of the 16-strong field. Behind them Gibson and Scott Harrison were locked in battle for fourth overall.

McMaster's lead was never certain, Bamber closing right up on him under brakes at the hairpin lap after lap and Dallas poised to take advantage of any error by either of the pair in front of him.

On the sixth lap Gibson and Harrison took their fight a further step, going side by side through the hairpin as Harrison tried to force his way through. A lap later he had made sure of the position, Gibson hanging onto the rear bumper of Harrison's car but unable to regain his fourth place.

McMaster crossed the line first, Bamber just .123 of a second behind and Dallas third.



William Bamber



Matt Gibson

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Fastest lap of the race was by Auckland driver Marc Spring, a 1:13.636. An increase in minimum car weight for the championship means last year's race lap record, a 1:13.184 by William Bamber, is unlikely to be broken.

The final race was run in reverse-grid format over 12 laps of the fast 2.841 km circuit.

Hastings racer Michael Paaymans led off the start. He beat the category's female racer, Katherine Collins, into the Stables corner while behind him Sam Robinson, Bramwell King, Craig Innes and Grant Ryan fought for track position.

A lap later Paaymans had established a one second lead while Collins was coming under pressure from a charging Innes, who has switched to the Suzukis this year after winning the MINI Challenge in 2008-2009.

Innes took second place going onto Pukekohe's long back straight, leaving Collins to fight for third with Wellington's Grant Ryan.

Ryan showed biggest improvement, slipping past Innes a lap later to hold second. Sam Robinson overtook Katherine Collins for fourth behind Innes.

On the next lap, young Whangarei racer Scott Harrison saw his championship aspirations derailed in the esses, his car rolling spectacularly across the infield. The crash stopped the race while Harrison was extricated from his wrecked car and the track cleared of debris.

"I don't know all of what happened, the car was just off on its own ride out there, I saw sky and grass and then just dust. My back is pretty tender, the ambos reckon it will be worse tomorrow, but I'm okay," he said later.

At the restart Michael Paaymans was swamped by the close-bunched field. William Bamber had been working his way through the field, and surged to the lead, Ben Dallas going with him.

Grant Ryan and Craig Innes tangled at Castrol corner, Ryan going off the track into the tyre barrier. Matt Gibson narrowly missed Ryan's car as it bounced back off the tyres. Sam Robinson had stayed out of trouble and was third as the race entered its final laps, Shaun Lawrence fourth and close behind. Lawrence and Robinson entered the last lap side by side down the front straight, with Lawrence emerging into the esses ahead of Robinson.

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Their battle had allowed Bamber and Dallas to get well clear, and they took the chequered flag nose to tail with just .224 of a second between them. The fastest lap in the third race went to Mike Turley of Auckland, a 1:13.848.

Gibson says he is pleased with his progress.

“A race win, fourth on points for the weekend and we stayed out of the way of the mayhem in that last race. That is a pretty good result I’d say.”

-End-

Fast, competitive one-make racing, a showcase for new talent

The Suzuki Swift Sport Cup, the most successful one-make class in New Zealand motor racing, has been elevated to full championship status for 2009-2010. Motorsport New Zealand has confirmed the Cup will have full championship status in the premier “tier one” summer motorsport season.

Now entering its third year, the Swift category is fast becoming the rising star of the New Zealand motorsport scene. Category head Paul Burborough says promotion to a fully-fledged championship is official recognition of the popularity and success of the close-fought competition.

As a stand-alone one-make motor racing championship, the Suzuki Sport Cup is now one of the most competitive series on the New Zealand motorsport calendar. The race-modified 1.6-litre Suzuki Swift Sport cars used in the category are affordable and identical, meaning racing is close and exciting and emphasis is placed on driver ability.

The championship races at every round of the “tier one” summer motor race series, but will not contest the stand-alone Hamilton 400 street race. The season wraps up with an endurance race at the Hampton Downs circuit in the northern Waikato.

The scholarship: picking winners

Each year, the Castrol Suzuki Sport Cup Scholarship has attracted the fastest rising talent to the series.

The scholarship has a knack of picking winners: three of the four championship front-runners are either current or former scholarship recipients, including two-time series winner Cody McMaster, 2007-2008 scholarship winner Ben Dallas and this year’s recipient, up and coming Wanganui racer Matt Gibson. The scholarship is a valuable boost to the motor racing career of any rising star, a package worth more than \$50,000.

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From a start in karting at age 12, Gibson moved to Formula First at just 16. Success in this field led to several podium finishes, a class lap record at Pukekohe, and pole position at every circuit, finishing fourth in overall in the national championship last season.

Winning the coveted Castrol scholarship gives Gibson an assisted drive in the coming season's Suzuki Sport Cup Championship, boosting his profile and taking him one step closer to fulfilling his dream to become a world touring car driver.

Two-time champion and inaugural scholarship winner Cody McMaster returns to defend his past championship wins in his Winger-backed car, which was driven last year by Scott Downes. Ben Dallas, the 2008-2009 Scholarship recipient, also returns to the series with the title in his sights.

2009-2010 Suzuki Swift Championship dates

Round	Date	Venue
1	6-8 November 2009	Pukekohe
2	27-29 November 2009	Ruapuna
3	15-17 January 2010	Teretonga
4	22-24 January 2010	Timaru
5	12-14 February 2010	Manfeild
6	19-21 March 2010*	Taupo
Endurance event	TBC May/June 2010	Hampton Downs

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